

## ACADEMIC IMPERIALISM\*

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The topic of intellectual imperialism is a serious one. The term may seem rather unusual and it gives the impression as though it were not a subject of proper and serious consideration. As students of the social sciences, we know that there is such a concept known as the history of imperialism and another known as the sociology of imperialism. The phenomena of imperialism can be divided into a number of aspects such as the social, political and economic. In keeping with our analysis and insight into the historical and sociological process, there is also the need to consider that there is such a thing as intellectual imperialism.

Imperialism is not confined only to the political or economic aspects of the historical process. We have to consider imperialism as a cluster, comprised of different aspects of human undertakings. In this paper, we are discussing intellectual imperialism. We shall first describe what it is and then discuss the problems connected with it. Imperialism in the political and historical sense of the word is the subjugation of one people by another for the advantage of the dominating one. The traits of imperialism are:

1. Exploitation: There is exploitation and control by the subjugating power over the people dominated.
2. Tutelage: The people dominated are considered as wards within a tutelage system. They are taught and asked to do certain things; they are organized towards certain ends and purposes laid out by the subjugating power.
3. Conformity: The subjugating dominant power expects the dominated people to conform to certain aspects of its life, rules and organization.
4. Secondary role: The dominated people play a secondary role in the set up.
5. Intellectual rationalization: There is an attempt to explain imperialism as a necessary stage in human progress and that the role of the imperialist power is to civilize the people under subjugation. This is a trait most pronounced in the writings of Raffles (see Alatas 1971).

6. Inferior talent: The subjugated country is very often run by inferior talent. For instance, compared to what was available in Britain, the British personnel who came to Malaysia and Singapore in the past were such inferior talents that there were complaints even from the British themselves. I remember a complaint made by a former civil servant, Thomson, to the effect that many of them who came from England were not the cream of the British society; they came to serve in the colonies because they could not succeed or get jobs in England.

These are the six main traits of imperialism. In addition to social, political and economic imperialism, we are also subjected to intellectual imperialism. Intellectual imperialism is the same domination of one people by another in its world of thinking. Intellectual imperialism is usually an effect of actual direct imperialism or indirect dominance arising from imperialism. The sociology of knowledge studies the forms of knowing which appear at different periods in different societies. What I am suggesting here is that the political and economic structure of imperialism generated a parallel structure in the way of thinking of the subjugated people. This is the product of intellectual imperialism.

### Parallels between Political Economic Imperialism and Intellectual Imperialism

Let us go back to the first trait, exploitation. What is the form of exploitation in intellectual imperialism? In political economic imperialism, the mother country exploited raw materials of the colonies. The raw materials were exported to the mother country to be processed and the end-products were distributed in the colonies. The colonies were considered to be sources for raw materials as well as markets for the industrial products for the mother country. An example of this process is rubber. Rubber was grown in Malaya, the latex was taken to England, tyres were made there and then sold in Malaya. Intellectual imperialism is similar to this process. Raw data on certain topics is collected in this region, processed and manufactured in England in the form of books or articles and then sold here. Generally, people of this region, scholars included, were used mainly as informants. We are continuously bombarded by foreign publications. The term 'foreign' is not used in a judgemental way but it merely refers to the origin of things. The bulk of our own history was written by scholars from abroad. These scholars

came here to collect raw intellectual materials, they then return to their home countries to publish the books which would be exported back to the country of fieldwork.

On one of my trips to Kelantan, Malaysia, I came into contact with a leading traditional healer who used to supply some British writers with information. As he was illiterate, he was unable to make the finished product. The colonial scholars took the data and published and distributed them without any form of acknowledgement or further analysis. There is a parallel here between economic exploitation and the exploitation of knowledge.

Let us consider the second trait, tutelage. In the past, the outlook was that the education of the population in certain technical areas was useful for imperialist governments. The world of learning was also governed by the idea of tutelage. Underdeveloped regions, Malaysia and Singapore included, were supposed to be dependent on everything abroad. If you wanted to get a good degree, you should go to European or American universities. If you wanted to learn anything, you should read their books. This idea of intellectual dependence through tutelage had been taken for granted in this region. It was assumed that people here are less knowledgeable about almost every subject than people in the West. Here you have a parallel again. In the past, the outlook was that the colonies could not maintain themselves and hence, they would ruin the country if they are granted independence. They could not be relied upon to develop the country because they did not have the technical know-how. The parallel with intellectual imperialism is that they do not have the intellectual know-how and therefore, there was a need for a form of indirect tutelage.

