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# ISLAM AND MODERNIZATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Modernity refers to the end result of the process of modernization. It is the condition that a society attains after having gone through specific patterns of social and economic change which began in Western Europe in the eighteenth century and which has been spreading throughout the rest of the world. The process of modernization refers to the introduction of modern scientific knowledge to increasing aspects of human life, first of all in Western civilization, then to non-Western societies, by different means and groups, with the final aim of achieving a better life as defined by the society concerned (Alatas, S.H. 1972, p. 22). The traits of modernization include the rationalization of economic and political life, rapid urbanization, industrialization, differentiation in the social structure, and greater popular involvement in public affairs. If we understand these traits as constituting the modern condition, then modernism would refer to the ideology, attitude or mentality that subordinates the traditional to the modern.

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to development studies as a modernist discourse. This is followed by a concise overview of the Islamic ideal of development which is juxtaposed to the economic realities of Muslim societies. It then proceeds to theoretically assess attempts in Muslim countries such as Malaysia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia to create an alternative discourse on development that draws on Islamic law and an Islamic philosophical anthropology. The next sections move on to a consideration of the role of the

state in development and the questions of democracy and civil society. The concluding section makes some remarks on the problematic state of discourse in the Muslim world on modernization.

## DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AS MODERNIST DISCOURSE

The vast majority of Muslims around the world live in economically underdeveloped countries, with high rates of inflation, low rates of economic growth, low life expectancy, and a high level of adult illiteracy. There are also severe problems in the health and nutritional status of Muslims worldwide, which have serious implications for the quality of human resources. Muslim countries also lag behind industrialized nations in educational attainment, especially where access to tertiary education is concerned (Hassan 1992).

Such is the relative economic state of affairs of the Muslim world. It is also a fair description of the Muslim world in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, when economists and social scientists in the West first began to draw their attention to the economic problems of the Third World. It was also during this period that development theory started to be uncritically adopted in a wholesale manner throughout the Third World. The type of scholarship along these lines later came to be known by reference to the phenomenon of the captive mind, as conceptualized by Syed Hussein Alatas (1972; 1974). Mental captivity connotes a mode of thinking that is characterized by the uncritical imitation of external ideas and techniques. There is a lack of capacity to be creative and raise original problems, to forge original methods. There is also a general alienation from the main issues of the local society, and the unquestioning imitation of the Occident (Alatas 1972, 1974; Dube 1982, pp. 497–500; Sardar 1987, p. 56).

The structural context of mental captivity can be understood in terms of the idea of academic dependency. The structure of academic dependency links social scientists in advanced industrialized nations to their counterparts in the Third World. The nature of these links is such that scholars in the Third World are dependent on colleagues and contacts in the industrialized West and, to some extent, Japan for research funds and opportunities, gaining recognition and other types of rewards from such relationships (Dube 1982, p. 499).<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the problems of mental captivity and academic dependency is the state of development theory itself (Booth 1985; Edwards 1989; Manzo 1991; Sheth 1987; Smith 1985; Vandergeest and Buttel 1988; Wiarda 1989). It was primarily the disciplines of sociology, economics, and political science

that dealt with the modernization of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. Modernization theory can be understood in terms of its structural and psychological components.

The structural version of modernization theory is founded on an evolutionary vision of social, political, and economic development. It derives its inspiration from classical theory, that is, the belief in progress and increasing complexities in the social, economic, and political spheres (Portes 1976, p. 55). It was perhaps Rostow who gave modernization theory its best known form (Rostow 1960), suggesting that there are five stages which all societies would go through in order to industrialize. Despite the fact that these five stages were derived from the experience of industrialized nations and are, therefore, questionable in this light, Rostow's stages of economic growth were applied to under-developed countries as well.

The psychological version of modernization theory views Western society as possessing those psychological traits, such as a high need for achievement and economic rationality, that are prerequisites for economic success (Hagen 1962; McClelland 1967; Inkeles and Smith 1974). By now it is well understood that the trajectory of development experienced by advanced industrialized nations in both its structural or psychological terms, is not necessarily an experience that is available to under-developed countries. According to Marxist and neo-Marxist theories under-developed countries would never be able to catch up with developed countries because of the historical evolution of a highly unequal capitalist system of relations between rich and poor countries. Unequal power relationships between advanced industrialized and under-developed countries do not enable the latter to experience independent and sustainable development.

