

The role of religion for an alternative sustainable governance theory

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Abstract : In post-modern times there has been much empirical evidence to indicate that religions and faiths play a pro-active role in civil society and more importantly in development activities. The contemporary reality of plurality demands a fresh look into the narratives of different civilisations, cultures and ideologies as opposed to the imposed meta-narratives of modernity. Hence, exploring religion and faith to develop an alternative notion of “good governance” from “other’s” worldview is necessary. Much could be learned from cultures, religions and faiths in the realm of governance studies from the phenomenological perspective. This paper is an attempt to explore how religion could play an effective role in creating sustainable governance based on values and ethics. It will try to look into the contemporary situation of religion, and show how it will fit into the framework of governance.

Keywords : Religion, Sustainable governance, Values, Ethics.

Introduction

Some critics perceive Western discourses of governance as deeply rooted in the worldview that neglects the elements of culture and values. Culture, values and religion are considered as inadequate with the “universal” barometer of modernity and development. The critics of Bretton Wood’s version of “good governance” describe the situation as a “new-colonialism” agenda imposed by liberal, Western-dominated international institutions. It represents the “hegemony of Eurocentric culture”, which is characterized by the larger picture of economic stratification, military inequality, a disproportionate emphasis on European ideologies, the proliferation of Western-derived systems of education, consumerism and life style. In fact, modernity as a political and intellectual project, has a long tradition of dominating, excluding and misunderstanding the non-West. This stance seems to imply that modernisation is not merely a structural transformation but also a practice based on discursive formations such as the culture, knowledge and economic and political superiority of the West. Western values and beliefs were imposed and forced upon the non-Western countries as a means of saving them from their underdevelopment and backwardness.¹

In the same manner, within the framework of the “good governance” agenda, “governance” is “good” if it suits the philosophy designed mainly by the Bretton Woods

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institutions according to the values they believe in. Those values might not suit the nature of some underdeveloped societies or states and improve their performance in social, political and economical fields. Some reports suggest that certain programmes imposed on those countries not only worsened their situation but also resulted in new problems.ⁱⁱ Lack of “indigenity” and culture characteristics in tackling underdevelopment issues has been identified amongst the lacunae within current good governance projection by other outstanding researchers and international reports.ⁱⁱⁱ Hence, an exploration of the panacea based on the values of the society is justified for its possible potential to cure the aforesaid situation.

In post-modern times, there has been much empirical evidence to indicate that religions develop is a major factor in political and economic life for the development of a country, as well its governance.^{iv} Religion as a form of ethical doctrine could potentially provide the “internal good” for development through its doctrines on social cohesion, mutual co-operation and virtue-based community. In practice, the process of governance is not an axiological neutral human activity, but like other activities it is impregnated with values and ethics.^v In consequence, apart from mainstream liberal economic ethics (i.e. efficiency, competitiveness, economic growth, human rights, etc.) there are other traditional, culturally-constructed and religious ethics that are worth incorporating into the discourse in order to respond to the realities of each society for it to reach an acceptable and efficient solution for itself. It is through this premise that the Aristotelian concept of *praxis* is worth employing to explain how ethics and tradition can encourage a society to cooperate to attain the *telos* (the *internal goods*).

Stiglitz argues that cultural values should be preserved due to their essential function as a cohesive force for development at a time when many other values are weakening.^{vi} Rationally, culture and values that enhance both human and social capital will generate public order through the production of good citizens who live in mutual cooperation and mutual assistance, transcending conflicts that mount up to establish social stability.^{vii} Casson points out that culture as “collective subjectivity” will enhance efficiency through good behaviour, integrity, honesty, trust and cooperation that will have a great impact on economic performance.^{viii} In the same way, Throsby suggests that culture will provide objectives for group development through certain worldviews, values and beliefs, and it will also affect economic efficiency by affecting behaviour, innovation, group dynamics and decision-making processes.^{ix}

It is according to this reason that UNESCO suggested in its 29th General Conference Report that culture (if it is being strengthened and supported) could be an enormous potential key element, as a social capital, in the struggle against poverty.^x The same concern was voiced by the then President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, who emphasised the essentiality of the independency of growth and social development and further suggests that : “without parallel social development there will be no satisfactory economic development”. While on another occasion, the President of the World Bank also stressed the significance of social development through social justice and equality to complement the institutional and structural reform for political economic growth and

human prosperity. Social capital and culture, thus, are key components of these interactions.^{xi} It should be noted that these differences also highlight the distinction between ‘economic growth and development’.