The third trait is conformity. In the past, the dominating power, or the mother country, expected conformity in the behavior of the conquered people. For instance, if you wanted to behave normally and properly you should sit the way they sit, eat the way they eat, and not belch in their presence. This is an exploitation of conformity. In the colonial relation, the dominating power expected the dominated to conform in social behavior as well as in many other areas. For instance, to advance in sports, one should play the British games. In the past, attention was given to golf, cricket, football, hockey, polo and games popular in the mother country. Little or no interest was given to games indigenous to Southeast Asia. This exploitation of conformity is revealed within the relationship of intellectual imperialism in the fields of theory and methodology. We are expected to employ methods of analysis which are current abroad and be interested in topics of interest to people abroad. In running organizations, they expect us to do the same. We have abundant examples from history.

The fourth trait is the secondary role which the communities in the colonies played. For instance, within the setup of intellectual imperialism the scholars and intellectuals of the region were often given a secondary role. Often, international publications and journals are not controlled by regional scholars. They are also not given prominence in international conferences and congresses. The same is true with regard to assessment and valuation. There is a general attitude that many of the regional scholars are suitable only for secondary roles. In fact, some of the scientists abroad were propagating the idea that scholars in underdeveloped areas should not engage in creative research, they should only do applied research or learn to apply the existing stock of knowledge. They should not attempt to be creative because it is expensive. In other words, if you are a dentist, do your best to pull out or fill people's teeth but do not engage in creative research or theoretical innovations in the fields of dentistry because this would be a luxury. You would have to spend a lot to get the instruments, resources and other things. So the emphasis is placed on the performance of a secondary role in the creative development of science.

The fifth trait is the rationalization of the civilizing mission. In the past, imperialists talked about the white man's burden. In intellectual imperialism, there is the talk to develop the sciences in underdeveloped societies, according to the prescribed model. Intellectual imperialism assumed the attitude of monopoly and dominance in the affairs of science and wisdom. Even knowledge of tropical insects comes under its purview.

The sixth trait is the most painful to discuss, but nevertheless must be mentioned. Just as we have inferior imperial bureaucrats running the colonies in the past, we now have an inferior group of interested scholars in this region who make a career of their work here. How many top thinkers from Europe and America have come to underdeveloped areas to do research? Most of those who went to a Third World country, whether as students on specific projects or ex-colonial servants, had no jobs in their own countries and so they would go to universities in Third World countries. If they had been in Malaysia, they would go to the Malay Studies department, learn some Malay, edit some remote and obsolete manuscript, get it published and then pose themselves as Malay experts. You will find this being practiced in other branches of knowledge too. There is a predominance of talent, which is not considered the most advanced in their own countries, just as there is a predominance of talent in the colonial bureaucracy, which is not considered the most advanced in their countries during their time.

In the imperialist political order, a significant section of the population accepted the superiority of the imperial power. Those who are affected by

this feel that significant knowledge can only come from the West. There is the attitude that good books are only written in the West. Those who study history, economics, philosophy and political science do not bother to find out what their Asian counterparts had contributed in that particular field. There is an outlook which regards regional scholars as irrelevant and outmoded. Useful and genuine knowledge are not to be found there. They have to go abroad for it. This is the extreme position.

### **Intellectual Slavery, Bondage and Imitation**

Lest I am being misunderstood, let me clarify that I am not suggesting that we should close our minds to genuine knowledge from any part of the world. We should assimilate as much useful knowledge as possible from all sources or from all parts of the world. But we need to do this with an independent critical spirit, without turning our backs on our own intellectual heritage. The phenomena of servility and intellectual bondage are not the same as genuine creative assimilation from abroad.

Let me give you an example. I am ill and am in need of medicine. This medicine happened to be made in the West. It proved to be effective and I chose to use it. This is not bondage. This is a form of genuine dependence. On the other hand, if without investigation, I believe that there is nothing of worth in Chinese medicine, I am in intellectual bondage. The moment you adopt that outlook, you come under the sway of intellectual imperialism, which effects a complete mistrust on one's cultural background.