To a great extent, under-development is attributed to the policies of industrialized countries and their extensions in the form of elite groups in the periphery. World-system theory sees the world as constituting a single division of labour, this division of labour being hierarchical. These approaches are correct to criticize modernization theory for its lack of attention to the structure of the world economy and its hierarchical relationships. Nevertheless, their inadequacies are not to be denied, particularly those they share with modernization theory. Both modernization and Marxist-inspired theories can be said to fall within the orbit of a modernist discourse which is informed by the principles of nineteenth-century liberal philosophy and which confines its understanding of development to Westernization (Alatas 1972, ch. 2), democratization, economic growth, and other technical aspects of economic development (Manzo 1991, p. 6).

## DEVELOPMENT IN THE MUSLIM WORLD: BETWEEN IDEALS AND REALITY

The Islamic ideal of development can be adequately captured by referring to the Arabic term, *iqtisad*, which is conventionally translated as economy. The term *iqtisad* is derived from the root, *qasada*, which together with the derivation, *iqtasada*, convey the notion of economizing and being moderate, frugal, thrifty and provident. However, this is only one of the meanings. The verb *iqtasada* also connotes adopting a middle course or a mediatory position. We could understand *iqtisad*, therefore, not simply as economy in the technical sense of the term, but as economy in the context of thrift, frugality and providence and, above all, moderation. Indeed, the Qur'an stresses moderation in economic affairs: Make not thy hand tied to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute (17:29).

Here Muslims are exhorted to be neither niggardly nor extravagant. Such moderation in economic as well as other behaviour defines Muslims as constituting a median community (*ummatan wasatan*, Qur'an, 2:143). The median path is, therefore, the right path (*al-sirat al-mustaqim*), that is, the path that leads to God (Qur'an, 11:56). The ideal of the economy in Islam, therefore, is not divorced from the notion of human beings as moral creatures with obligations to God as well as to each other.

At the philosophical level, the foundations of development from an Islamic point of view can be understood in terms of four concepts (Ahmad 1980, pp. 178–79; Aidit 1990, pp. 22–23).<sup>2</sup> *Tauhid* or the principle of the unity of God establishes the nature of the relationship between God and man as well as that between men. *Rububiyyah* refers to the belief that it is God who determines the sustenance and nourishment of man and it is He who will guide believers to success. It follows that successful development is a result of man's work as well as the workings of the divine order. *Khilafah* is the concept of man as God's vicegerent on earth. This defines man as a trustee of God's resources on earth. *Tazkiyah* refers to the growth and purification of man in terms of his relationship with God, his fellow men, and with the natural environment. The putting into practice of these principles results in *falah*, that is, prosperity in this world as well as the hereafter (Ahmad 1980, p. 179). The Islamic concept of development is, therefore, *tazkiyah* or purification combined with growth (Ahmad 1980, p. 179). This concept encompasses the spiritual, moral, and material aspects of development and the ultimate aim is to maximise welfare both in this life

and in the hereafter. At the more practical level, the organization and functioning of the economy, apart from being based on the above philosophy of development, are also guided by three economic principles (Sadr 1991). In the principle of double ownership neither private nor public or state ownership are fundamental principles of the economy. Both forms of ownership are acceptable in Islam, but only in their respective areas of the economy. In the principle of limited economic freedom economic activities must take place within the boundaries of a both self-imposed and socially-enforced normative order, which is, of course, defined by Islam. Finally, the principle of social justice refers to the Islamic theory of distribution of produced as well as natural wealth, and is based on the notion of mutual responsibility and equity.

Arising from this philosophy of development are a number of policy goals (Ahmad 1980, pp. 180–84):

- (i) Human resource development should be concentrated on the development of the right attitudes, aspirations, character, personality, physical and moral well-being, and efficiency (Afzal-ur-Rahman 1980*a*, pp. 189–99), and would call for the Islamization of education (Al-Attas 1980).
- (ii) Production and consumption would be restricted to those goods and services which are deemed as useful for man in light of the value constellations of Islam. This refers to the adoption of a middle way between crass materialism and other-worldly asceticism (Afzal-ur-Rahman 1980*b*, p. 11)
- (iii) Efforts to improve the quality of life include employment creation, the institutionalization of *zakah* (poor tax), and the equitable distribution of income and wealth through tax policies, charity, inheritance laws, the prohibition of usury, speculation, and so on (Afzal-ur-Rahman 1980*b*, pp. 55–105, 268–72).
- (iv) Development should be along the lines of regional and sectoral equality to achieve balanced development for the Muslim world (Sardar 1987, pp. 107–12).
- (v) Technology must be indigenized to suite the conditions of Muslim society and must, therefore, be in harmony with the goals and aspirations of the community without, at the same time, causing serious social disruption (Sardar 1987, p. 146).
- (vi) Economic dependency on the non-Muslim world must be reduced and integration within the Muslim world must be brought about (Alatas 1987*b*).

