The problem of academic dependency: Latin America and the Malay world

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The structural context of Orientalism in the social sciences today is academic dependency. Academic dependency is a problem that exists at two levels. There is the structural level characterized by a certain division of labour in global social science which is maintained by policies and regulations enforced by bureaucrats and administrators. There is also the intellectual level of academic dependency. This has more to do with the realm of ideas. In this paper, I provide a general introduction to the problem of academic dependency, drawing upon some Latin American as well as Malay world works. Some remarks are also made on how we may make some progress in reducing academic dependency.

Orientalism in the social sciences

Much of the discussion on Orientalism and the related theme of Eurocentrism has focused on their traits or characteristics, usually understood in terms of a number of dichotomies such as "civilized-barbaric," "enlightened-backward," "rational-irrational" and truth-falsehood'. Understood in this way, Orientalism is seen to be largely a problem of the past, of the 19th and early 20th century. It is no longer seen to be a major problem afflicting the social sciences. This is particularly the case in the study of Southeast Asia, where there was significantly less attention paid to the problem at both the epistemological and empirical levels in the disciplines of history, anthropology, sociology and psychology. It is against this background that I wish to make three points:

1. The first concerns the distinction between Eurocentrism and Orientalism. Orientalism is a manifestation of a specifically European version of ethnocentrism in the various fields of study that are concerned with the "Orient." Eurocentrism is the larger phenomenon and is found among academics and non-academics alike. When it is translated into "scientific" theories and empirical works, Eurocentric perspectives take on the form of Orientalist orientations that inform academic work.
2. The critique of Orientalism is usually associated with the Middle East and with Islamic studies and, more specifically, with Edward Said. But the critique was launched before Said and outside of the Middle East. Said himself noted that what he had said on Orientalism "had been said before me by A. L. Tibawi, by Abdullah Laroui, by Anwar Abdel Malek, by Talal Asad, by S. H. Alatas, by Fanon and Césaire, by Pannikar, and Romila Thapar, all of whom had suffered the ravages of imperialism and colonialism, and who, in challenging the authority, provenance and institutions of the science that represented them to Europe, were also

understanding themselves as something more than what this science said they were."[1] What Said did not say, however, was that the critique had actually begun much earlier in Southeast Asia in the work of the Filipino thinker and reformer, José Rizal (1861-1896).

3. Eurocentrism as it is manifested in the social sciences and humanities in the form of Orientalism is no longer based on the abovementioned dichotomies. If we restrict our definition of Orientalism to the domination of such dichotomies in the disciplines and area studies, then we can say that Orientalism has been transcended. But there is still a way in which Orientalism remains significantly dominant. This has to do with the marginalisation of non-European theories and concepts in the development of the social sciences and humanities.

In this last sense, Orientalism is still very much alive. Consider a statement from a former president of the International Sociological Association:

> [T]he futile attempt to create "alternative" or "indigenous" sociologies is pernicious for the discipline. Science, including social science, does not know borders. It develops as a common pool of knowledge to which all national, continental, regional or even local sociologies are more than welcome to contribute. They may have unique research opportunities, unique research agendas, particular problem-emphases or orientations, but they do not require any alternative methodologies, or indigenous theories. Instead of arguing for the need for indigenous sociologies, my advice is: just do it. There is a lot of important sociological work done in the non-Western world. But it is usually based on standard methodologies and contributes to universal pool of theories. Nothing alternative or indigenous there, but simply good sociology.[2]

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1. Edward Said, "Orientalism reconsidered," *Cultural Critique* no, n. 1, p. 93, 1985 (p. 89-107).

2. Piotr Sztompka, "Ten theses on the status of Sociology in an unequal world," *Global Dialogue: Newsletter for the International Sociological Association*, v. 2, n. 2, 2011.

What Sztompka failed to understand here is that good sociology requires attention to concept formation and theory building, and that the two are neither innocent of material and ideal interests nor undetermined by cultural contexts. The general failure of the social sciences to understand this point has resulted in the continuation of the Orientalist orientation in the social sciences, in the form of the marginalisation of the non-Western.

I define the marginalisation of non-Western ideas as the neglect of non-Western traditions as sources of theory and concept formation. The reason for such marginalisation is the continuing dominance of Orientalism in the social sciences. Here I am referring to a specific aspect of Orientalism, that is, the failure to take seriously the voice of the "Oriental." Although Orientalism and the related phenomenon of Eurocentrism had been discussed by a number of scholars such as Anouar Abdel-Malek, A. L. Tibawi, Syed Hussein Alatas and Edward Said, these critiques have generally not made their way into teaching in the social sciences. Although the topic of Orientalism is often raised in social science and humanities courses, these are usually confined to area-studies courses or postcolonial topics. Basic or foundation courses in the disciplines rarely discuss concerns raised by the critique of Orientalism or Eurocentrism. Even if the Orientalist orientation is recognised, there is no real effort to introduce non-Western thinkers into the teaching syllabi of the various social-science disciplines.