Recent global religious uprisings in many areas have demanded a restructuring of faiths and values in the fields from which they were once banished.^{xii} As a result, exploration of the possibility of incorporating culture or religion specifically into the public sphere is no longer taboo. However, this new uprising, or what is termed by Micklethwait and Wooldridge as the return of God or ‘God is back’, emerges in a different form from that it took during the pre-Enlightenment periods.^{xiii} This global phenomenon is represented by the re-appearance of religions in the form of ethics, values and many other functioning forms rather than the previous institutional structure. This new form of religion usurps the realm of politics, economy, education, international affairs and governance without diminishing the existing structures. Religions from this new perspective are no longer mere beliefs in miraculous rescue from above (*deus ex machina*) but rather a vehicle for human betterment.^{xiv}

These elements give the human race a ‘sacred canopy’ against the threat of the lack of meaning (*anomie*) of the world and accordingly will lead the society to appreciate the innate value of the *nomos* (meaningful order).^{xv} As an example, the relation between Islamic values and the issue of governance is worth exploring. The same can be applied to the rich Confucianism-oriented Chinese culture and philosophy derived from the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. Similarly, the Dharma-based Indian values articulated from Kautilya and Ashoka wisdoms regarding political and administrative affairs are another invaluable source to enhance the ideal. The list goes on to include other cultures and faiths.^{xvi}

Similarly, various researchers have dedicated their studies to the new role that religions can play in development.^{xvii} Many empirical studies have been undertaken on these topics and most of them indicate that religions, through faith-based or faith-inspired organisations and movements, have not contributed significantly to development. However, many researchers believe that religion has tackled poverty, improved education, provided welfare services to the community, enhanced humanitarian works, and encouraged political participation in the struggle against corruption and misadministration.^{xviii}

Religion and governance : A philosophical inquiry

Under the modernity project, religion has been perceived as a dogma that is against “rational” or “universal” (liberal) values that is not welcomed in the public sphere, or more precisely in the political-economical fields. Such precepts are to be understood from the historical perspective as mentioned in the previous chapter of the failure of church-state domination over the people. Initially, the constant struggle to eliminate religion as a whole from the public sphere became a norm in the major discourse of philosophers, scholars and most Western thinkers.

Despite the initial goal of those who waged this struggle to constrain and deprive the hegemony of religion in secular arts and sciences, and other “worldly” realms, Kant brought this struggle to a new dimension with a compromising formulation. Through his transcendental idealism, ‘religion’ was acknowledged as the only means to engage lofty metaphysical issues, but inappropriate for all other matters. For everything save metaphysics, reason is both necessary and sufficient, and it is with this division of intellectual labour that Western modernity was founded. This position taken by Kant, restricting religion to an important set of metaphysical concerns, protects its privileges against state intrusion, but restricts its activity and influence to this specialized sphere.^{xix}

The Kantian approach nevertheless is far from useful in explaining the current global trend of the return of religion in many “secular” territories, and in setting up the foundation which needs to be applied in this research. In reality, the contemporary return of religion goes beyond the “transcendental” border and encroaches the area in which faiths were once totally banned. In conjunction with this phenomenon, the main thesis of this research is constructed. In determining a presupposition to present the focal point idea of this research, which is to introduce Islamic values as part of the contemporary governance discourse, the ground for such debate must initially be prepared. Through the employment of Taylor’s multiple modernities approach, the following argument deals with such concerns. However, a philosophical introduction to how religion constructs an alternative solution for governance is essential.