## THE MUSLIM RESPONSE TO MODERNIZATION: THE CASE OF ISLAMIC ECONOMICS

The Islamic ideal of development, as described above, has far from been realized in the empirical world. Muslim responses to the problems of modernization have taken the form of the articulation of broad ideological orientations such as modernism, neo-modernism and traditionalism. But some Muslims have attempted to respond to the problems of modernization and under-development by developing a new discipline, that of Islamic economics. This is in line with other calls within specific disciplines to revamp theoretical perspectives and create visions of a new Islamic order along social, economic and political lines. Hence, the notions of Islamic sociology, Islamic political science and Islamic economics. Here, the focus is on the economic dimension.

Due to both the problems associated with modernist discourse as well as the state of development in Muslim countries, there were demands for alternative discourses to both modernization and Marxist theories (Anisur Rahman 1991). The perceived crisis in development studies had resulted in efforts in the Muslim world to ground development theory in Islamic law and philosophical anthropology, resulting in what is referred to as Islamic economics (Siddiqi 1989; Abu Saud 1989). The question of whether Islamic social science in general is possible on philosophical and epistemological grounds has been dealt with elsewhere (Fazlur Rahman 1988; Alatas 1987*a*, 1993*a*, 1995). In what follows, I attempt to layout in broad outline the fundamental premises of what is presented as Islamic economics (Afzal-ur-Rahman 1980*a*, 1980*b*; Choudhury 1983; Gilani 1980; Khan 1989; Philipp 1990; Pryor 1985; as-Sadr 1982–84, 1984; Siddiqi 1981; Taleqani 1983).

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 (Abdullah 1989; Masters 1988; Udovitch 1962, 1970*a*, 1970*b*). Islamic economics, therefore, is a modern creation. It emerged as a result of dissatisfaction with capitalist and socialist models and theories of development in the 1950s (Abdul Rauf 1984; Nasr 1987; As-Sadr 1984; Shari'ati 1980). 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 (Alatas 1995, p. 92; 1997, p. 70). The need is, therefore, to identify the Islamic ideal of economic development (Ahmad 1980, p. 171).

Islamic economics rejects 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 (Ahmad 1980, p. 173). They maintain that the prerequisites of development are to be found in Islam but 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) (Alhabshi 1990). Western development theory and policy, on the other hand, are based on the peculiar characteristics, problems, and value constellations that are found in Western society.

The Islamic economic critique of development studies is not directed only at modernization theory but more generally at the entire body of modernist development thought encompassing perspectives from the left to the right. The modernist call is to promote development by recasting Islam in a modern light, by tempering its traditionalist tendencies, by accepting Western notions of economic and political development — in short, by recasting itself in a Western mold (Tibi 1988; Nasr 1993). 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. Muslim scholars have attempted to articulate an alternative concept of development, refusing to evaluate the backwardness and progress of Muslim societies in terms of Western theoretical perspectives and values. In this way it is counter-modernist in tone and can be added to the list of those other critiques of developmentalism such as liberation theology and feminist ecology (Manzo 1991). Nevertheless, Islamic economics suffers from a number of problems, some of which have been dealt with by others (Kuran 1983, 1986, 1989; Fazlur Rahman 1964, 1974). The following remarks on Islamic economics, however, are centred on 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. In contrast, empirical theories are generalizations about observable reality and require the process of abstraction and conceptualization (Alatas 1995, p. 93; 1997, p. 72).<sup>3</sup>

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) (Ahmad 1987; Ariff 1982; Faridi 1980; Iqbal and Mirakhor 1987; Karsten 1982; Khan 1986; Khan and Mirakhor 1987, 1990; Sadr 1982; Uzair 1980). 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 often claimed, 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 doing 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 by Muslim economists for economic analysis is essentially that of neo-classical, Keynesian or monetarist 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. There are at least three problems associated with this:

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, in a manner that could be regarded in theoretical and methodological terms as specifically Islamic.