Critiques of and responses to Orientalism

An early critique of Orientalism in fact originates from Southeast Asia. Rizal was probably the first systematic social thinker in Southeast Asia and also the first to raise the problem of Western constructions of non-Western histories and societies. Rizal lived during the formative period of sociology but theorised about the nature of society in ways not done by Western sociologists. He provides us with a different perspective on the colonial dimension of the emerging modernity of the 19th century.

In 1887 Rizal published his first novel, *Noli me tangere* (*Touch me not*). The novel was a reflection of exploitative conditions under Spanish colonial rule and its publication enraged the Spanish friars. It was a diagnosis of the problems of Filipino society and a reflection on the problems of exploitation in Filipino colonial society. His second novel, *El filibusterismo* (*The revolution*), published in 1891, examined the possibilities and consequences of revolution.

If we were to construct a sociological theory from Rizal's works, three broad aspects can be discerned in his writings. First, we have his theory of colonial society, a theory that explains the nature and conditions of colonial society. Second, there is Rizal's critique of colonial knowledge of the Philippines. Finally, there is his discourse on the meaning of and requirements for emancipation.

In Rizal's thought, the corrupt Spanish colonial government and its officials oppress and exploit the Filipinos, while blaming the backwardness of the Filipinos on their alleged laziness. But Rizal's project was to show that in fact the Fil-

ipinos were a relatively advanced society in pre-colonial times and that their backwardness was a product of colonialism. This required a reinterpretation of Filipino history.

During Rizal's time, there was little critique of the state of knowledge about the Philippines among Spanish colonial and Filipino scholars. Rizal, being well-acquainted with Orientalist scholarship in Europe, was aware of what would today be referred to as Orientalist constructions. This can be seen from his annotation and republication of Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (*Historical events of the Philippine Islands*) which first appeared in 1609. Morga, a Spaniard, served eight years in the Philippines as lieutenant governor general and captain general and was also a justice of the Supreme Court of Manila (Audiencia Real de Manila).[3]

Rizal republished this work with his own annotation in order to correct what he saw as false reports and slanderous statements to be found in most Spanish works on the Philippines, as well as to bring to light the pre-colonial past that was wiped out from the memory of Filipinos by colonization.[4] This includes the destruction of pre-Spanish records such as artefacts that would have thrown light on the nature of pre-colonial society.[5] Rizal found De Morga's work an apt choice as it was, according to Ocampo, the only civil

3. De Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas.* For the English version see De Morga, *Historical events of the Philippine Islands.*

4. Rizal, "To the Filipinos," p. vii.

5. Zaide, "Historiography in the Spanish period," p. 5.

history of the Philippines written during the Spanish colonial period, other works being mainly ecclesiastical histories.[6] The problem with ecclesiastical histories, apart from the falsifications and slander, was that they "abound in stories of devils, miracles, apparitions, etc., these forming the bulk of the voluminous histories of the Philippines."[7] For Rizal, therefore, existing histories of the Philippines were false and biased as well as unscientific and irrational. What Rizal's annotation accomplished was the following:

1. it provides examples of Filipino advances in agriculture and industry in pre-colonial times;
2. it provides the colonised's point of view of various issues;
3. it points out the cruelties perpetrated by the coloniser;
4. it furnishes instances of the hypocrisy of the colonisers, particularly the Catholic Church; and
5. it exposes the irrationalities of the Church's discourse on colonial topics.

Rizal noted that the "miseries of a people without freedom should not be imputed to the people but to their rulers."[8] Rizal's novels, political writings and letters provide examples such as the confiscations of lands, appropriation of labour of farmers, high taxes, forced labour without payment, and

6. Ocampo, "Rizal's Morga," p. 192.
7. De Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, p. 291, n. 4.
8. Rizal, "The truth for all," p. 31.

so on.[9] Colonial policy was exploitative despite the claims or intentions of the colonial government and the Catholic Church. In fact, Rizal was extremely critical of the "boasted ministers of God [the friars] and *propagators of light* (!) [who] have not sowed nor do they sow Christian moral, they have not taught religion, but rituals and superstitions."[10] This position required Rizal to critique colonial knowledge of the Filipinos. He went into history to address the colonial allegation regarding the supposed indolence of the Filipinos. This led to his understanding of the conditions for emancipation and the possibilities of revolution.