The modern positivistic approach to the discourse of development and governance, which devalues religion and other normative elements to stress the quantifiable aspects of human experience rather than the meaning, will never be an efficient toll for the functionalist view of religion. The only choice is to shift towards more interpretative and consequentialist approaches, which seek to interpret human action and focus on understanding the meaning people give to their own actions and the consequence of those actions to the topic of the study, which in this research is development and good governance. The emphasis hence is moved from mere observation and description (what is) to understanding (why and how) hence challenging the conventional value-free proposition of positivism.^{xx}

With regard to the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions posed earlier, philosophy of ethics represents a useful tool to understand the significant nature of religion. For instance, the philosophy of ethics raises the question of goodness. This question results in many ethical theories each of which leads to different conclusions or answers to the question “What should one do?” or “How should one live?” (*i.e.* Kantian ethics, Aristotelian ethics, Mill’s utilitarianism, *etc.*). In the same line, it also examines moral claims, which underpin a society’s core values and social norms. Akin to other ethical and moral theories, religion as another source of ethics and established doctrines provides substantial answers to those questions. By applying the typology of “tradition” (according to the definition by Alasdair MacIntyre, 2007 [1981]), religion is to be understood as a conception of ‘what good living is about’, which is then expressed through social practices performed by believers. Within such concepts, we could

conceptualise an early assumption of how religion (as a set of ethical propositions along with its theoretical structure) would fit into the discourse of development and governance.

Similar to the “tradition” typology of religion, Lincoln’s deconstruction of religion brings another holistic view in explaining the nature of religion.^{xxi} In defining his concept, Lincoln attributes four (what he calls polythetic and flexible) domains as the characteristics of religion : (i) it entails a transcendental discourse (from its claims to authority and truth); (ii) it imposes a set of practices with the goal of producing a proper world according to the religious discourses to which the practices are connected; (iii) it requires a community whose members construct their identity with reference to the religious discourse and its practices; (iv) it depends on institutions that regulate religious discourse, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendental value. Lincoln also implicitly constructed religion with a beyond-transcendental and more comprehensive framework. Such a definition also implies a maximalist type of religion unlike the Kantian (and other) minimalists.

Furthermore, religion as a form of ethical doctrine could profoundly act as an agent to attain the internal good in development through its doctrines on social cohesion, mutual co-operation and virtue-based community. Practically, the process of development is not an axiological neutral human activity, but like other activities, it is impregnated with values and ethics.^{xxii} Apart from mainstream liberal economic ethics (*i.e.* efficiency, competitiveness, economic growth, human rights, *etc.*) there are also other culturally traditional ethics and religious ethics that are worth incorporating into the discourse. It is from this premise that the Aristotelian concept of *praxis* is worth employing to explain how ethics and tradition could enhance society to cooperate in attaining the *telos* (the internal good) and the same goes for religion.

Following this line of argument, governance encompasses the discourse of politics, economics and public administration, thus is value-loaded at its most elementary level and shaped by individual values derived from individual worldviews, as part of individual social construct. Since factors affecting worldviews differ, different worldviews exist leading to different ‘systems’ for different people.^{xxiii} Religion is amongst the major determining factors that fundamentally construct worldviews. The meaning (*nomos*) that religion brings through its ontological dimension leads to the construction of distinguishing narratives to development through the governance process. Accordingly, this distinctive religion-based framework represents the endogeneity of non-Western discourses on governance, hence creating narratives instead of the meta-narrative of the modernist projection of universal values. According to the previously mentioned multiple modernities framework, the acknowledgement of other worldviews allows religion to have its role in the creation of alternative means in the realm of governance. The following section explains the more significant role of religion in development as the aim of governance through the explanation of how religion could be articulated in development, theoretically and empirically.

