

¿Y QUÉ TAL SI?

Knowledge, the highest stage of imperialism



1.4



**ARTURO SARMIENTO
VANEGAS**

Columnista RHI

VOL. IV COLECCIÓN C:3 - C5

In an ever more globalized world, skill and technologies have become a crucial part of the comparative advantage. Knowledge has an immense impact on development and growth. Empirical studies offered the scoop on the developing success cases in the twenty century. We can see some examples in South Korea and the Nordic countries: knowledge

approaches were crucial in the prosperity of the countries. In the same way, knowledge is intrinsically linked with hierarchical power, dominance, and imperialism. Most of the time knowledge has its own political, economic, cultural agenda. One of the reasons I wanted to address this topic is because that problem gave me reminiscences of Lenin's

theory. Based on this analysis, maybe the reader will see the importance of the knowledge economy and the new ways of imperialism and dominance in the twenty-one century.

All economies have some range of knowledge, simple activities like farming, building, and fishing have some know-how fundamental procedures. In the age of information and globalization, these procedures could be more powerful and valuable than natural resources or capital-labor. Nowadays we can see the rise of knowledge-based capital “compromise a variety of assets... unlike machines, equipment, vehicles and structures, they are not physical. This intangible form of capital is, increasingly, the largest form of business investment and a key contributor to growth in advanced economies” (OECD, 2013).

In every group of individuals, there has been expertise. In the history of humankind, these experiences were the driving force that developed societies. For example, in primitive tribes, there was a need for information about their environment. Viva-voce became fundamental; otherwise, the members of the tribe could have been in danger by a predator, intoxicated by a poisonous plant, or not knowing how to treat a wound. As a species, we have always used our environment to our advantage even though we have the necessary resources for survival. This is the beginning of a narrative that continues until the present day. That allowed an environment damaged; although the prehistoric human is not that far away from knowing this damage “it is likely that prehistoric humans had a comparable, or perhaps more severe impact, on their environment. This is because the species

that have survived to the present represent the less vulnerable plants and animals” (Smith,1993). The know-how methods have an intrinsic ideology and a way of viewing and understanding the world (and power).

The Neolithic period brought the basis of civilization. Agricultural advances started to flourish around the globe, the discovery of new tools and the possibility to store them (and the know-how procedures, writing systems) became a crucial leap. With ancient civilizations began a new paradigm. Greeks started a new approach to nature. They set about to explain and represent the world in a logically structured way. The Roman stuck to this trace and complimented. Also, with the Romans, this idiosyncrasy reached the shores of Britain and the deserts of Northern Africa. From the Antonine wall to the Holy City, the new paradigm shaped Europe.

From the middle ages to the industrial epoch, Europe lagged behind. Meanwhile, in China, new technology appeared. For its part, the Arab world made substantial improvements in math and science. A new paradigm deeply in tune with an epistemological religious belief sank Europe. Even though China had the technical capabilities and the Arab world had the scientific method; Britain began the industrial revolution. With the industrial revolution, Britain took advantage and became the dominant position of leadership in the world. The Steam Machine and textile machinery were entrepreneurial inventions that helped lead the British to rule the world for the following centuries. Contrarily Germany obtained local power and growth with links between education and industrial organization. Therefore being cataloged as the principal industrialized nation as regards

technology.

Lenin noted that the industrial revolution and the exponential growth of the capital brings an enormous concentration of production: “Tens of thousands of huge enterprises are everything; millions of small ones are nothing.” (Lenin,1917)

Following this lead, we can see some reminiscence of Lenin’s theory nowadays. But as we already mentioned, at the present moment knowledge-based capital is essential. A step forward in Lenin’s theory could be the accumulation of knowledge-based capital by tech monopolies and governments.

The United States and China remain at the top of the list of countries with the highest market capitalization. Since 2009, the United States has grown from \$3,805bn to \$13,093bn. The market dependence on ICT-related products is increasingly overwhelming and benefits the world powers. It can be seen more clearly from a historical review of the largest companies by market capitalization. In the 1990s, within the same ten positions, there was only one company dedicated to telecommunications and the production of software and computers. The top companies in this list were engaged in the production of automobiles, and following the trend, oil companies (PWC,2020). From 2009 to 2020 the companies that relatively grew the most were Amazon and Apple. In absolute terms, Microsoft is the winner with the figure of \$1,037bn during the previously mentioned period.

On the other hand, new forms of communicating information could create

opportunities in developing countries. With the extensive use of the internet, marginalized sectors of society can access a wide variety of data and information, therefore, have more valuable skills. Knowledge could break the barrier of dependence. Not only could technology break it, but additionally, being a form of democratization of the world. Some studies in social science look for a different explanation. Networks and open source knowledge could be the beginning of a new paradigm. Not-hierarchical knowledge relations could be possible. Some theorists that claim this are Manuel Castell (2002) and Bruno Latour (2005).

Even though KE could create new forms of development. The global trend is evident. In a globalized world, telecommunications are fundamental; but at the same time, this implies dynamics of power, accumulation, and imperialism. North global scholars quoting others north global scholars, brain drain from developing countries to silicon valley... and a variety of examples where we can see a change in the subject of imperialism. From a financial system perspective to a silicon valley perspective. From the accumulation of steam and power to the accumulation of knowledge, well north global knowledge.