Bearing in mind the reinterpreted account of Filipino history, Rizal then undertakes a critique of the discourse on the lazy Filipino native that was perpetuated by the Spaniards. The theme of indolence in colonial scholarship is an important one that formed a vital part of the ideology of colonial capitalism. Rizal was probably the first to deal with it systematically. This concern was later taken up by Syed Hussein Alatas in his seminal work of 1977, *The myth of the lazy native*, which contains a chapter entitled "The indolence of the Filipinos," in honour of Rizal's essay, "The indolence of the Filipino." The basis of Rizal's sociology is his critique of the myth of the indolent Filipino. It is this critique and the rejection of the idea that the backwardness of Filipino society was due to the Filipinos themselves, but rather to the nature of colonial rule, that provides the proper background for understanding

9. Rizal, "Filipino farmers."

10. Rizal, "The truth for all," p. 38.

Rizal's criticisms of the clerical establishment and colonial administration. In Rizal's treatment of the myth of Filipino indolence in his famous essay, "The indolence of the Filipino," he defines indolence as "little love for work, lack of activity."[11] He then refers to indolence in two senses. First, there is indolence in the sense of the lack of activity that is caused by the warm tropical climate of the Philippines that "requires quit and rest for the individual, just as cold incites him to work and to action."[12] Rizal's argument is as follows:

> The fact is that in the tropical countries severe work is not a good thing as in cold countries, for there it is annihilation, it is death, it is destruction. Nature, as a just mother knowing this, has therefore made the land more fertile, more productive, as a compensation. An hour's work under that burning sun and in the midst of pernicious influences coming out of an active nature is equivalent to a day's work in a temperate climate; it is proper then that the land yield a hundredfold! Moreover, don't we see the active European who has gained strength during winter, who feels the fresh blood of spring boil in his veins, don't we see him abandon his work during the few days of his changeable summer, close his office, where the work after all is not hard—for many, consisting of talking and gesticulating in the shade beside a desk—run to watering-places, sit down at the cafes, stroll about, *etc*.? What wonder then that the inhabitant of tropical countries, worn out and with his blood thinned by the prolonged and excessive heat, is reduced to inaction?[13]

What Rizal is referring to here is the physiological reaction to the heat of a tropical climate which strictly speaking, as Syed Hussein Alatas noted, is not consistent with

11. Rizal, "The indolence of the Filipino," p. 111.
12. Rizal, "The indolence of the Filipino," p. 113.
13. Rizal, "The indolence of the Filipino," p. 113.

Rizal's own definition of indolence that is "little love for work." The adjustment of working habits to the tropical climate should not be understood as a result of laziness or little love for work.[14]

There is a second aspect of Rizal's concept of indolence that is more significant, sociologically speaking. This is indolence in the real sense of the term, that is, little love for work or the lack of motivation to work:

> The evil is not that a more or less latent indolence [in the first sense, that is, the lack of activity] exists, but that it is fostered and magnified. Among men, as well as among nations, there exist not only aptitudes but also tendencies toward good and evil. To foster the good ones and aid them, as well as correct the bad ones and repress them would be the duty of society or of governments, if less noble thoughts did not absorb their attention. The evil is that indolence in the Philippines is a magnified indolence, a snow-ball indolence, if we may be permitted the expression, an evil which increases in direct proportion to the square of the periods of time, an effect of misgovernment and backwardness, as we said, and not a cause of them.[15]

A similar point was made by the eminent Brazilian sociologist, Gilberto Freyre, in the context of Brazil:

> And when all this practically useless population of *caboclos* and light-skinned mulattoes, worth more as clinical material than they are as an economic force, is discovered in the state of economic wretchedness and non-productive inertia in which Miguel Pereira and Belisário Penna found them living—in such a case those who lament our lack of racial purity and the fact that Brazil is not a temperate climate at once see in this wretchedness and inertia the result of intercourse, forever damned, between white men and black women, between Portuguese

14. Alatas (Syed Hussein), *The myth of the lazy native*, p. 100.

15. Rizal, "The indolence of the Filipino," p. 114.

> males and Indian women. In other words, the inertia and indolence are a matter of race…
> All of which means little to this particular school of sociology, which is more alarmed by the stigmata of miscegenation than it is by those of syphilis, which is more concerned with the effects of climate than it is with social causes that are susceptible to control or rectification; nor does it take into account the influence exerted upon mestizo populations—above all, the free ones—by the scarcity of foodstuffs resulting from monoculture and a system of slave labor, it disregards likewise the chemical poverty of the traditional foods that these peoples, or rather all Brazilians, with a regional exception here and there, have for more than three centuries consumed; it overlooks the irregularity of food supply and the prevailing lack of hygiene in the conservation and distribution of such products.[16]