Articulation of religion in development

As mentioned before, secularization is a major component of modernity. The concept of secularization rejects religions in the public sphere and in the realm of governance. Nevertheless, a closer scrutiny of the subject from the sociology of religion approach as well as anthropology and other current approaches, might show that a certain degree of religion is being accepted beyond its Kantian metaphysical border within the modernity project. Similar to the approaches mentioned in looking into the response towards modernity, the subsequent arguments furthermore look into rationality and on how religion still has the dynamism to exist and function in 'secular' territories including development.

In his effort to understand the way in which religion can find its place and function in the public sphere, Casanova employs a sociological approach in proposing the concept of *deprivatization* of religion.^{xxiv} He explains how secularization (as one of the landmarks of modernity) would allow religion and faith to enter its public sphere in a homeostatic way through the current global uprising of religions around the world. As there is no monolithic way of explaining the nature of the relation between secularization and religion, he insists that this new phenomenon is not a continuation of the decline of the established *caesaro-papist* church that has been rejected and which declined after the final blow it received from the modernity project.

In the same way secularization, as a process of differentiation between various spheres (economic, social, political, religious, *etc.*) and the social and scientific sphere, progressively emancipated itself from the prism of religious institutions and norms. This differentiation process leads to the *deprivatization* of religion, and religion refuses to be relegated to the private sphere. At the same time its claim to enter the public sphere redefines the very boundaries of the differentiated spheres. Thus, civil society has been a field where the *deprivatization* of religion has found a way to escape from mere private territories into the supposedly "secular" realm. Through this new space, religious institutions and organizations pose their repudiation to the *status quo* of positivism by bringing the interconnection of private and public morality, and by challenging the claims of moral spheres and renormativisation of the public economic and political spheres.^{xxv}

From another sociological point of view, the *social norms* approach could also explain the consequence of religions as a set of values for social practices.^{xxvi} This approach claims that values would be meaningless without shared social practices to sustain them (*i.e.* solidarity, freedom, taxation, mutual co-operation, caring, *etc.*). Values as 'irreducibly social good' are inherent in numerous social relationships, such as family, trade unions, interest groups, religious communities, or those bound by a common history or language.^{xxvii} These social norms contribute a large degree of involvement towards development through civil society and social capital. This situation is supported by the way faith-based or faith-inspired organizations and movements vigorously utilize the environment to articulate their ideals, hence good governance and development.

The anthropologist rejects the traditional anthropological perception of religion as mere symbols that resemble a system of meanings.^{xxviii} He maintains that religion needs coercion, through law and power, to make individuals act according to religious precepts; it also presents social embodiment and constitutive activities of the world which implies the need for a set of practices to express the beliefs, as well as discipline (by institutional structures) to enforce them and a community of believers in which this discipline is exercised and enjoys their allegiance and serves as base of their identity. Due to the needs of social and public spaces to exercise religious beliefs, he concludes that the religious world and the social world are inseparable and interact in an interdependent and mutual manner. Akin to the previous argument, the recent global return of religion into the public sphere exemplifies this anthropological theory.

It is rather interesting to discover that even the founder of the liberal market economy, Adam Smith also acknowledged the contribution of religion in the realm of the *laissez-faire* economy.^{xxix} In his magnum opus *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Smith explains the role of established clergy towards the market-oriented economic development process through the ‘moral enforcement’ mechanism. The values of honesty and integrity as a determination of the veracity of business ethics are essential for the enhancement of business activities. He further advocated an ‘open market’ and ‘freedom of speech’ for all religious groups so that rational discussion about different religious beliefs and practices can create an environment of “good temper and moderation”, which is essential for sustained growth and development.^{xxx} This indeed indicates that even at the beginning of political economy, religion and values were perceived to be important factors shaping individual choices and behaviour, which indeed came to an end with Marshallian revolution.