We should assimilate whatever is necessary for progress. We should be practical and independent and at the same time, tap the maximum from our own tradition. In other words, we should have individuality and a sense of independence, rather than an imitating personality.

I shall give you another example of an extreme case of subjugation by intellectual imperialism. More than 30 years ago, I have a colleague who was a professor in our region for some time. He was an Asian novelist and a born Muslim. One day we were talking about philosophy and I asked him whether he had read the philosophy of Jalaluddin Rumi from Persia or any Muslim thinkers on the different aspects of philosophy. He replied that philosophy before Hegel was of no value; philosophy was valuable only after Hegel. I asked him whether those few thousands of years of thinking in India, China, the Near East were simply useless? Was he not interested in them? He said no, he was only interested in philosophy after Hegel. Before we parted, we talked about his novel. He asked me if I had read that particular

book and I asked if it was written before Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*? He replied that it was written some time in the early 1950s, before Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*. I then told him: "To me there is no literature before Pasternak. The only sensible literature I find worthwhile to read is after Pasternak." He was stunned. I gave him the same answer he gave me about philosophy. It so happened that it was his novel which was specified as not being worthy of attention. Here you find that intellectual imperialism had a profound effect.

Very few students are really interested in what the Asian thinkers of the past had said. Our students would read Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli and other contemporary Western thinkers, but they would skip Wang An Shih, Ibn Khaldun, Rizal and Nehru simply because they started with the initial outlook, probably unconsciously, that there is nothing to learn from Asian and other non-western societies. All these things belong to the past; they are the dust of history. Although they know nothing about tradition, they make blanket judgements influenced by the sense of inadequacy.

Another trait is what we call alienation from one's tradition. There is a break, a lack of interest and a conviction that nothing is worthwhile from the past. Another trait we can mention here as an effect of intellectual imperialism is imitateness. There is an insidious trend of intellectual imitation in the style of writing and the choice of themes.

An example of imitation is the writing of Singapore history. The history of the British occupation here has been written from the perspective of the British. The history of Raffles, for instance, had been presented from the point of view of Raffles as derived from his records in the colonial office administration. Many issues such as whether he fell from favor, the intrigues he was involved in, the reasons for his preoccupation with pepper, and a host of other issues often dealt with are not issues of central concern to us. We are interested in the changes Raffles had affected in Bencoolen, how his presence affected those in that area, whether his presence in Bencoolen was oppressive towards the population, and so on. These themes did not interest the colonial scholars of history. Instead of selecting different themes ourselves, that is, using our knowledge of historiography to select new topics which are relevant to the region, we persist in imitating the themes and methods of European scholars. Our method is to hide ourselves in the darkroom, viewing one roll of microfilm after another, then document after document. All these things have to be done, but if we consider them as rituals, we do not change our topics, there is no choice of new subjects and there is no attempt to go beyond the documents into the wider background. Nothing of that sort had been done and the final result of the research is another paper, printed in foreign historical journals, on firms, pepper and

intrigues. Who will read it but the same type of historians? There you find the inbreeding. Our colonized scholar has become an out member of the breed. There is perpetual inbreeding. He has become the loyal slave of the Roman Empire. A slave of the Roman Empire believed in the glory of Rome, he was happy in his slavery; he found it to be a natural state of affairs. Similarly, our slave scholars are quite happy.

### **Intellectual Compradors and the Need for a Break**

The intellectual alienation effected by imperialism had generated, to borrow a Marxist term, a group of intellectual compradors. Here, we see another parallel between political and intellectual imperialism. In political imperialism, you have collaborators and freedom-fighters (those who want to resist imperialism). In the mother country, you have this conflict as well, there were be those who want to maintain imperial rule and those who want reforms or independence for the colonies. We have the same thing in intellectual imperialism.

In the world of intellectual imperialism, you have collaborating local scholars and rebels who are fighting against this domination. In the home countries in Europe and North America, you have scholars, such as Myrdal, who went against this state of domination.

