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Subduing Globalization

The Challenge of the Indigenization Movement

MEHRZAD BOROUJERDI

Twenty-five years ago, Stanley Hoffmann (1977) described the discipline of International Relations (IR) as a peculiarly "American social science." He maintained that, traditionally, analysis of the international system had been equated with the study of U.S. foreign policy—not surprising given that scholars residing in the United States do much of the theorizing in IR. Ironically, however, IR scholars continue to view their discipline as a "global" social science within which theories and research methodologies can supposedly travel from one culture and location to another with little difficulty. Of late, postmodernist IR theorists have questioned the notion of IR as a "global" social science, insisting that all scholarship is radically situated within its own cultural and temporal frameworks. Postmodernists claim that there is no neutral vantage point or absolute standard of scientific objectivity from which scholars can observe human behavior.

Meanwhile, another emerging body of literature, not necessarily always in tune with postmodernism, has also challenged IR in particular and Euro-American-centered social sciences in general. I will refer to the authors of this literature as members of the "indigenization" movement. The proponents of indigenization argue that Eurocentric premises have, alas, colonized the social sciences and, in turn, helped to secure and perpetuate a Western-dominated world order. They argue that Third-World intellectuals have to be wary of the "Western," disguised as "universal," theories and research methodologies in the social sciences. Proponents of the indigenization movement have attacked such cherished assumptions and axiomatic principles of Western philosophy as objective reason, humanism, the idea of progress, culture-transcending knowledge,

and the radical dualism between religion and science. Instead they maintain that social scientists in the Third World should generate and use concepts and theories rooted in indigenous intellectual traditions, historical experiences, and cultural practices in order to explain in a more comprehensive fashion the world-views, sociohistorical contexts, and scholarship of their people.[1] Indigenization theorists maintain that social science is universal insofar as concepts and theories developed in one civilization are available to scholars in another civilization. However, they caution that we should not confuse universalization with generalization,[2] and that we should aspire to make social sciences more transcultural.

The brazen nature of their attacks on Western scholarship and Euro-American scholars' intellectual arrogance has not endeared the advocates of indigenization to Western academic circles. On the contrary, some Western opponents of knowledge indigenization have branded this movement as apologetic, chauvinist, essentialist, ideological, anti-modern, particularistic, and xenophobic. By contrast, I will argue that the project of knowledge indigenization should not be readily dismissed as obscurantism, atavism, militant particularism, or an invidious and compulsive tendency to fetishize and celebrate difference. Instead, I maintain that this is a largely genuine, albeit conflict-ridden, project by partisans of erstwhile civilizations seeking to end their condition of intellectual docility while negotiating with a compulsive and restless modernity. By looking at the ideological efficacy and travails of the indigenization project, I shall demonstrate how Third-World intellectuals wish to form their own discursive repertoire, not wanting to be a prolegomenon to Western philosophy. As a case study, I will briefly survey the "Islamization of knowledge" as one such enterprise.

1. For example, the ideas of the fourteenth-century Arab historical sociologist Ibn Khaldun on the rise and fall of states, Amin's "tributary mode of production," "the rentier-state" argument, and the Asiatic mode of production.

2. We should remember Raymond Williams's idea of "keywords" (words whose meanings change over time and differ across cultures). For example, some of the keywords in the liberal lexicon (that is, "liberalism," "individualism," "equality," "democracy," and "civilization") can be contested. Democracy may be a universal concept but its specific applicability often is not. You can have democracy in a Lockean form (checks and balance), as in Britain and the United States, or in a Rousseauian form (organic, centralized, unified rule), as in France or Latin America.