Similarly, Khan and Bashar deconstruct the functions of religion and present the way through which religion can contribute to development from several dimensions.^{xxxi} For instance, Islamic ethics will affect productivity through certain personal traits of ethics, thrift, honesty, and openness to people. Furthermore, the enhancement of economic growth and development by promoting a positive attitude toward honesty may increase trust and reduce corruption and criminal activity. Religious rituals on the other hand also play a significant role in economic activities by promoting in-group trust and cooperation that help overcome collective-action problems. In the meantime, religions also exert a positive impact on human capital by enhancing education levels through the encouragement of seeking knowledge to epitomize wisdom. All these motivations will accumulate the creation of social capital, which is essential to growth and development, hence good governance and vice versa.^{xxxii}

By following this line of argument, it seems that religion acts substantively as a catalyst for the accumulation of ‘social capital’ and thereby growth, which is a widely-accepted norm in development literature (with different kinds of interpretations and definitions). Following the successive emphasis on physical capital, human capital and knowledge capital, researchers believe that adding ‘social capital’ to growth models as an

explanatory variable enhances the explanatory powers of growth and development models in an indigenized manner.^{xxxiii}

“Social capital” refers to social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness, which arises from connections between individuals in the same way as physical capital (accumulated by physical objects and human capital) and refers to the properties of individuals. In this way, social capital can be depicted closely to what some have called “civic virtue”.^{xxxiv} Collier on the other hand, in explaining how social capital can contribute towards overcoming the issue of poverty, characterizes social capital as the internal social and cultural coherence of society, the norms and values that govern interactions between people, and the institutions in which they are embedded.^{xxxv} Social capital, hence, has a significant impact on economic advancement through social networking, which acquires positive externalities and facilitates joint action of mutual benefit outside the market.

Collier further divides social capital into two categories : the ‘civil’ social capital (non-official) and ‘government’ social capital (official).^{xxxvi} The former refers to micro cooperation and coordination which govern interactions between individuals as economic agents through trust, solidarity, fraternity, reciprocity and interpersonal networks, while the latter incorporates the benefits of law, order, property rights, education, health and good government. Through social capital, transaction costs and information costs could be reduced, thus making physical capital and human capital more productive. In this spirit, religion as both the foundation (source) and framework for civil social capital contributes to the building of networks in society.

Despite the externalities that it may produce (and has already produced in many cases), religion, as a motivation for social capital, works very well to enhance the role of civil society, participation, eradicating poverty and corruption, education and accountability. The effects of religion on social capital and development can be seen in the contemporary, empirical studies, which show how the current global uprising of religion is contributing towards the fields of the political-economic and the social sphere. As discussed earlier, social capital is also able to generate public order through the production of good citizens who live in mutual cooperation, mutual assistance transcending conflicts, and striving to establish social stability, which are vital in good governance, as these lead to capacity development for economic development in communities.^{xxxvii}

Marshall, however, suggests that religion and faith can play a greater role in development beyond civil society and social capital parameters.^{xxxviii} In ‘Faith and Development : Rethinking Development Debates’, she proposes that religion can give hope and meaning to the lives of millions of people through their teachings on core values which are essential to human relationships. This will balance the distribution of wealth through the philanthropic missions by faith organizations to help poor communities. The paper also maintains that faith is another motivational factor for engagement towards development. This has been proven through the global Millennium Development Goals

agenda throughout the world in developing educational sectors and health issues. In terms of conflicts, faith organizations have also played a tremendous role in providing solutions, preventions and humanitarian support. Faith communities have also contributed immensely towards the recovery of many post-conflict and post-calamity situations. The post-December 2004 tsunami is a glaring example.

Religion and governance : Empirical cases from the periphery

Much has been produced in exploring the empirical evidence to show that faith, ethical and moral-based approaches can fit into the discourse of development.^{xxxix} Amongst them are the studies done on the co-relation between the efficiency of the bureaucratic system and development with Confucius ethics in some East Asian countries.^{xl} Despite its authoritarian approach, it was proven and acknowledged that the Confucian traditions managed to bring rapid growth to some of the countries.^{xli} Some argue that, not only did the Western-rule-of-law based governance fail to manage complex social problems with laws and regulations but they also witnessed relentless calls for greater morality amongst their leaders.

