

Is Islam an Obstacle to Development? Evidence to the Contrary and Some Methodological Considerations

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***Abstract:** This paper investigates the relationship between value systems and economic development. Beginning with Weber, many social scientists, especially in the West, have expressed the belief that Islam is an obstacle to development. This is, in turn, used to explain widespread underdevelopment in almost all the Muslim countries. The intellectual root of their argument is Weber's assertion that the Protestant ethic was responsible for the development of capitalism in western countries. This study tries to show that works of Weber, Sutcliffe, and Parkinson are flawed on methodological and substantive grounds. Work done by Muslim social scientists in response to such claims has even more serious flaws than that of their western counterparts. In the present investigation, using data from a study carried out in Kelantan by Prof. Zeyauddin of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology IIUM in 1992, the author attempts to show that development may assume a different meaning in a traditional Muslim community, and despite the less developed status of an area, the people may be as ambitious and motivated as any people in the world.*

Despite the fact that almost all of the Muslim countries of today are developing or underdeveloped, the issues concerning development have not attracted the attention of Muslim scholars, who did not or could not

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produce explanations for the backwardness of their countries. Except for some brief and sketchy remarks on development, there are not much widely accepted theories that we can use here. Unfortunately, here as in most areas, much of the work on development originates from western scholars.

One good reason for western scholars' concern with development has been their firsthand experience of the issue. In fact, the widespread interest in socioeconomic change among European scholars has been in part a direct reflection of the circumstances of their time. They were reacting to one of the most tumultuous periods¹ in history, which witnessed the rapid expansion of industrial manufacturing, growth in population, urbanization, and the increasing national importance of the political and bureaucratic activity of the state. It is important to note that these processes did not crop up all of a sudden in the nineteenth century and they were not prevalent in all European countries at the same degree.

The interpretation of these processes of social change varied considerably among those whose work is now regarded as "classic" like Marx (1818-1883), Durkheim (1858-1917), and Weber (1864-1920). Despite their considerable differences, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber shared the common concern of identifying the basic features of societies that promote or inhibit development. In varying degrees they were affected by the dominant Darwinian thought which challenged the established notion of an unchanging, predetermined, God-given order to the world. Under the influence of Darwinian theory they started suggesting the possibility that social change could be explained in terms of some principle of social evolution. In particular they were investigating if societies follow certain "stages" in their development and whether these stages are the same in past and present societies. What will they be in the future?

The twentieth century has seen the critique, refinement, and even attempted synthesis of the ideas of these men. Their theories gave birth to two schools of thought which dominated the literature on development and change. The first is called "modernization theory,"² and was prominent in the 1950s and 1960s. The intellectual forefathers of this school were Durkheim and Weber, who contributed to the identification of the common features of the process of development. The second, which was popular in 1970s, is called "underdevelopment theory,"³ which benefited from the analysis of the economic system of capitalism developed by Marx.

Marx downplayed the role of religion by describing it as "opium."

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed culture, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people."⁴ In fact there is no place in Marxist theory for religion, which is presented as something which works against development. Contrary to Marx, both Durkheim and Weber conceived of religion as important for the continuation of societies. The difference lies in the way they attribute importance to religion. For Durkheim, religion was an inevitable ingredient of moral life which held societies together. For Weber it was more than a cement holding individuals together, in that it not only integrated individuals but also regulated their behaviour. This additional function that he attributes to religion makes Weber more relevant for our discussion here.

The fundamental question to which Weber addressed himself was why capitalism (capitalist manufacturing) was nourished only in the economies of Western Europe. He argued that the emergence of capitalism can be explained by the existence of a cultural process *peculiar to Western society*, namely *rationalization*, through which the rational organization of business enterprise to establish steady profitability and the accumulation of capital was possible. Making money was not, argued Weber, the principal factor behind this process. The crucial factor was the rational ethos of the spirit of capitalism which was responsible for the transfer from mere money making to large-scale capitalist enterprise. Commitment to hard work and the steady accumulation of capital through careful investment promoted a work ethic which had its roots not in economics but religion.