Secondly, these attempts at Islamic economics have sought to ground the discourse in a theory of wealth and distribution in very much the manner that Western economic science does, as a glance at some of their works will reveal (Kahf 1982; Khan 1984; Khan 1986; Abdul Mannan 1982; Siddiqui and Zaman 1989*a*, 1989*b*; Zarqa 1983). When it is engaged in the sort of discourse that one could understand as constituting empirical theory, it is not doing so from a specifically Islamic economic approach, and “despite their repeated references to *tawheed*, *akran* and other fundamental Islamic concepts, Islamic economics is little more than one huge attempt to cast Islamic institutions and dictates, like *zakah* and prohibition of interest into Western economic mould” (Sardar 1985, pp. 42–43). The point here is that attempts to create a “faithful” economic science have not yielded policy options for the



problems that are being addressed because what "Islamic economics" amounts to is neo-classical, Keynesian or monetarist economics dressed and made up in Islamic terminology. Islamic economics is very much embedded in the tradition of British and American economics in terms of its near exclusive concern with technical factors such as growth, interest, tax, profits, and so on. According to Sardar (1985, p. 43), over eighty per cent of the Islamic economic literature is on monetarism.

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 theorists, 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 or monetarist 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 industrialized capitalist centers 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 co-opted 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.

## THE STATE AND DEVELOPMENT IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

The problems that beset Islamic economics in terms of its theoretical perspectives, methodology and practical results are not disconnected from the

political contexts of Muslim societies. As noted above, Islamic economics has generally neglected those areas of interest that have become the trademarks of neo-Marxism, dependency and world-systems theories. Islamic economics, therefore, has been rather innocent of political economy, which is ironic considering the ominous role that the state plays in the Muslim world. Indeed, the neglect of the state in Islamic economics is in stark contrast to the all-encompassing presence of the state in Muslim societies.

Political economy, that is, the study of the interactions of the state and economy, is virtually non-existent among Islamic development scholars. Whenever the subject of the state is broached, it is done so in terms of ethical statements and not in terms of analyses and empirical theory. While it is necessary to understand the political ideals of Islam, it is equally important to examine the realities. Statements to the effect that the Islamic state is an instrument of Allah and a symbol of divine power on earth (Nyang 1976) are true and generally acceptable to Muslims. The problem lies elsewhere, that is, in the nature and functioning of contemporary states in Muslim countries. For this reason, the study of economic development in the Muslim world must lie within the field of political economy. Let us consider what some of the concerns of such a political economy might be.

The state in the Muslim as well as the rest of the world is an important determinant of what men and women wish to and can achieve. This is nonetheless true in the economic arena. While many are uninterested in the activities of the state, nobody remains unaffected by it. State power is unceasingly wielded in the name of economic development and there are various roles that the state plays in this area, which include the provision of infrastructure, the regulation of the economy, the transfer of income, research and development, the formation of state-owned enterprises, and the advancement of the private interests of state officials and politicians.

The provision of social and economic infrastructure such as electricity, water, sanitation, roads, and communications help to facilitate economic activities and is a basic function of any state. But beyond the provisioning of infrastructure, the state can play a more involved role in the process of economic development through the regulation of the economy by means of various monetary and fiscal policies as well as a host of other development policies that involve exchange rate and wage controls, industrial licensing, investment incentives, and immigration quotas. The state may step in to redress the problem of income inequality through the instrumentality of transfer payments which include subsidies, grants, and welfare payments. The state may also fund basic scientific and technological research. However, the economies of Muslim countries have yet to benefit from the fruits of

research and development as less than four per cent of all world research and development expenditures originate in the Muslim world. For various reasons, states in the Muslim world, as elsewhere, have found it necessary to be directly involved in the process of capital accumulation through the formation of state-owned enterprises which are public corporations owned and operated by the government. Clearly, the state has a positive role to play in the process of economic development. These various roles of the state outlined above are clearly vital. But what is the nature of the state in Muslim and other Third World societies that may function as a brake on development?

The political economy of most Muslim countries is such that the state intervenes directly in the relations of production making surplus-extraction and capital accumulation a major political issue. Rather than the market or social classes it is the state that is the main driving force in the political economy of these countries. This is due to the autonomy of the state from the dominant classes. But what is important is the manner in which this autonomy is manifested. The notion of the autonomy of the state from dominant class interests implies that the state has interests of its own.