INDIGENIZATION: A HISTORICAL BATTLE CRY FOR THIRD-WORLD SCHOLARS

The calls of Third-World thinkers for knowledge indigenization came on the heels of demands for political independence and cultural authenticity during the post-Second World War era. A host of movements—for example, Rastafaris and Négritude—and activist intellectuals—such as Samir Amin, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, Albert Memmi, and Léopold Sédar Senghore—argued that "intellectual decolonization" must accompany political liberation if the Third World is not to remain a nodal point on the Western imperialist map. The rise of "Third Worldism," starting in the mid-1950s, strengthened the calls for cultural authenticity because mimicry and submission were considered fraudulent and counterfeit modes of existence. Hence, the "decolonization" of Egyptian, Ghanaian, Indian, Indonesian, and numerous other national histories and historiographies began in earnest with much fanfare and vociferous rhetoric.

In 1972, the Malaysian scholar Syed Hussein Alatas lamented the "captive mind" of Third-World social scientists, defining this as "the product of higher institutions of learning, either at home or abroad, whose way of thinking is dominated by Western thought in an imitative and uncritical manner" (Alatas 1972, 691). He contended that Asians needed to create their own autonomous social science tradition. A few years later one of Alatas's counterparts in India, C. T. Kurien, wrote: "We are neither Asian nor scientists. Our knowledge about the problems of our own societies is largely bookish, and the books that we read are mainly from the West . . . We are beggars, all of us—we sneak under many an academic table to gather the crumbs under them. And we mix these bits and make a hash which we pretend to relish, but which we can hardly digest. We have hardly made a contribution to academic cuisine, and have thought it impossible to prepare a dish of our own, with a recipe we have made, using ingredients we have" (Atal 1981, 191).

Such developments as the precipitous decline of Third-Worldist solidarity, the end of the Cold War, and swift globalization of capitalism and modernity have moderated the rhetoric of the authenticity and indigenization movements. Yet these have not fallen into the dustbin of history. Quite the contrary: at the same time that all cultures have experienced the impact of globalization—the expansion of financial markets, the growing importance of information technology, and so forth—the calls for knowledge indigenization and cultural authenticity have intensified. While the global commodification of culture tends to homogenize the particulars, a robust counter-movement of local identity politics is concurrently rising. As Third-World societies try to engage, finesse, or incorporate Western modernity into their everyday life practices, they simultaneously alter that modernity by drawing upon their own reservoir of "cultural capital" and "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977).[3] Because the prerequisite for the realization of the ethos of Western modernity is the loss of non-Western peoples' former ontological identity, globalization and local resistance(s) to the process often go hand in hand.

KNOWLEDGE INDIGENIZATION: THE PROJECT'S UTILITY

The movement to indigenize knowledge raises the following six questions: Is indigenization of knowledge a pernicious intellectual project? How legitimate are the non-Western charges against the precepts, and ethos, of the meta-narrative of Euro-American-centered social sciences? Should criticisms of Eurocentric ideologies lead to incrimination of Enlightenment principles or actual realization of some of them? How have non-Western intellectuals historicized and delimited Western thought? Have Third-World intellectuals formulated judicious "indigenous" epistemological principles in such fields as anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology? Finally, what are some of the obstacles to knowledge indigenization in the Third World?

According to Syed Farid Alatas, "The call to indigenization does not simply suggest approaching specifically indigenous problems in a social scientific manner with a view to developing suitable concepts and methods, and modifying what has been developed in Western settings. It goes beyond this and refers to the idea that social scientific theories, concepts, and methodologies can be derived from the histories and cultures of the various non-Western civilizations" (1993, 309).

The calls for indigenization gained particular momentum during the 1970s when numerous African, Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern intellectuals argued that Western culture and social sciences are not the only relevant and valid models. These intellectuals sought to narrate their respective societies' historical trajectories by developing a new set of conceptual vocabulary rooted in their own local conditions, needs, practices, and problems—yet obviously mediated

3. For example, the neo-Confucian cultural movement of Asia stresses the ethics of the bureaucratic public sphere by extracting from the cherished ideals of the family. This movement considers the individual an instrument of the group rather than an autonomous agent.

through their exposure to the West. As dependency theorists and the advocates of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) attacked the assumptions and arguments of modernization theory in the 1970s,[4] Third-World intellectuals called for an end to the sociocultural subjugation of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Years of Western intellectual imperialism had produced a predominantly borrowed consciousness that rendered most social sciences esoteric and irrelevant in much of the Third World. Consequently, social scientists could play at best an ancillary role in Third-World societies; typically, however, the masses regarded social scientists as alienated from local realities.