In his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber⁵ argues that the doctrines of John Calvin (1509-1564) were responsible for the rise of capitalism. Central to this doctrine was the belief in *predestination*, that is, God has already decided about the saved and the damned and no one can know whether he or she is one of the chosen few. More importantly, salvation cannot be earned through hard work or declarations of faith. This caused, what Weber called, the "salvation panic" among the believers. The solution found to this impasse was to think that people could not be successful in this world without God's blessings. With this, the belief of unknowable predestination was made less awesome by believing that success was a sign (although never a proof) of election. For believers, then, success at work (for that matter in anything) meant to glorify God; any weakness, failure or self-indulgence meant damnation. Success, diligence, discipline, and moderation were as crucial in business as anywhere else. These religious concerns shared by Protestants created

a new work ethic which was in tune with the spirit of capitalism.

Weber tried to support his propositions with historical evidence. In fact, his interest in China and India⁶ can be taken as a search to find factors to explain the nonemergence of capitalism in these societies. For instance, in the case of China, Weber thought that the structure of the typical Chinese community, characterized by rigid kinship bonds in the form of sibs, the Chinese state which was largely patrimonial and governed by tradition, prerogative and favouritism, and the nature of the Chinese language—which makes systematic thought difficult—were structural barriers to the rise of capitalism.

In a similar fashion, Weber discussed the structural barriers of the caste system in India.⁷ Also the idea of reincarnation and belief that salvation could be achieved by faithfully following the rules but not being successful in economic activity were structural barriers to the rise of capitalism and, more generally, a rationally ordered society in India.⁸

Weber did not investigate the religion of Islam and Muslim countries in as much detail as he did the religions of India and China. Despite the lack of deeper understanding of Islam he claimed, comparing it with Christianity, that Islam "lacked the requirement of a comprehensive knowledge of the law and lacked the intellectual training in casuistry which nurtured the rationalism of Judaism."⁹ He misinterprets Prophet Muhammad's (SAS) saying to someone, upon seeing him in ragged attire, "when Allah blesses a man with prosperity He likes to see the signs thereof visible on him," as corresponding to the feudal conception of status. He went on to assert that "the 'feudalistic' Islamic religion provides little incentive for individual initiative, scientific inquiry, and intellectual boldness." Weber reached the conclusion that Islam with its "thoroughly traditionalistic ethic ... directed in the conduct of life into paths whose effect was plainly opposite to the methodical control of life found among Puritans."¹⁰

On the basis of the aforementioned description of Islam, which actually represents countless similar ones, one may charge Weber, as has been done by Rodinson,¹¹ with not knowing anything about Islam whatsoever. Rather than subscribing to any accusation like this, it is more appropriate to discuss the weaknesses of his theory. Essentially there are two problems with Weber's theory on the advent and development of capitalism. The first is methodological, which is twofold. One of them relates to the difficulty in showing that any religiously influenced value system can be responsible for the rise of capitalism. It is quite impossible to single out the effect of some value system on any

behaviour, let alone economic behaviour. This is not to deny the effect of values on behaviour. What is claimed here is that the relationship between values and behaviour is very complex to investigate, and Weber did not show the mechanism of this relationship clearly. On this point Mair suggests that:

In some religions, the idea of an individual fate that one cannot escape may lead people to take little interest in plans to improve their fortunes. Hinduism and Islam both include such an idea, but *it is very important to be aware how much or how little in a given case people's attitudes towards the practical problem of their own lives are affected by it.*¹² [Emphasis is mine]

The other methodological problem associated with Weber's thesis is the abstract and general nature of the concept that he employs in his explanation such as "the spirit of capitalism." Such a concept is difficult to define and operationalize, which makes his analysis difficult either to confirm or refute.¹³

The second problem pertains to the flaws in the facts on which he built his theory. In fact, Weber overlooked and omitted many facts which constitute potential counter evidence to his theory and misinterpreted many which create ambiguities in understanding the relationship between the values and behaviour. According to Goldthorpe, one of Trevor-Roper's criticisms against Weber is:

The idea that large-scale industrial capitalism was ideologically impossible before the Reformation is exploded by the simple fact that it existed.... Until the invention of the steam engine, its scope may have been limited, but within that scope it probably reached its highest peak in the age of the Fugger. After that there were convulsions which caused the great capitalists to migrate, with their skills and workmen, to new centers... The novelty lay not in the entrepreneurs themselves, but the circumstances which drove them to emigrate...not so much Protestantism and the expelled entrepreneurs as Catholicism and the expelling societies.¹⁴

Probably the best counterevidence falsifying Weber's thesis is recorded by Trevor Ling about India. Weber was alive at that time and was trying to collect material for his work on India.