We have a very curious pattern emerging now. In colonial capitalism, economic exploitation was often subcontracted to local firms. In intellectual imperialism, we have the same parallel phenomenon. Scholars abroad may have research grants. They go to places in Asia and get local collaborators—scholars to whom they subcontract the research: "Here is the money, you get me the data." These scholars obtain data for them. They do not write the report, see the finished product or know what form it will appear. They then assemble the superstructure and the finished product will appear in a form not recognizable by the collaborating scholars. This subcontracting is being done in the academic world and parallels the economic subcontracting. Apart from research on Asia, they will be bombarding the Asians with materials on Europe and the United States—materials on their health, culture, politics, problems, religions and the way they look at life.

The interesting thing is that you will not find similar subcontracting in Europe or the United States. You do not find Indian and Japanese scholars subcontracting data collection in Europe or the United States for research on culture, history, politics and social problems. You also do not find Japanese and Indian scholars roaming all over Europe or the United States collecting

data, publishing them at home, in their language, and then bombarding Europe and the United States with their published results.

Here is another example. A foreign scholar has written a book on Singapore. This book will be published by a foreign publisher, reviewed by a foreign reviewer in a foreign journal but it will be sold in Singapore and used by its students. This is a strange situation. Can you imagine a Japanese writer writing a book on the American national character, have it published in Japan, reviewed by a Japanese scholar, popularized by the Japanese propaganda machinery and eventually have it sold in the United States, resulting in thousands of students seeing their country through Japanese eyes? This does not happen in Europe and the United States. Those who are writing on American history are Americans. Their works are reviewed by other American scholars. As a result, the standard of scholarship of their country is high because there, people are critical of each other's works. But in our cases, there is more scholarship on our region done, reviewed and assessed abroad but consumed here. Therefore, there is less scholarly debate locally.

Intellectual imperialism conditions the mental attitude of those who have been caught in its web. Apart from encouraging docility, it stifles creativity. As a result of being dominated by intellectual imperialism scholars cannot become creative. They spend their time imitating; they try to be acceptable or gain approval from the group they look up to. This is a very well-known and general trend among Asian scholars. Many of them feel they are not good if they do not publish in Western journals. This is, of course, not true. A work is good and has its merits regardless of whether it is published in the West. It is not necessary to affirm one's beauty with a panel of foreign judges in a beauty contest. If you have self-confidence, you can look into the mirror and say to yourself 'I am beautiful.' But, on the other hand, if you cannot announce your beauty but need a panel of judges to do so, that means you have no self-confidence.

The lack of creativity is a very serious problem because it increases our dependence. The lack of creativity is not an unavoidable state. We can learn from the well-known anthropologist Malinowsky. Malinowsky spent a couple of years in the Trobriand Islands in the Pacific. From his stay there, he succeeded in evolving a theory of human behavior which became a landmark in the history of cultural anthropology. My big question is why he and not our scholars, who spent more than a few decades in this region, succeeded? Is it necessary to have expensive instruments for theorizing in the social and historical sciences? The library in the campus is adequate and even better than many libraries abroad for that purpose. Our materials are here. It is not the same with the physical sciences. We do not need expensive instruments,

the materials and laboratories are around us, and if Malinowsky could do it, why can't us? The reason is simple. Malinowsky went to the Trobriand Islands as an independent individual. He had no complexes and did not feel compelled to imitate. He was also not interested in whether his writings would be accepted by journals; he spent his time thinking and developing his theory which became very interesting for many people. We are in a position to do that. The reason why despite their numbers, there were not many Asian scholars who succeeded in this aspect is primarily because of intellectual imperialism. They believe that they cannot do anything outside the domination of the group. They are being pushed incessantly in the direction of applied research. They will be patted on the back if they write a good paper or book, provided it is not a challenge.

Another example of this would be Karl Wittfogel. He wrote an interesting theoretical work on China called *Oriental Despotism* (1957). There is no reason why an Asian could not have written a comparable work. The moment the book was released, it was read, digested and assimilated here. But why was it not produced here? It is not an impossible task. The reason being there is an absence of spirit; the initial impulse is not there. In order to develop this initial impulse, one has to perform a break. First, we have to be critical of writers in general, foreign writers included. Second, we have to redirect our attention to individual topics of research. Third, we have to avoid assessing ourselves with foreign yardsticks. Fourth, we have to cultivate a sense of individuality and independence, and not merely imitate in order to please others in our works and research. This is of course a problem that is outside the preview of scientific discussion at the moment. It is a rather complex problem; it is a question of how to create a thinker. Nobody knows how to create a thinker. You cannot ask people how to create a poet. A poet is born and not created. The same goes for dictators. We cannot create dictators. In the sense of artificial production, organizing, planning and training can transform cadets into army officers. But this cannot be done as far as thinkers are concerned. All you can do is to awaken consciousness amongst as many people as possible and maybe a few of them will evolve in the direction you want them to. Once they have this individuality and outlook, what they need is further experience, training and reliance on their capacity. We will at least be able to avoid the danger of slipping into imitation again.<sup>1</sup>