Rizal's important sociological contribution is his raising of the problem of indolence to begin with, as well as his treatment of the subject-matter, particularly his view that indolence is not a cause of the backwardness of Filipino society. Rather it was the backwardness and disorder of Filipino colonial society that caused indolence. For Rizal, indolence was a result of the social and historical experience of the Filipinos under Spanish rule. We may again take issue with Rizal as to whether this actually constitutes indolence as opposed to the reluctance to work under exploitative conditions. What is important, however, is Rizal's attempt to deal with the theme systematically. Rizal examined historical accounts by Europeans from centuries earlier which showed Filipinos to be industrious. This includes the writing of De Morga. Therefore, indolence must have social causes and these were to be found in the nature of colonial rule. Rizal would have agreed with

16. Freyre, *The masters and the slaves*, p. 48.

Freyre, who suggested that it was the masters rather than the slaves who were idle and lazy. He referred to the slave being "at the service of his idle master's economic interests and voluptuous pleasure."[17] Furthermore:

> It was not the "inferior race" that was the source of corruption, but the abuse of one race by another, an abuse that demanded a servile conformity on the part of the Negro to the appetites of the all-powerful lords of the land. Those appetites were stimulated by idleness, by a "wealth acquired without labor…"[18]

Defining academic dependency[19]

The idea of intellectual imperialism is an important starting point for the understanding of academic dependency. According to Alatas, intellectual imperialism is analogous to political and economic imperialism in that it refers to the "domination of one people by another in their world of thinking."[20] Intellectual imperialism was more direct in the colonial period, whereas today it has more to do with the control and influence the West exerts over the flow of social-scientific knowledge rather than its ownership and

17. Freyre, *The masters and the slaves*, p. 329.

18. Freyre, *The masters and the slaves*, p. 329.

19. My interest in this topic is due in large part to the lifelong concerns of my late father, Syed Hussein Alatas (1928-2007), with the role of intellectuals in developing societies. On this topic he wrote a number of works that developed themes such as the captive mind and intellectual imperialism. See Alatas, "The captive mind and creative development"; "The captive mind in development studies,"; "Academic imperialism"; and "Intellectual imperialism: definition, traits, and problems."

20. Alatas (Syed Hussein), "Intellectual imperialism," p. 24.

control of academic institutions. Indeed, this form of hegemony was

> not imposed by the West through colonial domination, but accepted willingly with confident enthusiasm by scholars and planners of the former colonial territories and even in the few countries that remained independent during that period.[21]

Intellectual imperialism is the context within which academic dependency exists. Academic-dependency theory theorizes the global state of the social sciences. Academic dependency is defined as a condition in which the knowledge production of certain social-science communities is conditioned by the development and growth of knowledge of other scholarly communities to which the former is subjected. The relations of interdependence between two or more scientific communities, and between these and global transactions in knowledge, assume the form of dependency when some scientific communities (those located in the knowledge powers) can expand according to certain criteria of development and progress, while other scientific communities (such as those in the developing societies) can only do this as a reflection of that expansion, which generally has negative effects on their development according to the same criteria.

This definition of academic dependency parallels that of economic dependency in the classic form in which it was stated by Theotonio dos Santos:

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21. Alatas (Syed Hussein), "The autonomous, the universal and the future of Sociology," p. 7-8.

> By dependence we mean a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which the former is subjected. The relation of interdependence between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and be self-sustaining, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of this expansion, which can have either a positive or a negative effect on their immediate development.[22]

The psychological dimension to this dependency, conceptualized by Syed Hussein Alatas as the captive mind,[23] is such that the academically dependent scholar is more a passive recipient of research agenda, theories and methods from the knowledge powers.[24] According to Garreau and Chekki, it is no coincidence that the great economic powers are also the great social-science powers,[25] although this is only partially true as some economic powers are actually marginal as producers of social-science knowledge, Japan being an interesting example.

In previous work I had listed five dimensions of academic dependency. These are (a) dependence on ideas; (b) dependence on the media of ideas; (c) dependence on the technology of education; (d) dependence on aid for re-

22. Dos Santos, "The structure of dependence," p. 231.

23. Alatas (Syed Hussein), "The captive mind and creative development"; (1969); "The captive mind in development studies;" "The captive mind and creative development (1974)."

24. Alatas (Syed Farid), "Academic dependency and the global division of labour," p. 603.

25. Garreau, "The multinational version of Social Science," p. 64, 81, 89; Chekki, *american sociological hegemony*.

search and teaching; (e) dependence on investment in education; and (f) dependence of scholars in developing societies on demand in the knowledge powers for their skills.[26] I would like to add a sixth dimension, that is, dependence on recognition. I shall have more to say about this later.