From the point of Weber's verdict on India the unkindest twist of fate was that in 1911, the first really notable large scale example of all-Indian industrial capitalism, the Tata Iron and Steel Company, began production. J. N. Tata ... died in 1904, but the scheme was taken up

and pursued by his son, Dorabji Tata. In 1906 rich resources of iron ore were discovered in ... Bihar, which the Maharaja was prepared to allow Tata to work, in return for royalties on the ore. The capital needed for the construction of the plant was £1¾ million. A prospectus was issued by Tata in August 1907. Nationalist fervour was at its height and the leaders of the movement were urging all Indians to join in and support the Swadeshi movement to support Indian-owned production of every kind, and to boycott British goods. The result was that "from early morning till late at night the Tata offices in Bombay were besieged by an eager crowd of native investors, old and young.... At the end of three weeks the entire capital for the construction requirement was secured, every penny contributed by some 8,000 Indians." The construction of the plant was begun in 1909. In 1911, when Weber was writing his *Hinduism and Buddhism*, the first iron ore was being produced by an Indian company.¹⁵

This evidence clearly indicates that Weber was wrongly attributing capitalistic entrepreneurship only to the European countries that adopted the Protestant ethic. Although it does not change the fact that he was mistaken about the rationalistic character of non-European countries, one should not be quick to blame Weber for not observing these developments, given their newness at that time. However, as noted by many social scientists, Weber, had he been alive today, would have immense difficulties in explaining the notably enterprising character of Indians abroad in countries such as Burma and Malaysia. This phenomenon alone is enough to cast doubt on his thesis.

Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that Weber also misidentified the cause which gave birth to capitalism. As Trevor-Roper noted, it was the "migrant status rather than the doctrinal attachment as the critical factor in the making of an enterprising minority."¹⁶ He also noted that:

Neither Holland nor Scotland nor Geneva nor the Palatinate—the four obvious Calvinist societies—produced their own entrepreneurs. The compulsory Calvinist teaching with which the natives of those communities were indoctrinated had no such effect. Almost all the great entrepreneurs were immigrants. Secondly, the majority of these immigrants were Netherlanders: some of them, perhaps, were Calvinists only because they were Netherlanders.¹⁷

Weber is not alone in claiming that Islam is an obstacle to development. Sutcliffe, in his widely known study conducted in the Jordan Valley with a sample of 278 Muslims, tested the following three hypotheses: the more religious a respondent is: (1) the less likely he is to

be oriented to the future; (2) the less likely he is to be oriented to mastery over nature; and (3) the less likely he is to be oriented to doing.¹⁸ The first two hypotheses, inspired by Weber, are meant to test the traditionalistic character and influence of Islam in directing Muslims away from mastery of their environment. The last one is inspired by McClelland, who claims that Muslims are low in achievement.¹⁹ Statistical testing indicated that "religious commitment has no statistically significant effect on these value orientations." Sutcliffe also entertained two more hypotheses relating to the adoption of modern farm methods and productivity, which directly test the assumption that Islam is an obstacle to development. Again he found out that "religious commitment has no statistically significant effect on adoption of modern farm methods or productivity."