### The Continuity of Intellectual Imperialism

The continuation of imperialism after the dismantling of the political edifice following the independence of Asian and African countries after the Second

World War is another attempt to control and dominate, but not in the earlier political form. At the moment, the imperialist trend in the West operates within a pluralist setting. It has other forces in the West to contend with, forces that do not wish to revive imperialism. I am not suggesting that the entire Western Civilization is reviving intellectual imperialism as the replacement of the imperialism that was dismantled after the Second World War.

The present intellectual imperialism is a dimension of Western civilization that has been proven to be the most developed, dominant and powerful. It has the most crucial role in the destiny of mankind at the moment. The rest of the world has a high degree of dependence on assistance from the West. It is therefore crucial that the rest of the world be apprehensive of certain negative elements that might perpetuate certain ill-effects of the former political form of imperialism. One of these negative elements is intellectual imperialism. As in political imperialism, the first strategy is to destroy the self-confidence of the subjugated people. After that comes the conditioning to accept the subjugation. Intellectual imperialism does the same thing. Just as the acceptance of imperialism may be derived from unconscious conditioning, the attempt at domination may not be perceived as imperialism.

The views of many famous thinkers and scholars are examples of intellectual imperialism. The West is held in high regard while the rest of the world is denigrated. Some are subtly expressed while others are crudely presented. Central to intellectual imperialism is an underlying racism or ethnocentrism. Even prominent intellectual giants like Marx and Engels were not free of ethnocentrism of the aggressive and denigrating type (Alatas 1977, pp.234–235). The same may be said of Russian revolutionary thinkers such as Belinsky who attributed the degradation of Russia to Asiaticism engrafted upon it by the Tartars. The dominant traits of this Asiaticism were corruption, mental sloth, ignorance and self-despising—a direct opposite to Europeanism (Belinsky 1956, p.127).

This view of the inferior non-European world was dominant before the Second World War. Not only was the inferiority in science and technology stressed, the inferiority on culture, religion, morality and the intellect were also emphasized. The current trend of intellectual imperialism, though no longer expressed in terms of political control, continues to survive in highly influential circles. An example to illustrate this would be the greatly acclaimed humanitarian and Nobel Prize winner, Albert Schweitzer. Many of Schweitzer's works on colonialism and the inferior spirituality of the non-western world were published before the Second World War and with his blessings, they were translated into several languages and distributed worldwide. He was

awarded the Nobel Prize in 1952, and several other top awards from different governments. He died in 1965.

Schweitzer was the most sophisticated defender of colonialism. To him, 19<sup>th</sup> century European colonial expansion was a choice between alternatives and colonialism was the superior moral choice. According to him, the primitive or semi-primitive peoples did not lose their independence when a protectorate or a colonial government was formed. Independence was lost when the first white man's boat arrived with powder and rum. Turmoil and injustice wrought havoc. The chiefs started exchanging their human subjects for goods. Schweitzer then concluded: "From that point the political work of a state in colonising is to correct, by its action, the evils developed though unrestrained economic advance" (Schweitzer 1928, p.65).

Though freedom is a human right, a stable society is required to secure it. Schweitzer concluded, "In a disordered society the very well-being of man himself often demands that his fundamental rights should be abridged" (Schweitzer 1928, p.65). Hence, the purpose of colonization is to improve the general well-being of the conquered, that is, to attain true civilization. The people should not be drawn into the global industrial capitalist network but instead should develop their agriculture and manage without the lure of profit and manufactured goods (Schweitzer 1948a, p. 223).

