

Some mechanisms can help us surmount such biases. Knowing that bias is inevitable is the first step toward overcoming it. Our theoretical effort to discover bias must include the whole theoretical structure of Western philosophy. A more radical, complex, and comprehensive outlook should be based on the assumption that no single historical or cultural course exists. We should be open to different world civilizations and benefit from their cultural and intellectual traditions that could deepen our understanding of humankind, society, and nature. While eliminating bias we should form an alternative paradigm that benefits from all previous human experience, not excluding the Western.

A proposed alternative paradigm and scientific approach would stem from our indigenous Islamic heritage; work toward a comprehensive theory; start from the knowledge that humans occupy a central position in the universe; include a non-materialist category; operate in a generative (non-cumulative) manner; and allow for incomplete certainty and continuous *ijtihad*.

## Chapter Two

### **Bias in Western Schools of Thought: Our Heritage as the Starting Point for Development**

*Adel Hussein*

The Arab and Muslim world has entered a phase of critical revision of our traditional concepts and positions on the intellectual and theoretical levels. The social sciences long relied on stock theories that prevented our scholars from formulating their own critical observations through practice. In the epistemological realm, the predominance of Enlightenment notions meant “secularism” prevailed in social affairs. The Western approach aimed to merge social and natural sciences, and we in the East adopted the same approach. Yet for the social sciences to acquire academic legitimacy and recognition as being objective, universal, reliable, and scientific, they must be founded on solid knowledge based in all human societies and their respective histories.

In the limited (Western) scope of social sciences, theoretical models largely focused on conflict between labor and capital and secular concepts and ideas of materialistic progress. In fact, the problems and challenges faced by Western civilization in the contemporary era can

no longer find solutions on the social and economic levels of Western civilization, a phenomenon that has yet to be fully studied and analyzed. We face different questions and challenges from those in the Western experience and require the development of schools of different thought and methodologies.

Throughout the last two centuries the standard thesis has been that classical science is originally European, emanating directly from Greek philosophy and science. Economic discourse justifies a superior power over the world, which then becomes economically dependent on an international division of labor. All forms of social organization and political management outside the West are considered inferior and incapable of renewal and development. This resulting dogma justifies imperialism and Western hegemony in its worst forms.

Independent practitioners of social sciences in our Eastern societies have grown increasingly cautious about importing the intellectual dependency in Western social theories. This critical view has been reinforced by the detection of bias and prejudice of Western studies regarding our history and heritage. Many empirical studies demonstrate the real value of our achievements and have identified some specific characteristics of the course of our own history. An independent theoretical practice that relies on empirical results and is supported by a general critical approach is preferable.

Western schools of thought confirmed that human beings are by nature worldly (secular) and place physical self-interest above any other consideration. This viewpoint emphasizes technological and industrial development as a way to gratify this materialist self-interest. In this process, we do not reject some Western theoretical constructs but must sort out what is Western, what is universal, and what is consistent with our own value doctrine. Many such concepts, for example, relate to secularism and might not be consistent in our society and economic system. Our society's essential influence and ultimate point of reference come mainly from Islam. Formulation of the future under the influence of Islam and its cultural heritage is the responsibility of independent theorization or contemporary fiqh and ijihad.

For developing countries, self-confidence in dealing with dominant nations is the most important value regarding independent economic and cultural development. Serious adoption and implementation of this aim will mean a radical revolution in all aspects of life. Development policies will have to be structured to cope with this process.

An overall strategy of gratifying basic needs with the ultimate goal of independence can likely integrate the following six principles: the relationship with the outside world; self-reliance; the role of the state in supporting independence; strategy in maximizing economic surplus; distribution; and development as a complex process. The social side of development relies on mobilization of the masses. Our main means of realizing this independent development is through a concept of social action that seeks to mobilize diverse and competing energies within a specific society-nation via appropriate institutions.

Great revolutions are usually fueled by a solid doctrine, and Islam, in particular, embodies such a doctrine. The independence model implies an unrelenting confrontation with major powers on the cultural, political, and economic fronts, but the model instead embodies a minor struggle against interests that run radically counter to our own.

## Chapter Three

### **Theories of Political Development: A Case of Biased Discourse in the Political Sciences**

*Nasr M. Arif*

Any academic work is expressive of the culture of the society in which its author's mind has been shaped and informed. Therefore, full detachment cannot be achieved. Epistemological inputs are bound by time and place. Self-centricity is central to bias and to evaluating the Other according to the criteria of the perceiving self. Theories of political development that are considered the essence of the concept of development encompass all relevant theories in the domains of social, economic, and cultural development. The following analysis will address the methodological and philosophical bases of most theories of development in the social sciences. The concept of political development and its roots can be used to see if bias has rendered these theories partial and exclusive or if these theories are universal and applicable to most human societies despite their differences.

Science is characterized by the study of specific human or natural phenomena regardless of their details or geographical locations. According to Western thought, science is an intellectual activity that deals with the actual and objective state of things. A close examination