Instead of leaving the results as they are and explaining why this is the case, he goes on to describe these findings as "surprising negative" and tries to explain how he ended up with these surprising "negative findings." Why the findings are "negative" (probably he means "contrary to what he expected") escapes us, since terms like "negative" are never used to describe the results of statistical hypothesis testing. He forces himself to advance the following interpretation. First, he rules out the possibility that there might be some measurement error or error in operationalization of "Islam." Since he does not bring any assurance whatsoever for the validity of his measurements, a claim of "no error" is meaningless. He completes his interpretation by saying that "...these negative findings should not have been surprising, but rather could have been predicted if what we 'know' about Islam and Muslims ... was based less on stereotype and more on social sciences."²⁰ Besides openly admitting his ignorance of Islam and Muslims, what he is implying is the idea that Islam is different from what the Muslims preach. The findings obtained here apply to Muslims who live differently than the principles of their religion. He advances such an interpretation just to maintain the possibility of the idea that Islam still is an obstacle to economic development. Then he fails to answer the question of why Muslims, if they are not affected by the negative influence of Islam, are still living in a state of underdevelopment.

There are reasons to believe that the biases observed in Sutcliffe's study originate from his strong and unquestionable loyalty to Weber and his follower McClelland. Just like Weber, Sutcliffe misinterprets the Qur'anic verse which states "It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Apostle have decided an affair, to have any

choice in that affair..." as the absence in Islam of free will which is so crucial for the mastery orientation (Weber) and achievement motivation (McClelland). According to Sutcliffe the absence of free will "would seem to be sufficient to establish Islam as an obstacle to development."²¹ Beyond the mistake in interpretation of the verse²² which again stems from ignorance about Islam, the "sufficiency" attributed to this relationship is unclear and without any ground. It is obvious that by following the same logic one can find numerous statements in any religion to accuse it of being an obstacle to development.

The last Western social scientist discussed here is the economist Parkinson, who, agreeing with the idea that Islam retards economic development, brings evidence from Malaysia to highlight the negative influence of religion on economic development. Parkinson is particularly relevant for our discussion since our data also pertain to Malaysia.

Parkinson²³ touches upon religion as one of the noneconomic factors in the economic retardation of the rural Malays. The main point in his article is that "Malay society is economically retarded because the Malays resist the kinds of change which ... lead to economic development."²⁴ He claims that Malays resist and oppose to change and prefer old, traditional ways of doing things. One of the factors contributing to the backwardness of Malays is their fatalistic attitude toward life, which arises from adherence to Islam. According to Parkinson, this fatalism stems from "the Islamic belief that all things are emanations from God."²⁵ He goes on to assert that, "In economic affairs, this is most clearly seen in the concept of *rezeki*, a person's divinely inspired economic lot. Such an attitude constitutes a significant drag on economic development."²⁶ Moreover he relates this belief to another one, which strengthens the fatalistic character of the Malays even further. This is the belief concerning the advent of a Messiah, the Islamic *mahdī* who "will appear on earth and lead his followers into what might be called a 'golden age' of perfection."²⁷ He also points out the way that Islamic messianism will affect the Malays' economic ambition and aspiration by saying that "...there is the tendency to sit and wait passively for change to occur rather than to become vehicles of change. In short, there is a tendency to adopt an attitude of resignation rather than of innovation."²⁸

The views mentioned in Parkinson's article, and others, do not exhaust all that is said by those who blame Islam for the low economic development of the Muslim countries. One of the views which is used more frequently by these circles is the belief of Muslims in the hereafter, or the world to come. They think that the Muslims place too much

emphasis on the hereafter, which has a weakening effect on the ties of the individual to this world. They also claim that the humbleness and contentment with what one has, which Islam propagates, in turn produce a type of individual who does not care for much of the worldly phenomenon of personal well-being and national development. Those who advance such views usually do not know Islam well enough to offer such interpretations; what is more, their analysis is ahistorical, which means that they do not take into account the times when the Muslims, believers in the very same religion, dominated most of the world in almost every field.²⁹ They are also wrong in their assertion that there is disproportionate emphasis on the hereafter in Islam. Their efforts to understand and interpret Islam on the basis of the experiences of Muslims are misleading, since such an approach assumes that Islam is what Muslims practice, which is not true.