He recognized the cruelty and injustice committed against the colonized people, but to grant them independence was not a solution for it would lead to enslavement by their own people. In 1948, after the Second World War, when independence was in the air, he was not in favor of colonialism if it was for material advantage, but he found it desirable to help the colonized Africans attain a condition of well-being (Schweitzer 1948a, p. 222).

There were two significant reasons why the European man should impose upon himself this civilizing burden. First, it was because the African was a child. He said, "The Negro is a child, and with children nothing can be done without the use of authority. We must, therefore, so arrange the circumstances of daily life that my natural authority can find expression. With regard to the Negroes, then, I have coined the formula: 'I am your brother, it is true, but your elder brother' (Schweitzer 1948b, p.130).

The second was the innate nature of the African to recognize goodness and rationality, but this noble sentiment in him had hitherto been dumb and tightly bound up. The release of this suppressed inner sentiment could only be accomplished through the higher moral ideas of the religion of Jesus (Schweitzer 1948b, p.155).

We shall now examine what Schweitzer thought of the rest of the world, the non-western and non-African. Was he also an elder brother or a

schoolmaster? He was definitely a master, the epitome of Truth and Wisdom, the pinnacle of Humanity. Let us hear his opinion on Islam. He dissuaded us from comparing the spiritual values of Islam with Christianity. The reason being, "It lacks spiritual originality and is not a religion with profound thoughts on God and the world. Its power in the world is based on the fact that, while it is a monotheistic and also to some extent an ethical religion, it has preserved all the instincts of the primitive religious mind and is thus able to offer itself to the uncivilised and the half-civilised peoples of Asia and Africa as the form of monotheism most easily accessible to them" (Schweitzer 1939, p.22)

As for Buddhism and Hinduism, they were similarly inferior to Christianity. The intellectualism of the Indian mind was like a cloud that did not give rain but consumed in a sultry atmosphere. Brahmanism and Buddhism attained to an ethic in words but not in deed. Schweitzer conceded that Buddhism and Hinduism were unified, logical, consistent, monistic and pessimistic, but their ethical content was meagre and their god was dead. He said, "They present a logical, monistic-pessimistic view of the world and life. But it is a poverty-stricken religion. Its god is mere empty spirituality. Its last word to man is absolute negation of life and of the world. Its ethical content is meagre. It is a mysticism which makes man lose his individual existence in a god that is dead" (Schweitzer 1939, pp. 38,43).

Schweitzer admitted that the Buddha originated the ethic of compassion though the commandment "not to kill" and "not to hurt" did not begin with him. The Buddha's ethic of compassion was also incomplete. He deduced, "No where does the Master demand that because all life is suffering man should strive, in so far as is possible, to bring help to every human being and to every living thing. He only commands the avoidance of pitiless actions. Of sympathetic helping he takes no account. It is excluded by the principle of non-activity that derives from world- and life-negation (Schweitzer 1936, p. 102).

One cannot avoid the impression that Schweitzer had made a caricature of Buddhism under the garb of a penetrating analysis. How can we say that those Buddhists, monks and laymen, who burnt themselves to death for the cause of truth and justice, as they did in Vietnam during the Vietnam War, did not act for the good of others? Was their action non-activity? Millions of Buddhists have been involved in intense political conflicts involving the pursuit of the correct political and social order; this indicated their serious concern for the welfare of society; this is an affirmation and not a negation of life.

However, it is not the intention here to critically review what Schweitzer wrote about non-western civilizations. We are concerned with the thought structure of intellectual imperialism. This architectonic structure is common among intellectual imperialists. The foundations of this structure are:



1. The non-western world has a limited degree of competence and creativity.
2. It needs the guiding hands of the West to unfold this limited ability.
3. It is receptive to compassion from the West as a younger person is willing to accept advice from an older and more experienced person.
4. It should not be left on its own to experiment with things unknown or alien to the West.
5. Whatever it has achieved in the past was incomplete and seriously defective.
6. The standard of the non-western world cannot be applied to measure the West. Only the West can measure itself and it is the West that can measure civilizations other than its own.

These are some of the main pillars of the thought foundation of intellectual imperialism. From as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this foundation has been in existence for centuries harboring different generational occupants.