A crucial feature of academic dependency is the global knowledge division of labour which is founded on a threefold division as follows: (a) the division between theoretical and empirical intellectual labour; (b) the division between other-country and own-country studies; and (c) the division between comparative and single case studies. Examples of these have been given elsewhere.[27] There have not been many attempts to delineate the structure of academic dependency, the exceptions being the works of Altbach[28] and Garreau.[29] But, during the last twenty or thirty years there are new aspects of the problem that require our attention.

In the sections that follow, I discuss one of the six dimensions of academic dependency listed above, that is, the dependence on ideas.

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26. Alatas (Syed Farid), "Academic dependency and the global division of labour," p. 604.

27. Alatas (Syed Farid), "Academic dependency and the global division of labour," p. 607.

28. Altbach, "Literary colonialism" and "Servitude of the mind?"

29. Garreau, "The multinational version of Social Science"; "Another type of third world dependency"; and *The political economy of the Social Sciences*,

Dependence on ideas: the case of Islamic economics

Academic dependency at the level of ideas is the general condition of knowledge in the South. Although it is fashionable to expose Eurocentric biases in the social sciences, the emergence of autonomous or alternative theoretical traditions has been very slow, and the dependence on theories and concepts generated in the European and North American context continues. This problem of dependence is linked to the ubiquity of imitation, a condition conceptualised by Syed Hussein Alatas as mental captivity. The captive mind is an "uncritical and imitative mind dominated by an external source, whose thinking is deflected from an independent perspective."[30] The external source is Western social science and humanities and the uncritical imitation influences all the constituents of scientific activity such as problem-selection, conceptualization, analysis, generalization, description, explanation and interpretation.[31]

Among the characteristics of the captive mind are the inability to be creative and raise original problems, the inability to devise original analytical methods, and alienation from the main issues of indigenous society. The captive mind is trained almost entirely in the Western sciences, reads the works of Western authors and is taught predominantly by Western teachers, whether in the West itself or through their

30. Alatas (Syed Hussein), "The captive mind and creative development," p. 692.

31. Alatas (Syed Hussein), "The captive mind and development studies," p. 11.

works available in local centres of education. Mental captivity is also found in the suggestion of solutions and policies. Furthermore, it reveals itself at the level of theoretical as well as empirical work.

Alatas suggested that the mode of thinking of colonised peoples paralleled political and economic imperialism. Hence the expression academic imperialism,[32] connoting the context within which the captive mind appears.

Academic dependency at the level of ideas should be seen in terms of the domination of social-science teaching and research by the captive mind, the consequence of which is the persistence of Eurocentrism as an outlook and orientation in social-science teaching and research, as well as in planning for economic, social and cultural development. A case in point is the discipline of Islamic economics. The discipline of Islamic economics provides an example not only of the dependence on ideas but also the function of such dependence.

The notion of Islamic economics did not arise from within the classical tradition in Islamic thought. In the classical Islamic tradition, there were discussions and works on economic institutions and practices in the Muslim world, but the notion of an Islamic science of economics and a specifically Islamic economy did not exist.[33] Islamic economics, therefore, is a modern creation. It emerged as a result of

32. Alatas (Syed Hussein), "Academic imperialism."

33. Abdullah, "Al-Mudarabah"; Masters, *The origins of Western economic dominance*; Udovitch, "At the origins of the Western commenda," *Partnership and profit in Medieval Islam*, and "Commercial techniques…"

dissatisfaction with capitalist and socialist models and theories of development in the 1950s.[34] It is mainly in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia that Islamic economic research is being carried out, although there has also been a great deal of interest in this field in Egypt, India, Iran, Malaysia and Sudan. Interest in Islamic economics predates the rise of the modern Islamic states of Iran, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. Islamic economics rejects the ideology of "catching up" with the West and is committed to discerning the nature and ethos of economic development from an Islamic point of view. The need is, therefore, to identify the Islamic ideal of economic development.[35]

The starting point of Islamic economics is based on a rejection of various ethnocentric misconceptions to be found in modernization theory with regard to Muslim society, such as its alleged fatalism and the lack of the achievement motive.[36] Muslim scholars have been tireless in pointing out that the prerequisites of development are to be found in Islam and that development within an Islamic framework is based on the constellation of values that are found in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* (the traditions of the Prophet of Islam).[37] Western development theory and policy are based

34. Abdul Rauf, *A Muslim's reflections on democratic capitalism*; As-Sadr, *Iqtisaduna*.

35. Ahmad, "Economic development in an Islamic framework," p. 171.

36. Ahmad, "Economic development in an Islamic framework," p. 173.

37. Alhabshi, "Peranan Akhlak dalam Pengurusan Ekonomi dan Kewangan" ("The role of morality in economic and financial management").

on the peculiar characteristics, problems and value constellations that are found in Western society.