Most of the issues raised by Parkinson were criticized first by Wilder³⁰ and later by others³¹ rather harshly. We do not intend to repeat them here. However it should be noted that Weber, Sutcliffe, and Parkinson, despite their obvious ignorance of Islam and the cultures of Islamic countries, all insist on commenting on it. Their mistake lies in the causality that they attribute to the relationship between the religion of Islam and the behaviour of Muslims. Besides the difficulties in explaining behaviour by the effect of a value system that was mentioned in case of Weber, they also tend to forget that the believers in the same religion dominated the world when the Europeans were living in the darkness of the Middle Ages. Unlike Christianity, the principles of Islam have never been tampered with or changed. It has to be something else that explains the relative underdevelopment of the Muslim countries. On this point, Ragab offers two explanations: (1) The unique institutional nature of Islam that presupposes full control by Muslims over their decisions, and, (2) The adverse international power relations. Economic backwardness of Muslim countries is a fact, but to hold Islam responsible for this is gross reductionism and does not follow any rules of logic or scientific methodological principles. It is also a fact that there seems to be some discrepancy between Islamic principles and the way Muslims behave.³²

Studies attacking Islam in relation to economic development have attracted scanty response from Muslim social scientists. Moreover, those who responded to these accusations have followed a rather mistaken methodology in their responses. The major flaw observed in these studies is the tendency to use verses from the Qur'ān, and *ahādīth* which describe the ideal situation in its most abstract and general form. This

means that they are responding to accusations based on the actual situation with idealistic and general Islamic principles. This is comparing "what it is" with "what it should be."

It is clear that Islam is attacked due to the underdevelopment of Muslims, and support for this attack is usually provided in the form of some evidence, historical and textual in the case of Weber and Parkinson, and empirical in the case of Sutcliffe. Following the famous dictum of Popper,³³ the best policy to adopt is to try to falsify the claims by bringing counterevidence, which can be accomplished by employing various methods, from historical to experimental, that are understandable by Westerners. It would be proper to deal with those verses from the Qur'ān and the *ahādīth* which reflect the actual experiences of Muslims rather than overemphasizing the general principles. Such an approach answers historically some of claims of the Westerners. For those accusations, the bases of which are empirical studies, the Muslims have to conduct similar research to refute these claims. As a critique of Sutcliffe's above mentioned empirical study conducted in a Jordan valley, Sadeq has presented some verses and *ahādīth* as a response.³⁴ They include verses such as "Do not forget your share of this world" (28:77); "When prayer is over, disperse in the world and seek the bounty of Allah" (62:10); and "A person gets whatever he strives for" (53:39); and *ahādīth* such as "A faithful and trustworthy trader or businessman will be with the prophets, *siddīqīn*, and martyrs on the Day of Judgement,"³⁵ are relevant and well-chosen but say nothing about the experiences of today's Muslims. A similar approach has also been adopted by Mutairi.³⁶ Ragab³⁷ is the only author who brought more historical evidence without resorting too much to the general principles of Islam. Such an approach constitutes the most serious methodological weakness for Muslim social scientists and should be redressed immediately.

In what follows an attempt will be made to show empirically that members of a traditional Muslim community where people are known for their adherence to Islam may not necessarily be fatalistic and other-worldly; on the contrary they may have worldly goals. With this piece of evidence it will become evident that even in a relatively less developed and traditional community people could be ambitious and achievement-oriented. However, such people may have a different conception of development, particularly economic development. This goes on to show that the concept of "development" can not be easily be captured and explained in terms of a single factor like religion.

Data

Data were collected from Kelantan, one of the thirteen states of Malaysia. It is located in the northeast of the peninsula and populated mostly by Malays. Kelantan is the poorest of all states in terms of GNP. Lack of natural resources, which are greatly enjoyed by other states, is one of the main reasons for its relative underdevelopment. Although poor in material terms, Kelantan is rich in history, as manifested in Islamic literature in the form of journals, books, and literary works. It has great imams and Islamic scholars. Furthermore Kelantan is a state where people have shown great concern for adopting Islamic principles in different spheres of their life.