### Intellectual Emancipation

From the nature of the problem generated by intellectual imperialism, it is obvious that an intellectual emancipation movement should take place. Here, there is also a parallel between our present situation and the colonial past. Akinsola Akiwowo, the well-known African sociologist from Nigeria, lamented the state of dependence on and mental captivity of African sociologists by their North American colleagues. They showed more respect and admiration towards North American and European sociologists than towards their colleagues. They were also ignorant of the excellent work done by their colleagues in and outside their countries (Akiwowo 1980, pp. 62–63). I have also discussed the phenomenon of the captive mind at length elsewhere (Alatas 1969; 1972; 1974).

Akiwowo found that African sociologists were not alienated from their respective homelands. They were very much involved in politics, social criticism and trade unionism. "However," Akiwowo inferred, "African social scientists differ essentially from their European counterparts in their inability to demonstrate a capacity to construct African modes of explanation, relevant to their daily preoccupation as social scientists in their homelands, as sociologists in Europe and North America have done for their own countries" (Akiwowo 1980, p.66).

The phenomenon of the captive mind, though not identical in particularities, is widespread. In the 10<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (New Delhi, 10–21 December 1970), I pleaded for the establishment of an Asian social science tradition. One of the essential conditions for a tradition to flourish is to possess the combative element, to refute erroneous generalizations, interpretations, problem-raising, conceptualizations methodologies and the inadequate mastery of data and understanding of the historical socio-cultural context (Alatas 1979).

Only after this has been accomplished, will the condition be right for a creative reconstruction of the social sciences in the direction of an autonomous and independent tradition.

Last but not least, intellectual imperialism and bondage have brought about a displacement of attention from certain issues which are significantly relevant to Asian and African societies if not to the rest of the world. Take the example of ethnicity raised into prominence by anthropologists during the colonial times. Presently, I can think of at least nine aspects of ethnicity that should be seriously studied in the Third World. They are: a) ethnicity and corporate crime, b) ethnicity and bureaucratic nepotism, c) ethnicity and cronyism, d) ethnicity and political misdemeanour, e) ethnicity and corruption, f) ethnicity and decadence, g) ethnicity and operational idealism, h) ethnicity and the maintenance mentality, and i) ethnicity and the suppression of the individual.

There are other possible examples but it suffices to say that the emancipation of the mind from the shackles of intellectual imperialism is the major condition for the development of a creative and autonomous social science tradition in developing societies. Those who hesitate to accept the prevalence of intellectual imperialism are welcome to an intellectual combat. The intellectual imperialists are not going to protect them; they will abandon them the moment they are no longer useful in their scheme of things.

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#### NOTES

- \* This is an abridged version of the keynote address delivered at the ISA Regional Conference for Southeast Asia.
- 1 The preceding sections constituted a lecture I delivered to the History Society, University of Singapore, on 26 September 1969 entitled "Academic Imperialism".

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## CHAPTER TWO

## SHIFTING PARADIGMS AND ASIAN PERSPECTIVES: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING\*

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I do not have a strict definition about paradigms. When I was young, we used models, patterns or even world views, to convey what the physical scientists called paradigms. But I would recognize the examples of shifts in the way we studied the humanities and social sciences as comparable to paradigmatic shifts and I shall treat them as such here. My own starting point is that of a multidisciplinary historian, that is, one who comes from the humanities side and uses the methodologies of the social scientists when they are appropriate and helpful. I am also fascinated by the use of the past by scholars in other disciplines, as well as by the histories of other disciplines, especially in the context of the sociology of knowledge.

One general point of contrast should be noted. For universities in Western Europe, North America and Australasia, paradigm shifts usually come from academic and intellectual activity, or cerebral responses to social and cultural changes over time, taking in the larger picture within the context of universal science and progress, and of modern civilization, as the main driving force in history.

Over the past 50 years in Asia, especially in the newer nations, paradigm shifts are more situational and influenced by contemporary political and economic developments. Thus, we might distinguish between the responses to academic shifts emerging from the major scholarly centres in the West and those from situational changes (which sometimes produce paradigm shifts) which Asia experienced.

I have seen many kinds of shifts in my time. The following paradigmatic shifts are striking in that they have clearly elicited Asian responses and influenced many Asian scholarly writings. In each case, it would not be difficult to show how they have influenced research and teaching. I have chosen ten *examples*, some more like scientific paradigms than other, but all of them represent potential discontinuities in research and teaching.



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