The advocates of knowledge indigenization insisted that they did not see themselves through the Western gaze or mirror that had reduced them to mere echoes of American, British, and French scholarship under the false pretense of scientific universality. Intellectuals in the Third World had to focus on the historical and cultural specificities of their societies to offer theories and research methods reflective of their own goals, world-views, and sociocultural experience. Responding to those skeptics who denounced this "self awareness" as too subjective, the proponents of knowledge indigenization questioned the totalizing master narrative of Western modernity, which is based on an East-West binary construction, and the disguised partiality of Western science. Advocates of knowledge indigenization claim that they have the right to criticize the ideals, norms, and prescriptions of Western social scientists who are the children of the Enlightenment. Third-World intellectuals maintain that while "selective" and "constructive" integration of Western sciences is perfectly legitimate, one should not lose sight of the inherent ethnocentrism of Western academicians and their analysis.[5] Furthermore, these intellectuals underscore the intersubjective meanings between Western and non-Western settings that must not be minimized if social sciences are to become truly intercultural. Finally, they assert that like charity, social scientific research should begin at home. When local social scientists analyze their own realities, they expand both the substance and methodologies of their disciplines, offering alternative perspectives on human behavior.

While knowledge indigenization is fraught with epistemological difficulties and marked by vitriolic rhetoric, I cannot dismiss this project as a homogeneously rhetorical plot by Third-World demagogues. Central to the indigenization project are qualms about such pillars of Western intellectual tradition as objective reality, universal rationality, and value-free science. Ironically, Western thinkers have raised similar objections, inspiring—albeit perhaps inadvertently—their counterparts in the Third World. For example, Peter Winch (1958) argues that various societies have different standards of "rationality." Roy Mottahedeh (1985, 202) describes reason as "one of the notorious weasel words of all languages; it appears to designate a sanitized, universal area of discourse and yet in practice turns out to be as culturally determined and idiosyncratic [to say nothing of its gendered nature] as most of our ideas." As for the neutrality of science, the collective works of Jürgen Habermas and the Frankfurt School theorists demonstrate that all knowledge is rooted in some underlying interest or ideology. In addition, Michel Foucault and postmodernist scholars substantiate the claim that social sciences are not power-free, value-free, or interest-free (Kleden 1986, 37).

The proponents of indigenization remind scholars: (a) that in science, they need to distinguish the universal from the particular; (b) that while the aim and method of science may be uniform throughout the world, the problem of science in relation to society is not; (c) that what constitutes science at a given period is determined by the prevailing system of values; and (d) that the radical dualisms of body and soul, fact and value, reason and faith so central to Western ontology and epistemology are not universally shared.[6] In other words, the protestation of positivists notwithstanding, indigenization theorists object to the scientism and epistemological/methodological imperialism of Western sciences. For example, a group of cross-cultural psychologists from the United States, New Zealand, Turkey, and India have maintained that instead of "thinking globally, acting locally," American psychology is largely "thinking locally, acting globally." The strong commitment of Western psychology to foundationalism, empiricism, and the model of the self-contained individual often leads to the negation or ignorance of the "local intelligibilities" of non-Westerners. Significantly, these psychologists conclude: "We see particular dangers inhering in the traditional attempt to establish culture free knowledge of human functioning regardless of the particular methods chosen for study. Not only do such attempts obscure or denigrate myriad traditions, in favour of the culture which 'calls the truth.' But, such inquiry does not appear to have significant promise in terms of the enormous practical problems confronting the world—both in local and international

4. For three classic examples of dependency theory, see Baran (1957), Frank (1969), and Amin (1976).

5. For example, during the 1970s, estimates put the number of American political scientists at 75 percent of the total worldwide. Similarly, Susan Strange (1971, 223) maintains that in 1971, nine-tenths of world's living economists were Americans.