Likewise, Roman Catholic social teachings, and in particular those since *Populorum Progressio*, articulate a faith-based view of development in which the contributions of spiritual disciplines and of ethical action to a person's 'vocation to human fulfilment' are addressed alongside contributions made by markets, public policy, and poverty reduction.^{xlii} Meanwhile in Central and Southern Latin America, further visions of development have arisen in the liberation theologies by some radical Catholic priests, who criticize structural injustice and call for greater religious engagement in political and economic institutions to ensure equitable development processes. Their cause and struggle aim to awaken the people to rise up against the causes of poverty and deprivation and recognize development as liberation through political education and conscientization. Many point out that these began with the publication of Gustavo Gutierrez's *Theology of Liberation*, and distinct liberation theologies have emerged on other major faiths accordingly.^{xliii}

On the other hand, religions and faiths also play a pro-active role in the field of civil society, particularly in the field of social capital which is amongst the major factors in the politico-economic life of a country, as well as its governance. The *Global Civil Society Report 2004/5* (p. 5) argues that "there is no way we can understand the logic, strategies and dynamics of civil society anywhere in the Third World unless we bring the transcendental dimension back into our analysis. Religious devotion is a fundamental motive for many social movements in the South, from Latin America to Africa and South Asia".^{xliv} Political and social movements and advocacy campaigns have often drawn upon religious motivations and the support of religious leaders. For instance, the churches' mobilization in support of the anti-apartheid campaign and the Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt forgiveness was central to their political visibility. In this vein, the Catholic Church was also among the parties mobilized in support of literacy in Latin America.^{xlv}

The emergence of what is known nowadays as global (non-violent) political Islamic movements all around the Muslim world has to some extent contributed towards the democracy and good governance process. Their contribution can be clearly seen in the constant struggle against corruption and administrative misconduct of the mainly undemocratic regimes of Muslim states. It is becoming apparent in most Muslim countries that parties with Islamic aspirations emerge as the voice of the people for reform and criticize the massive extent of corruption committed by the regimes that in many cases leads to poverty and the underdevelopment of most Muslim countries. The democratic activities of these religious movements show how religion plays a role in the political life of the people through a constant struggle to produce a “better society.”^{xlvi}

Consequently, the activities and orientations of those movements manage to influence development on the soil on which they operate. For the same reason, the Islamism phenomenon also has a significant impact on the social capital of the community in many Muslim nations. Their relentless struggle to provide welfare, charity and education to the people as part of their *modus operandi* benefits a large proportion of the community in which they live. The movements also rigorously address the vacuum left by most of the Middle Eastern and North African states ruled by autocratic and corrupted regimes with their mechanisms and institutions. Despite their initial aim, which is to spread their ideologies as well as for recruitment purposes and using the activities as the pretext, the movements have contributed massively toward tackling many social problems that the regimes have regularly overlooked.^{xlvii}

In the field of socio-economic development, the active involvement of religion in governance can be seen through activities of faith-based organizations’ (FBO). These organizations, whether they are local, national, or international, within the larger picture of civil society, are significant purveyors of education, service delivery and other non-market activities. Many of the efforts are driven by religious motivation and consciousness of their duty in spreading the values to which they adhere.^{xlviii} As an example, the most popular and greatest efforts to be studied belonged to the Christian evangelical development agency, World Vision.^{xlix} In 2003, they had a cash budget of US \$819 million, and an effective budget of US \$1.25 billion due to in-kind contributions, which were later utilized for their evangelical works all around the globe.¹