But the Islamic critique of development studies is not directed solely at modernization theory but generally at the corpus of development thought encompassing the entire spectrum of perspectives from the left to the right that is seen to be located within the discourse of modernism. Modernism, whether in its liberal or leftist moments, calls upon Islam to promote development by recasting Islam in a modern light, by tempering its fundamentalist tendencies, by accepting Western notions of economic and political development, in short, by recasting itself in a Western mold.[38] Islam, on the other hand, has a different outlook on life and the nature of social change, and implies a unique set of policy options for the solution of the problems of development. Nevertheless, Islamic economics suffers from a number of problems, some of which have been dealt with by others.[39] The following remarks on Islamic economics, however, are centred around the distinction between ethical and empirical forms of theory.

Ethical theories express preference or distaste about reality in accordance with certain standards of evaluation. In addition to this, they specify the ideal goal toward which changes should be made. Empirical theories, on the other

38. Tibi, *The crisis of modern Islam*; Nasr, "Religious modernism."

39. Kuran, "Behavioral norms"; "The economic system in contemporary islamic thought"; "On the notion of economic justice"; Fazlur Rahman, "Riba and interest"; "Islam and the problem of economic justice."

hand, are generalizations about observable reality and require the process of abstraction and conceptualization.

Islamic economics presents an ideal of development that is based on an Islamic philosophy of life. Arising from this alternative vision of development, various policy options have been suggested, such as the introduction of interest-free banking and *zakah* (poor tax).[40] What is presented as Islamic economics are in fact ethical theories of production, distribution, price, and so on. When Islamic economists discuss the traditional categories of economics such as income, consumption, government expenditure, investment and savings, they do so in terms of ethical statements and not in terms of analyses and empirical theory. Contrary to what is claimed,[41] it would be difficult to refer to an Islamic science of economics, although we do have the scientific study of economies in Muslim countries, as well as the study of Muslim economic institutions and commercial techniques.

When Islamic economists are applying empirical theory, what is presented as Islamic economics turns out not to be an alternative to modernist discourse as far as empirical theory is concerned. The foci and method that have been selected

40. AÍmad, "Interest-free banking in Pakistan"; Ariff, *Money and banking in Islam*; Faridi, "Zakat and fiscal policy"; Iqbal & Mirakhor, "Islamic Banking"; Karsten, "Islam and financial intermediation"; Khan, "Islamic interest-free banking"; Khan & Mirakhor, *Theoretical studies in Islamic banking*; and "Islamic banking"; Uzair, "Some conceptual and practical aspects of interest-free banking."

41. Nasr, "Religious modernism," p. 194-5.

by Muslim economists for economic analysis are essentially that of Keynesian and neo-classical economics. The foci are the traditional questions that come under the purview of theories of price, production, distribution, trade cycle, growth, and welfare economics with Islamic themes and topics involved such as *zakah*, interest-free banking, and profit-sharing. The problems associated with this are the following:

First of all, the techniques of analysis that have been selected, that is, the building-up of abstract models of the economic system, have not been translated by Islamic economists into empirical work. For example, works on interest tend to construct models of how an interest-free economy would work. There is no empirical work on existing economic systems and the nature, functions and effects of interest in these systems.

Secondly, these attempts at Islamic economics have sought to ground the discourse in a theory of wealth and distribution in very much the same manner that Western economic science does, as a glance at some of their works will reveal.[42] When they are engaged in the sort of discourse that one could understand as constituting empirical theory, they are not doing so from a specifically Islamic scientific approach. The point here is that attempts to create a "faithful" economic sci-

42. Kahf, "Savings and investment function"; Fahim Khan, "A macro consumption function"; Mohsin S. Khan, "Islamic interest-free banking"; Abdul Mannan, "Allocative efficiency"; Siddiqui & Zaman, "Investment and income distribution pattern," and "Investment and income distribution pattern"; Zarqa, "Stability in an interest-free islamic economy."

ence have not yielded policy options for the problems that are being addressed because what "Islamic economics" amounts to is neo-classical economics dressed and made up in Islamic terminology.