Sampling: The population of the study is composed of people who are fifteen years of age and older living in the state of Kelantan as defined by its administrative borders at the time of the research. In 1990 the population of Kelantan was 1,173,740 persons living in an area of 14,992 square kilometres. Those who were fifteen years old and older were 669,420.³⁸ The unit of analysis was the household. The sampling technique utilized in the research was multistage cluster sampling, which requires the successive selection of clusters from larger to smaller until the final clusters are found from which sample elements are selected randomly. Two-level stratification was applied in the study; in the first, two districts (Kota Baru and Pasir Mas) among the existing eight were selected, and in the second, villages in these two districts were randomly determined. Finally households to be visited were chosen randomly within each village. In urban areas care was taken to include people from different socioeconomic status (SES) and, in order to secure a fair representation, neighbourhoods with different SES were identified and sampled proportionately. City centres were taken to represent the urban population, and villages and other small residential areas were taken to represent the rural population in Kelantan. The final selection of sampling elements in each sector was done randomly. The resulting sample of 600 was weighted so as to get the desired percentages for rural and urban populations without changing the total sample size.³⁹

Research Instrument: A specially developed questionnaire was used as the data gathering instrument. The questionnaire was pretested in the field between 26 August and 31 August 1991 to detect any flaws and correct them. Data were gathered in face-to-face interviews with the respondents. Local interviewers were used due to their familiarity with the people, their culture; and Kelantan.

The questionnaire itself is composed of seven sections, each of which probes a different aspect of social, economic, political, and religious life.⁴⁰ In addition to the questionnaire some in-depth interviews were conducted with a small number of respondents. Although their number does not exceed fifteen, they provide historical and complementary information on some of the issues probed in the questionnaire.

Values and Perceptions about Economic Development

Since Weber's seminal work, *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, there have been serious discussions about the relationship between value systems and economic development. Despite the overwhelming attention paid to this matter by social scientists, many issues remain unclear even today. Observing the fact that none of the Muslim countries is developed and industrialized, some scholars are inclined to think that Islam has something to do with it, and they are prone to conclude that Islam has a detrimental effect on development. However, the observation that almost all of the Muslim countries are underdeveloped is a statement which does not lead logically to the conclusion that Islam is an obstacle to development. Furthermore, the inductively inferred statement that "almost all Muslim countries are underdeveloped" does not, as Popper indicated, constitute a basis for generalization.⁴¹

It is our belief that such hasty conclusions are unwarranted and also unscientific. In order to assert that Islam has a damaging effect on development, one needs to establish the nature of the relationship between values or value systems and the development process. From our point of view, which is mainly methodological, perhaps the most important issue in Weber's study is not its success in explaining how Protestantism has given rise to capitalism but its indication of how a value system with strong religious overtones affects the way individuals think and work. What is crucial here is the values and how strongly they are adhered to by the members of society.

However, any study on values, let alone one which aims at explaining the effects of values on economic development, carries considerable difficulties. One serious problem in studying values is that they are the expression of what is desirable and undesirable in the eyes of individuals. It is often the case that even individuals themselves are not very clear about their values. Fortunately the focus here is not so much the values *per se* but how Kelantanese, supposing that they are under the effect of the Islamic value system, evaluate certain issues regarding economic

development. The questions included in the questionnaire probe the relationship between Islam on the one hand and economic development on the other. In other words, what is the perception of the Kelantanese with regard to the role of Islam in promoting the economic development which has been underway with unprecedented velocity during the last ten or fifteen years in Malaysia? Do they believe that economic development is a threat for Islam? Is it possible for a society to be developed, and to keep the Islamic values intact at the same time?

Table 1 reports the responses given to six questions regarding the relation between economic development and morality. The overall majority of the Kelantanese are satisfied with the economic development underway in the country. Although the majority indicate satisfaction with the economic development, three-fourths of the respondents also think that life and environment are negatively affected by this development. Almost all of them feel that religious and moral development should accompany economic development. It is clear that their understanding of economic development is different from the way the term is generally understood in a purely materialistic connotation. It is well-known that it is precisely this materialistic understanding of development, at the expense of moral development, on the part of today's developed countries that constitutes the source of all the disturbances including the social and moral problems prevailing in those countries. The Kelantanese see the problems accompanying economic development and they do not approve of any economic development unless it is backed up by religious and moral development.

They also believe that economic development does not necessarily satisfy their spiritual needs. This is to say that nothing is second to religious and moral development in terms of satisfying the spiritual needs of humans. They would like to have economic development isolated from its dehumanizing effects.