In Malaysia and Indonesia we have the *ersatz* form of capitalism, due to the peculiar nature of state involvement in development (Kunio 1988). *Ersatz* capitalism is capitalism that is based on state patronage, and the investment of transnational corporations and their technology. Muslim countries outside of Southeast Asia are not even blessed with this less than dynamic form of capitalism for a variety of geopolitical reasons. The focus on *ersatz* capitalism leads to a consideration of patronage and related phenomena such as rent-seeking and corruption. Capitalists are dependent on the state for assistance in order to be successful. Kleptocrats (Andreski 1968) or corruptors extend various forms of favours to private capitalists, that encompass incentives, licensing, protectionism, low interest loans from state banks, concessions, and joint-ventures. The relationship between kleptocrat and capitalist is one of patron and client. This is a special relation between a politically powerful patron and client who needs his/her protection due to the inadequacies of formal economic institutions. Therefore, the role that state officials play in advancing their private material interests takes its toll on economic development. Here we are referring to the activities of corrupt state officials. Their presence in various Muslim countries is sufficiently felt and has generated some research (Alatas, Syed Hussein 1990; Gillespie and Okruhlik 1988; Kameir and Kursany 1985; Waterbury 1976).

The kleptocratic state is one that is dominated by state officials who subordinate the interests of the public to their private interests. But the kleptocratic state refers to more than just a state in which corruption is

present.<sup>4</sup> It refers to a state in which the dominant means of capital accumulation are via corruption. Much of the debate in Asia on democracy and authoritarianism tends to overlook the fact that corruption is what Syed Hussein Alatas calls transsystemic (1990). In other words, it is found in all political and economic systems, whether feudal or capitalist, democratic or authoritarian. Nevertheless, to the extent that democracies demand greater accountability and allow for a greater role of the public in the affairs of government, the push for democracy and the rise of civil society in the Muslim world are important developments. But what are the prospects of democracy in the Muslim world?

### **CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIZATION: IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIA**

A distinctive feature of democracies is citizenship. While all types of political systems have rulers and the ruled, it is only democracies that have citizens. The concept of citizenship dates back to classical Greece but acquired its modern meaning after the French and American revolutions. A citizen is one who has civil, political and social rights. Therefore, a society has citizens only to the extent that it is democratic. A central feature of a democracy is the prominence of civil society, the intermediate sphere of society between the private realm of the family and the political relations of the state. Civil society consists of a variety of organizations and individuals engaged in various activities as interest and pressure groups seeking to influence public policy as well as the free-floating intellectuals that Karl Mannheim spoke of.

If we understand the role of intellectuals in terms of agitation for change and consciousness raising of the masses, the question, as far as Indonesia and Malaysia are concerned, becomes whether the intellectuals and other civil society actors here can play such a role effectively. Whatever the structural constraints and objective conditions might be, there is always potential for the opening up of democratic space, as the last three years have shown. So, as I see it, a central issue is the role that intellectuals can play in this process of expanding democratic space.

Here, it is useful to approach the question in terms of Mannheim's concept of utopia. In a paper entitled "Religion and Utopian Thinking Among the Muslims of Southeast Asia", Shaharuddin Maaruf (2000/01) applies this concept to the study of the social and political thought of Muslims in the region. Utopian thinking refers to that which "is incapable of correctly diagnosing an existing condition of society" because those doing the

thinking “are not at all concerned with what really exists; rather, in their thinking they already seek to change the situation that exists. Their thought is never a diagnosis of the situation; it can only be used as a direction for action” (Mannheim 1976, p. 36). Individuals or groups guided by utopian thinking are so keen on the transformation or destruction of the existing situation that they only see those aspects of that situation that tend to negate it. Utopias are, therefore, different from ideologies that focus on those elements of a given condition that tend to preserve it.

Utopian thinking “lends a millenarian, populist, eschatological and orthodox character to the religious life of many Muslims in Southeast Asia” and “underlies the demands for the establishment of the Islamic states and the implementation of Islamic laws” (Shaharuddin Maaruf 2000/01, p. 2). Shaharuddin lists the following as traits of utopian thinking as they apply to Muslims in Southeast Asia: (1) the rejection and denial of the existing order, (2) the posing of a radical alternative to the existing order, (3) distortion of certain aspects of current realities which challenge their ideas, (4) the role of ideas in mobilization rather than for the purpose of diagnosis, and (5) its populist rather than intellectual nature.