In the 1930s, 40s and 50s, economists in Latin America, Europe, and the United States began to pay attention to underdeveloped areas. The dominant school used to explain development in advanced capitalist countries was neo-classical economics, according to which the operation of free-market forces can maximise aggregate economic welfare, and the growth of output under full employment will continue as long as there is a positive propensity to save and invest in excess of what is needed to maintain capital equipment. The subsequent rise of development economics was in part a response to the inapplicability of neo-classical economics.[43] There are a number of approaches to the study of the economies in underdeveloped areas, including the structuralist school, neo-Marxism, dependency theory and the new institutional economics.

Islamic economics is very much embedded in the tradition of neo-classical economics in terms of its near-exclusive concern with technical factors such as growth, interest, tax, profits, and so on. A host of issues relating to political economy—such as uneven development, unequal exchange, bureaucratic capitalism, corruption, and the role of the state—that have been addressed by structuralist, neo-Marxist, dependency, and new institutional economic the-

43. Hunt, *Economic theories of development*, ch. 3.

orists, are not dealt with at the theoretical and empirical levels by Islamic economists. This is not to suggest that Islamic economists should uncritically adopt these other perspectives to replace neo-classical economics. The successful indigenization of development economics and the claim to scientific status depend on the degree to which indigenization efforts retain what is of utility in neo-classical and other theories of development.

The main problem with this state of affairs is that under the guise of "Islamic economics" the policies generated in industrialised capitalist centres are implemented in the Muslim world and are legitimated, thereby undermining the very project that Islamic economics is committed to. In attempting to ground itself in a theory of rational man and a hypothetical-deductive methodology it has merely substituted Islamic terms for neo-classical ones, retaining the latter's assumptions, procedures and modes of analysis. As such, it has failed to engage in the analysis and critique of a highly unequal world economic order in which the gaps are ever widening. That this supposedly anti-Western economics was coopted and made to serve those very trends that it outwardly opposes must be considered.

Thirdly, not very different from neo-classical economics, it extends a technical-economic rationality over a wide range of problems which presupposes viewing different ends as comparable outcomes, which in turn entails the elimination of cultural hindrances to the comparability of outcomes. In this sense, neo-classical economics, Islamic economics, Marxist as well as other alternative theories of development

are similar in that they are based on narrow assumptions about human action.

It can be said, therefore, that Islamic economics functions ideologically to support world financial capital while claiming to offer an alternative to mainstream economics. More importantly, it interacts and reinforces an attitude that can be described as a modernist Muslim ethic that some have referred to as Islamic Protestantism. This refers to a sense of piety in economic action in the context of the loss of traditional culture and the buying into a crude materialistic outlook. Examples frequently cited are the development projects around the *haram* in Mecca.

Many historical sites in Mecca have been demolished to such an extent that much of the prophetic legacy is disappearing. Irfan al-Alawi, director of the UK-based Islamic Heritage Research Foundation, has said: "The authorities are trying to destroy anything in Mecca that is associated with the prophet's life." The homes of the Prophet's wife, grandson and one of his companions have been demolished. The house of Prophet Muhammad's wife, Khadijah, was replaced with a block of 1,400 public lavatories. Other historical sites have been replaced with skyscraper hotels.[44] To complete the picture we can add that this modernist ethic has an affinity with Salafist and other modernist ideologies in the Muslim world in that both are indifferent to or reject tradition.

44. "As the Hajj begins, the destruction of Mecca's heritage continues," *The Guardian*, 14 October 2013.

Some have been tempted to equate certain trends of development in the Muslim world with the attitude described as the Protestant ethic that is said to have characterised European capitalist development some centuries earlier. References have been made to Islamic Protestantism or Protestant Islam. There are problems in drawing parallels between development in the Muslim world today with what took place in Europe centuries ago.

For Weber, modern capitalism was the result of the melding of capitalist enterprise and ascetic Protestantism, above all, the Calvinistic version.[45] Economic activity as the pursuit of profit is seen as a spiritual end. The spirit of modern capitalism was influenced directly by Calvinism, in which worldly asceticism was a means of knowing one's salvation. The effect of this Protestant ethic was psychological—it freed the acquisition of wealth from the inhibitions of traditionalistic ethics.[46] It also drove its adherents to hard work, discipline and frugality since the attainment of wealth as a fruit of labour in a calling was a sign of God's blessing. The practical result of all this was an ascetic compulsion to work hard, to save, and to avoid spontaneous enjoyment. This attitude towards life is what Weber calls the spirit of capitalism. There are two important theoretical points to make about the effect of the Protestant Ethic on the development of the spirit of capitalism:

45. Weber, *The protestant ethic*, p. 128.

46. Weber, *The protestant ethic*, p. 171.

i. There was an elective affinity or congeniality between Calvinism and the modern capitalist attitudes or ethics. There is a connection between the irrational value commitments of Calvinism with rational, calculative economic conduct. The one seems irrational from the other's point of view but they come together in capitalism;

ii. The fact of congeniality is related to the idea that Calvinists did not consciously seek to create a capitalist system. Capitalism was an unintended consequence of the Protestant ethic. In other words, we ought not to take a mechanical approach to values. We cannot simply invoke certain values and expect them to have the desired effects once people accept these values.