6. The cosmopolitanism of Diderot—who believed that without the unity of physics, ethics, and poetry humans face a new "barbarianism"—exemplifies a Western idea not universally shared.

terms. Theories and methods with a strong grounding in or applicability to practical contexts are much to be sought" (Gergen et al. n.d.).

Contrary to the prophecy of modernization theorists, who contended that a priori identities (ethnic, religious, linguistic, and so forth) would dissipate with exposure to "the West," these identities have endured. Western social scientists must recognize and read the self-reflexive narratives of scholars seeking to build between cultures. Ignoring these narratives in fact reduces the explanatory power of Western social science. Worse yet, to underestimate non-Western scholars as they become increasingly self-assured and assertive in articulating their own historical narratives runs the risk of turning the principles of "intercultural interchange" and the "global village" into mere slogans. Humanity has overcome the condition of "historical pseudomorphosis" (Spengler 1939)—that situation in which an older alien culture's extensive hegemony hampers a young indigenous culture from developing self-consciousness. As Fred Dallmayr (1996) contends, humanity is in dire need of a new mode of cross-cultural encounter based on a "deconstructive dialogue or a hermeneutics of difference which respects otherness beyond assimilation."

Finally, a number of indigenization theorists pose the following questions: to what extent should reason and its corresponding values and goals be considered globally uniform and universal considering the absence of ideological syncretism or ecumenical brotherhood in the world today?[7] Even if reason were perceived as universal, to what extent should scholars embrace the scientific analysis that flows from reason without compromising cultural authenticity and specificity? Western thinkers such as Rousseau, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Gramsci, and Kierkegaard would not favor the loss of authenticity, for they championed in one way or another the "be yourself" motto of authenticity. As Daniel J. Boorstin, former Librarian of Congress, inquires, "Can such an idea [the idea of progress], that grew from distinctively Western memory, experience, and imagination, take root and flourish elsewhere? Can it be credible in parts of the world that do not share the Judeo-Christian belief in a Creator God, a God of Novelty, and in a Creator Man, Apostle of Novelty? Can the idea of progress survive in societies that lack the melodramatic Western triumphs of science and technology? Can people be expected to share the intellectual product when they had not shared the process from which it came? . . . Would we not, perhaps, profit more from the diversity of human experience if we encouraged all people to make their own metaphor?" (1993, 60).

7. As I have argued elsewhere (1997), Francis Fukuyama's argument (1992), that the growing appeal of economic and political liberalism in the Third World is tantamount to the "end of history," is short-sighted.

RISKS AND LIMITATIONS OF INDIGENIZATION: THE ISLAMIC EXPERIMENT

The process of retrieving heritage while at the same time reckoning with modernity has rendered the knowledge indigenization project at once heroic and disjunctive. Yet hauteur toward the indigenization project should not necessarily translate into a blind acceptance of its fetishism of difference, cult of authenticity, or rancorous rhetoric. The efforts of certain indigenization theorists to short-circuit modernity through recourse to historical amnesia, exaltation of plebeian values, and invidious polarizing is ill-advised. Nor is "nativism"—the doctrine that calls for the resurgence, reinstatement, or continuance of native or indigenous cultural customs, beliefs, and values, especially in opposition to acculturation—a viable alternative to a modernity that has been simultaneously prodigious and perfidious.[8] In other words, countering the counterfeit "universalism" of the West cannot any longer be accomplished by embracing an arbitrary and intolerant "particularism."