An example of utopian thought that Shaharuddin gives is the totality of the claim that Islam is a complete way of life, which thereby denies the necessity of debate with rival ideas such as capitalism, socialism, democracy, and humanism, and ensures “the integrity of their own system of thought...” (Shaharuddin Maaruf 2000/01, p. 5).

This being the case, what can we say of the role of Muslim revivalist and orthodox *ulama*. If we accept the idea that their thinking is dominated by utopias of one variety or another, what will be their impact on civil society? We can think of at least the following:

- 1) The lack of a common agenda for political and social transformation among the Muslim intelligentsia;
- 2) The lack of cohesion in civil society, in that there is little engagement or co-operation with the so-called secular elements of civil society owing to their lack of Islamicity;
- 3) The lack of engagement with modern knowledge and ideas, especially those pertaining to capitalism as an economic system, democracy, liberalism, and others;
- 4) Little diagnosis of the existing situation.

What this spells is an under-developed Muslim social thought in theory and practice, and an intellectually impoverished Muslim civil society, and

therefore the inability to engage in those activities that contribute to the opening up of democratic space. This translates into little change as far as the regimes of Malaysia and Indonesia today are concerned.

Finally, the point needs to be made about Islam in relation to the idea of civil society. Many suggest that the Islamic notion of *mujtama' madani* (*masyarakat madani*) in Malay/ Indonesian corresponds to the idea of civil society as it is understood in the social sciences. This is not the case. Those calling for a more vibrant civil society seek greater political space and participation. Those calling for the establishment of *mujtama' madani* have in mind something quite different. Syed Muhammad al-Naquib Al-Attas (1976) has pointed out that the concept of *masyarakat madani* does not refer to civil society but rather to a religion-based society founded upon the ethical and moral system of Islam. The terms *madani*, *madinah* (city), and *din* (usually translated as religion) are all derived from the same root, d-y-n. According to al-Attas, the fact that the name of Yathrib was changed to al-Madinah means that it was there that the real *din* was established (Al-Attas 1976, ch. 3). The term *madaniyah* refers to a religious community. In Islam, civilized life is life in a *masyarakat madani*, and it is the *madinah* where a *madani*-type existence is established, informed by the ethical system and moral order of Islam.

Rather than use civil society and *masyarakat madani* interchangeably, we should have a correct understanding of their different meanings and realize that the struggle for the democracy of Islam is in fact a struggle for both civil society and *masyarakat madani*, that is, for democratic space as well as an Islamic moral order. To acknowledge that democracy is a term and institution that originated in the West is not to say there is no notion of democracy in Islam or that democracy cannot be Islamized, as Syed Hussein Alatas pointed out in an early work, *The Democracy of Islam*. According to Alatas, two fundamental features of the democracy of Islam are concerned with the unity of the human race and the freedom of belief. Mutual benefit and understanding are to be derived from differences among people. Because these differences are natural, it follows that people should be free in expressing their different ways of life (Alatas, Syed Hussein 1956, p. 37). We may conclude, therefore, that the public realm of freedom and action sought is part of the notion of *masyarakat madani*.

## CONCLUSION

This brief assessment of the response of Islamic economists to the general issue of modernization yields a number of conclusions about this discourse that can be itemized as follows:

1. While economists have generally maintained the rigorous separation between positive and normative economics, in the Muslim world, however, concerted attempts have been made to relate moral conduct to economic institutions and practices. This is a result of dissatisfaction with both modernization and Marxist-inspired theories that are understood by Islamic economists as being located within the orbit of ideological orientations that are at odds with Islam. Demands for an alternative theory and practice of development to both modernization and Marxist theories had led to the rise of Islamic economics.

But while Islamic economic thinking presents an ideal of development that is based on an Islamic philosophy of life, it is beset by a number of problems which make it difficult to be considered as an alternative to modernist discourse as far as empirical theory is concerned. As such, so-called Islamic economics cannot be considered as presenting an indigenous and alternative development theory. As an ethical theory of development Islam offers an alternative to modernization, dependency and neo-Marxist theories. However, as an empirical theory, so-called Islamic economic theory remains within the fold of Western modernist discourse in terms of its theoretical concerns and methodology.