One is struck by the high degree of consensus seen in this table which indicates a very homogeneous group whose members share similar views on the necessity of religious and moral development to accompany the so-called economic development. They perceive that if it is allowed to go unchecked, economic development will certainly have damaging and dehumanizing effects on individuals. Actually this has been the recurring theme in Kelantan's history, which manifests itself in political disputes between various groups.

It is possible to trace some of the ideas about how the leaders of Kelantan envision economic development, which reveals what they value

the most. A Kelantanese leader once remarked on the charges that they are opposed to economic development in the state:

We are not [against economic progress]. But we are against their kind of progress. Theirs is a progress only of bricks and cement, superficial and materialistic. That is not the kind of progress which is sought by the people, nor will benefit them. For us the concept of progress is not simply an economic concept, measurable in terms of the number of factories and land schemes that have been opened. For us progress consists of uplifting a society and a people from material poverty, social oppression, and a crippling backwardness. Its goal is *moral*, not just material. It is directed to the people and their own dignity.⁴² [emphasis is mine]

Table 1. Values and Perceptions of Economic Development

Items	Yes %	No %	DK %
1. Satisfied with the economic development in this area.	86.0	14.0	-
2. Bad effects of economic development on life and environment.	73.8	25.8	0.3
3. Economic development should go side by side with religious and moral development.	98.2	1.4	0.3
4. Economic development without religion and moral development leads one astray.	90.6	9.0	0.3
5. Economic development doesn't satisfy our spiritual needs.	88.8	10.9	0.3
6. Economic development must not be a dehumanizing influence.	98.2	1.5	0.3

The responses of the Kelantanese to the questions on economic development make it clear that they are conscious of the threats posed by the materialistic type of economic development that does not take into account the spiritual development of individuals. Their being mostly rural people characterized by strong adherence to their values makes them sincere believers in economic development along with and supported by moral and religious values.

Goals and Perceptions

Let us turn to the goals that Kelantanese set for themselves and their perception of the likelihood that their goals may be realized. The questionnaire includes some questions such as "What is your goal in life?" which invite considerable variation in the answers. Considering the number of response categories, which could easily reach 5,060, a different approach was adopted in coding such variables. That is, instead of coding the answers as they are, responses were coded on the basis of their being material/thisworldly or spiritual/otherworldly. In cases where a response had both spiritual and materialistic connotations it was coded as "both." It is obvious that this way of coding will not only provide more insight regarding the Kelantanese, but will also ease substantially the difficulties in data analysis.

One would expect a larger number of respondents choosing the spiritual/otherworldly response categories in this section, due to the Islamic orientation of the Kelantanese. But this could be a misleading expectation, given the fact there is as much emphasis on worldly affairs in Islam as on the otherworldly ones. The verses from the Qur'an and *ahādīth* are well known and need not be cited here. It may suffice to say that Islam requires the believers to pay equal attention to worldly affairs as to otherworldly ones. The questionnaire was developed in order to ascertain the extent to which the Kelantanese prefer worldly or otherworldly goals in response to different items covering various facets of social life. The findings of this section are very important since they test the claim of those who describe the Muslims as not having any interest in worldly affairs.

The responses given to the question "What is your goal in life?" indicate that almost half of the Kelantanese (48%) have set goals for themselves which are worldly, while 29 percent have otherworldly goals and 20 percent have goals which are both worldly and otherworldly. As mentioned above, this result goes against the expectation of many who visualize the Kelantanese as people with no worldly interests. Given the importance of this question, it is possible to claim that the Kelantanese are probably not different from other Malaysians concerning their desires in life. It is then wrong to describe them as people with a totally different outlook than the rest of the population. It is even possible to interpret the high percent of Kelantanese choosing worldly goals as showing that they know Islam well. The general belief expressing the view that "Muslims should work as they will never die and pray as they will die tomorrow," supports their position regarding worldly goals. The Kelantanese who

have otherworldly goals make up less than one-third of the sample. Had the stereotypic description of Kelantanese as purely otherworldly people been correct, this percentage should have been much higher.