Another famous example is the Buddhist self-governance Savordhaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, which managed to mobilize its members to develop the underdeveloped rural and suburban areas in the country with physical facilities. Inspired by Ghandi, the movement, established by Dr A.T. Arayatne, provided people with educational means, health, communications and job opportunities, which enhanced the economy of the people.^{li} Along with those FBOs, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Islamic Relief, Catholic Relief Services, the Aga Khan Development Network and others also deliver significant resources hence contributing to the development of many countries all over the globe. According to the holistic contemporary technical definition of governance, these organizations effectively mobilized the third sector to cultivate development and eradicate poverty.^{lii}

The World Faiths Development Dialogue was established in 1998 to become a dialogue platform between different religions and faiths and the multilateral development agencies.^{liii} The World Bank's *World Development Report 2004 : Making Services Work for the Poor* also maintains that religious schools, institutions and organizations in many countries were referred to frequently as effective delivery mechanisms for the people. The report also highlights the importance of faith groups in providing services, emphasizing the importance of people's participation in planning and running them, as well to make the voluntary services accessible to all levels of the community.^{liv} It should also be mentioned that the World Bank's *Faiths and Environment : World Bank Support 2000-5* Report stresses that many positive engagements and the efficient role of faith organizations and institutions around the globe have contributed proportionately towards the preservation of the environment and sustainability of their countries with the support given by the World Bank.^{lv}

Having said all that, the involvement of faith in civil society and the social capital sphere emerged to fill the gap in the current Western-oriented liberal system of governance. Despite the role they played, the discourse of development based on religious precepts was not well developed as a separate discipline of knowledge from the religions' unique ontological roots, but rather a mere response to certain circumstances and realities. In fact, evaluation of the existence of religions or faiths or culturally-inspired factors along with their paradigms were still viewed and evaluated using the conventional economic paradigm, without any appreciation of their own unique cultural cognitive paradigm. Furthermore, the variables used to evaluate the rationale of incorporating religion or culture into the current governance paradigm still represent considerable bias in favour of Eurocentric modernity values in examining the subject.

Conclusion

Since, like conventional paradigms, religion and culture-based models are rational as in economic development and governance areas, exploration of culture and faith as alternatives for the conventional Western paradigm requires a formulation that is based on their unique worldviews, epistemologies, histories, and the arts and not just merely filling in the gaps in the existing system.^{lvi} It must also appreciate and acknowledge unique paradigms of religions or cultures in explaining how ideal "governance" should be with the objective of galvanizing the concept for the acceptability of the societies in which such concepts will work out. In this case, the establishment of such alternative epistemological paradigms should precede the exploration of its mechanisms. Moreover, religion or cultural-based paradigms, as alternatives with their relevant surroundings, are creative, non-imitative and original, non-essentialist, counter-Eurocentric, autonomous from the state, and autonomous from other national or transnational groupings.^{lvii}

The proposed approach in terms of endogenizing culture and religion despite its radical nature must not be interpreted or lead to the consequences of the total rejection of what is "Western." The Western experience, especially in the field of governance, has undoubtedly given a great deal of benefit to humanity. The systems, mechanisms, tools

and institutions that operate within the modern Western atmospheres have indeed delivered justice for their inhabitants under the banner of freedom and democracy. Development, high quality of life, welfare system, eradication of tyrants and depriving regimes, accountability, transparency, respect for the rights of others were amongst the intrinsic universal values of most cultures and societies. Instead of emerging as rivals to the conventional Western paradigms, they would enrich them and widen the current parameters, thereby transforming them from closed paradigms based upon modern Western assumptions into open-ended universal human paradigms based on knowledge of all cultural formations in all of their specificities and manifestations and attempt to arrive at a higher level of abstraction and, therefore, universality.^{lviii}

In accordance with the previous rationale, Sardar's assertion that the pluralist world demands from people of different cultures to work out "their own ways of being, doing and knowing" is worth acknowledging.^{lix} Such an effort will lead to the construction of cultures' own "science and technologies," hence undertaking "their own civilization project" instead of blindly imitating the Eurocentric paradigms. Furthermore, he maintains that no civilization can retain its vitality if it does not possess its own science.

Endnotes

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