2. As a result, no conceptual vocabulary within the Islamic tradition developed to deal with modernization at a philosophical and social scientific level. While many Muslim scholars are against a number of labels that have become popular in the media as well as "scientific" discourse on Islam, they generally failed to construct alternative terms that would have arrived from new conceptualization. An example is the term Islam itself. There has been much talk of different "brands" or "versions" or "strains" of Islam in the media of late. Muslims are against such labelling as it implies that there are many Islams when in fact there is only one. How then may we discuss the problem of variation within Islam? Is there a pristine, pure Islam with the others being pretenders or aberrations? The only way out is to have the correct conceptual vocabulary that would enable social scientists to talk about Islam in a way that captures its unity as well as its diversity without falling into the trap of the labels mentioned above. For example, a distinction could be made between Islam at the abstract level (*din*) and concrete translations of this in the sense of different kinds of social groupings such as *tariqah* (ways of life), *ahl* (people, relations) and so on. The variations among Muslims can be captured by such terms. From the point of view of Islam, it would not be erroneous to speak of a backward *tariqah* or *ahl*.

This would imply not only an Islamic ideal of development but also serious investigations into the practice of Islamic economic institutions in

history. While there are such studies (for example, Udovitch 1962, 1970a, 1970b; Abdullah 1989; Orman 1997, 1998), proponents of Islamic economics have generally not taken these into account in their theoretical work.

3. Another problem concerns that of legalistic thinking among many Muslim scholars and community leaders. Islam is not conceived of as a way of life but rather a set of rules and regulations. Therefore, other aspects of life that are encompassed by the process of modernization such as the rational outlook on life, order, system, rights and good governance are not covered by what has been labelled as Islamic discourses on development, although these issues are tied to Islamic concepts such as *'ilm* (knowledge), *'amal* (practice), *'adl* (justice), *akhlaq* (character), *kamal* (perfection), and others.

4. I have already referred to the problem of the lack of concepts from within the Islamic tradition that may serve as a basis for speaking about the development of Muslim societies. A related problem is the relative neglect of the social sciences when it comes to the provision of rational justifications for rules and laws in Islam. I am referring to the provision of social scientific bases for rules and laws in Islam. A case in point would be Ibn Khaldun's sociological justification for not following the Prophetic tradition to the effect that the leadership of the *ummah* must always be in the hands of the *Quraysh*. Ibn Khaldun's argument was that this ruling only applied to times when the group feeling (*'asabiyyah*) of the *Quraysh* was sufficiently strong so as to command the allegiance of other groups (Ibn Khaldun 1967, pp. 396f). Social scientific reasoning would be a great asset as far as the rethinking of *hudud* and other laws are concerned.

5. Yet another problem has to do with corrupt leadership, a weak civil society and the lack of will to implement good laws and to build sound executive, legislative and legal institutions.

6. That any theory of development must take into account the role of the state as well as civil society is obvious. Islamic economics, however, tends to shun a political economy approach. This is despite the fact that there is a tradition akin to the political economy approach in Islam. An exemplar for this approach would be Ibn Khaldun.

7. There is also the problem of worldview in which Muslims of the modern period tend not to take this world seriously and not regard as obligatory (*wajib*) the study and mastery of reality in all of its dimensions.

A more creative approach among Muslim economists would result neither in the uncritical adoption Western models and theories of development with the customary terminological adornments, nor in the wholesale rejection of the Western contribution to economic thought, but in a system that is cognizant of the realities of economic life in the Muslim world and that is not



innocent of political economy. Thus far, calls for a *masyarakat madani* have not been made in this context and there appears to be a disjuncture between pro-democracy proponents on the one hand and those seeking an Islamic order on the other.

## Notes

- 1 Various aspects of academic dependency have been discussed elsewhere. See Ake (1979); Altbach (1977); Garreau 1988; Said (1993); Weeks (1990); Alatas (2000).
- 2 The following account draws from previous sketches of the Islamic view of development (Alatas 1995, p. 93; Alatas 1997a, pp. 71–72).
- 3 The discussion here is founded on the distinction between ethical and empirical theories, draws from Alatas (1995, pp. 93–95; 1997a, pp. 72–74).
- 4 On the need for a theory of the kleptocratic state see Alatas (1993b, pp. 382–83; 1997b). I initially raised the question of the relationship between Islam and civil society in the context of the concepts of ideology and utopia in Alatas (2001). For an exposition of this see Al-Attas (1976). In this work Al-Attas elaborates on the conceptual connections between *din* and related terms such as *madīnah*, *tamaddun* and others. Personal communication with Syed Muhammad al-Naquib Al-Attas, 20 May 2000.

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