The 16th century Protestant remained traditionalistic in terms of his outlook on family, marriage, culture and aesthetics. By the 19th century, however, the Protestant element had receded into the background. As Weber said:

> The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life and began to dominate world morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism…[47]

Salafist economics can be said to embody an extreme development of this attitude in which culture and aesthetics is excessively subordinated to the technical and economic requirements of development, even at the expense

47. Weber, *The protestant ethic*, p. 180.

of the destruction of religious heritage. However, this must be distinguished from the so-called "Islamic Puritans" or "Islamic Calvinists" for whom the interconnectedness between religion, heritage and culture, on the one hand, and economy, on the other, remains strong.[48] The kind of political and business elite I am referring to as embodying the crass consumerist culture which is driven by Salafist economics is more akin to those who wish to tear down old neighbourhoods and forested areas and build shopping malls, luxury apartments and hotels. The Gezi Park protests of the summer of 2013 in Istanbul refer to a situation that reflects the capitalist attitude that lost its original ethic. In Istanbul, some historical parts of the city had been flattened and replaced with malls and apartments, the result of the lure of global investment opportunities.

Conclusion: the prospects of academic dependency reversal

The logical consequence of the critique of Eurocentrism in the social sciences is to urge and agitate for a kind of intellectual movement that would eventually result in an autonomous tradition of the social sciences. This tradition would generate and apply universal social-science thinking in an autonomous fashion to specific problems in a way that is not imitative and uncritical conceptually and meth-

48. For more on this phenomenon, see ESI, "Islamic Calvinists"; Yavuz, Toward an Islamic Enlightenment; and Uygur, "Islamic puritanism." For critical views on the idea of Islamic Protestantism see Alatas, "Contemporary Muslim revival"; and Browers & Kurzman, eds., *An Islamic reformation*?

odologically.[49] It would result in what I have called alternative discourses in the social sciences. Alternative discourses are defined as:

> those which are informed by local/regional historical experiences and cultural practices in the same way that the Western social sciences are. Being alternative means a turn to philosophies, epistemologies, histories, and the arts, other than those of the Western tradition. These are all to be considered as potential sources of social-science theories and concepts, which would decrease academic dependence on the world social-science powers.[50]

The process of generating alternative discourses is identical to that of the universalization and internationalization of the social sciences. In my own work I have been concentrating on Ibn Khaldun[51] and José Rizal. I have spent more time discussing Rizal above as I believe that Latin Americans should also develop an interest in Rizal.

What are the prospects for academic dependency reversal? I am pessimistic as far as the structure of academic dependency is concerned. However, as scholars there is much we can do at the individual and intellectual level in our research and teaching to spread awareness about the problem of academic dependency and go beyond merely talking about the problem to actually practice alternative discourses. Indeed, many examples of alternative discourses can be cited from various countries in Asia and Africa. I have documented some of these in my *Alterna-*

49. Alatas (Syed Hussein), "Intellectual imperialism," p. 9.

50. Alatas (Syed Farid), *Alternative discourses*, p. 82-3.

51. Alatas (Syed Farid), *Ibn Khaldun*, and *Applying Ibn Khaldun*.

tive discourses in Asian social science (2006).[52] Of India, Syed Hussein Alatas said:

> A tradition can be expected to emerge. By tradition is not meant the mere presence of disparate studies of local or regional subjects by indigenous scholars. Apart from the traits we have earlier cited, there is one significant overriding trait of a tradition, that is, the continuous discussion of a set of major problems and ideas in the course of long duration, decades or centuries, reflecting the cumulative development of knowledge concerning particular subjects. An example is the discussion on the French Revolution or periodization in European history. (Alatas, 2006, p. 15.)

But, whether such a tradition can emerge in much of the South will depend on our ability to make changes in policy, change the reward systems in institutions of learning, reduce corruption and inefficiency, and remove national and local politics from the institutions of learning.

Do our academic institutions have intellectual leadership of sufficient integrity, resolve and bravery to combat imitative and culturally slavish ideals, or are they led by people who are content to be captive minds that are motivated by the current structures of reward and punishment? I think the latter is the case.

52. See also my "A definição e os tipos de discursos alternativos," *Estudos Históricos*, v. 23, n. 46, p. 225-45, Rio de Janeiro, 2010.

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