

Model United Nations: A Simple Learning Experience or a Dangerous Western Weapon?

In Pakistan the Model United Nations (MUN) is seen as being one of the biggest events amongst schools. Participation in it is seen as being an integral part of the educational experience, with local schools gathering their teams and pushing students to participate in the event. Each school has a team, which participates in a number of MUN events, both in and out of Pakistan, debating current events and discussing how they would respond to a number of crisis that are taking place across the world from Syria to Sudan.

For students it's a status issue; being a part of the MUN team gives them instant credibility. It's proof that you can debate and is seen as an 'innovative resource to prepare students for career and college success'. This view is pushed by the schools that encourage their students to take part, as it's a chance to travel abroad and a way to prove that your educational institutes help the students to prepare for their future.

The student 'delegates' stimulate the work of the United Nations; sitting on each one of their multilateral bodies and representing their appointed country's needs, aspirations and foreign policy decisions. They are provided with time to research the issues, and based on the country's foreign policy stances, are asked to plot strategy and resolve conflicts which appear on the UN agenda.

For example, in 2018 the theme for the Japanese MUN was '**End Hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**' and the theme for the 2018 conference in Ghana was "**Stepping towards Transformation**". The theme of the upcoming 2019 International MUN held in Bangkok, is "**FORGING UNITY: Integrating Diverse Intellects in International Sphere**". In each of these conferences' students are assigned countries and given topics that they will have to debate, keeping issues like diplomacy, terrorism, peace and the future of the nation in mind when they do.

When viewed from the surface, it seems like a great experience. The problem is that, it's pushing the youth to view things from a certain set perspective; a western one. The event is creating a situation where the students are allowing their thinking and ideas to be shaped by the West.

The goal of the simulation is to limit student's critical thinking and problem solving skills within a certain construct, it's a way of ensuring future generations of our citizens refer to United Nations and the Western framework when solving the problems that we are facing today. They are pushed to consider whether their stances will breach the victimized states sovereignty, whether they are acceptable according to the liberal system. The issue is that the Model United Nations is being used as a tool to push western culture and indoctrinate the youth with the idea that the Western system is superior.

The Model United Nations is an extremely competitive event, which the team members are trained for in after school classes. They are taught to argue the problems facing the citizens of the nations across the world are facing by considering concepts such as state intervention, humanitarian influence and diplomatic response using Western liberal definitions.

In issues like the Syrian Crisis, the students are told to consider how far they are able to aid the tyrant government, without impeaching on the concept of non-interference; would the USA be more willing to send military or economic aid? How far can the United Kingdom justifiably aid the citizens of Syria who are being killed in horrific ways? Will helping the

citizens be acceptable to the delegates own citizens? The point is that the students are taught to view a crisis as horrific as the one that is affecting Syria in a way that is acceptable to the nations of the world and does not go against the way that the United Nations would have reacted.

Education is being used to embed Western thoughts and culture into the youth, to ensure their dominance. This has been a technique that has been used for centuries. The Western colonialists used the education system as a way to spread their culture. Lord Macaulay said as much in a speech given in front of the British Parliament in 1835, *“I don’t think that we could ever conquer this country (India), unless we break the backbone of the nation, which is her spiritual and culture heritage and therefore I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation”*.

There is an argument put forward that suggests that in this post-colonialism era, the Western influence has become limited or has diminished entirely. Events like this, which are given so much credibility and tied to a student’s desire to succeed in this life, keep Western influence alive. As Lord Macaulay said, education is a way of spreading culture and embedding ideas in the youth. This belief still exists, all over the world, with states like France and Sweden, using the education as a way of molding the student’s identity, ensuring that the reference point for their actions is Western thought, not Islam.

The Model United Nations isn’t giving students a platform where they can become independent thinkers. It is using the education system to create a situation where they give the Western system superiority over Allah and Islam.

As Muslims, we make decisions based on what Islamic evidence. We study an issue and look at the Quran and Sunnah to understand what Allah has allowed us to do and act accordingly.

In the MUN, students are taught to use man-made law as their reference. This gives sovereignty to the people and thus is in complete contradiction to Islam. As such, the student’s perspective is skewed and entirely dominated by Western ideas.

In the example of Syria, as Muslims acting in accordance to Islam, we would not recognize the legitimacy of Bashar Al-Assad’s government, we would not even recognize the legitimacy of the United Nations or their attempts of solving the tyranny that the Syrian Muslims are facing. This is a basis of discussion that goes against the United Nations and the system it protects. As such, the Model United Nations would never allow it to take place.

﴿وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾

“And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And keep your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is stern in reprisal.” [Surah 59:7]

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