For example, the Islamization of knowledge presently pursued by various Muslim intellectuals, who present Islam as a faith for all seasons, is an endeavor riven by epistemological flaws.[9] The hybrid that results from mutation of Islam into an ideology supposedly capable of guiding Muslims, through a shortcut, to the blessed land of an indigenous postmodern enlightenment often produces nothing but "cultural schizophrenia" (Shayegan 1997). While Islamization of knowledge is an effort by Muslim intellectuals not to suffocate in a secularist universe, where the commodification of everyday life is threatening the tenets of faith,[10] the thought of religiously sanctioned social sciences is disturbing.[11]

8. I have elaborated further on this issue in Boroujerdi (1996).

9. For two such examples, see Moten (1996) and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (1989).

10. For a discussion of how trends in the postmodern world have influenced Islam, see Ahmed (1992).

11. The heavy-handed nature of government-sponsored research in Muslim societies in particular and the Third World in general is of special concern. Because governments finance most research projects in the Third World, they often use the rhetoric of indigenization as a means to persuade or pressure social scientists to tailor their research to meet the state's needs for social engineering or its standards of public morality. Consequently, Third-World social sciences must often confront the vexing questions: what do I know? what should I think? and what shall I do?

More troubling is that the ardent appeals for Islamization have not produced rigorous theoretical alternatives to Western social sciences. Besides parochial and pedestrian critiques of Western models, and essentialist or indigenously ethnocentric alternatives, there is not much there. For example, "Islamic economics" is nothing but neoclassical economic theory in religious guise. Developing an authentically Islamic theory of sociohistorical change—not to speak of actual political practice based on such a new idea—has been extremely difficult.[12]

I do not wish to suggest that all Muslim intellectuals have wholeheartedly embraced the Islamization of knowledge project. Far from it; many have become rather critical of this whole endeavor. For example, a leading contemporary Iranian intellectual considers the attempt of the Muslim new Aristotelians to Islamicize sociology, economics, and law to be rather futile. He writes: "Water, for example, has a peculiar structure and essence. As such, we do not have religious and non-religious water or religious and non-religious wine. The same is true for justice, government, science, and philosophy. Even if these subjects were to have an essence then their Islamization would be rather meaningless. As such we can not have a science of sociology that is essentially religious or a philosophy that is essentially Islamic or Christian, the same way we can not have a system of government that is essentially religious" (Sorush 1995, 11).

In short, for the time being, to speak of indigenizing the substance of various social sciences is possible. However, I am skeptical about efforts to formulate an indigenous social science "methodology" because this entails altering and presumably improving the very logic of inquiry. Making allowance for the distinction between substance and methodology may expedite the closure of the Third World's scientific and technological gap with the West. In this way, Third-World intellectuals may pursue a homegrown rereading of sciences and redefine separate paths to development without resorting to invidious language, engaging demagogy, and stigmatizing the "other."

12. For expositions and discussions of such efforts, see Lee (1997), Mutahhari (1986), and Safi (1994).

3

Subjectivity, Political Evaluation, and Islamist Trajectories

SAYRES S. RUDY

There will never be a credible globalization theory, namely, a valid account of the direct social consequences of global unification. This statement remains true no matter how scrupulously a theory tries to link discrete global trends—market expansion, scientific cooperation, political convergence, legal standardization, cultural diffusion, isomorphic communications, or bureaucratic regulation—to particular social phenomena. First, we will unlikely ever know how "globalization" works. Is it new? Are its discrete elements coordinated, symbiotic, autonomous? Is it best seen as integration, convergence, or homogenization? How can it be process and end-point, a thing that leads to itself? Does it alter the dispensation of social power? Second, answers to such questions would not solve two far more significant snags. Universal, uniform causes cannot, in principle, explain particular, divergent effects; and global, general patterns do not, in practice, vary directly with local, specific patterns.

Globalization cannot be said to cause certain, uniform social reactions because it acts upon societies, communities, and groups imbued with disparate tastes, desires, needs, and institutional or social resources to satisfy them. But es-

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