Table 2. Goal in Life (GOAL), How to Achieve it (HOWACH) by Place of Residence

<i>Item</i>	<i>Worldly</i>			<i>Otherworldly</i>			<i>Both</i>			<i>None</i>		
	<i>K^c</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>R</i>
GOAL ^a	48	59	42	29	13	37	20	26	18	0.7	0.3	1
HOWACH ^b	49	48	50	28	24	30	17	22	14	1	-	2

^aGOAL: What is your goal in life?

^bHOWACH: How can you achieve it?

^cK stands for Kelantan, U for urban and R for rural population.

Among urban Kelantanese, 59 percent of the respondents have worldly goals. Only 13 percent of the urban Kelantanese choose otherworldly goals for themselves. Among the rural population, 42 percent of the people prefer worldly goals, which is more than those who desired otherworldly goals (37%).

Table 3. Possibility of Achieving the Goals (POSACH) by Place of Residence

<i>POSACH^a</i>	<i>Kelantan</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>
Yes	59	65	55
No	4	1	6
Not Sure	12	2	17
Don't Know	19	25	16

^aPOSACH: Possibility of achieving it.

Kelantanese have more worldly goals than otherworldly ones, and they are, contrary to how they are described, as much interested as anybody else in the material world around them. Is it possible to interpret these findings as evidence to show how materially-oriented the Malays are, which is exactly the same thing that Parkinson and others have done in describing the Malays "fatalistic" because they believe that all things are emanations from God. Evidence here indicates that they are ambitious and their aspirations are worldly at least as much as otherworldly.

As important as the question on goals in life is the question of "How can you achieve it?" which in a way complements the first one. There is quite a similarity between the responses on the nature of goals and the responses on the nature of ways to achieve these goals. Those Kelantanese who expressed worldly goals also believe that these goals can be achieved by worldly means, and similarly those favouring otherworldly goals choose means that refer to the otherworld.

About the possibility of achieving their goals, 65 percent of the Kelantanese are hopeful and believe that they can be achieved, while only 4 percent are rather pessimistic. Those who are hesitant about their responses make up almost one-third of the sample. In this sense the future seems brighter, more to urban than to rural Kelantanese. Those who are not sure and don't know their answer are one-third of the rural population, which seems a high percentage. In order to see the relationship between the goals and possibility of achieving them, crosstabulation of the two variables was obtained. Table 4 presents the crosstab.

Table 4. Crosstabulation of GOAL with POSACH

<i>POSACH^a</i>	<i>GOAL</i>		
	<i>Worldly</i>	<i>Otherworldly</i>	<i>Both</i>
Yes	84.5	45.9	29.4
No	4.4	1.2	10.1
Not Sure	4.8	26.0	12.2
Nothing	1.4	0.0	0.0
Don't Know	4.8	26.9	48.3

^aPossibility of achieving the goal.

It is quite interesting to observe that 85 percent of those who have worldly goals believe that it is possible to attain them. The degree of determinism in the sense of setting goals and having confidence in achieving them explains why the Kelantanese are described stereotypically as ambitious and competitive people, compared with the rest of the Malays. However, among those Kelantanese who prefer otherworldly goals, only 46 percent indicate the possibility of achieving their goals. Still one-fourth are not sure and another 27 percent do not give any response to this question. Obviously this finding indicates lack of determination among those who set otherworldly goals for themselves. They have goals but they are not sure that their goals will be actualized. If it is possible to identify those who desire otherworldly goals as more religious, then an alternate interpretation will be that more religious Kelantanese have weak ties to both this world and the otherworld. Another plausible interpretation is in line with Islamic tradition, which stresses that Allah is the only authority in deciding the destiny of His creatures and no one but Allah can judge their performance based on what they do in this world. The latter interpretation seems more appropriate given the high percentages of "Not sure" and "Don't know" responses.

This finding also confirms and strengthens our earlier interpretation about the nature of the Malays. They can be described as ambitious, since they not only choose worldly goals but also believe that they will realize them, which is an indication of a high degree of self-determination.

Conclusions

The main thrust of this paper is to show that the relationship between values and behaviour is quite difficult to analyze. This should not be taken as denying the effect of values on behaviour. Without having proper methodology to isolate the effect of a given value system on a particular behaviour, it is meaningless to claim that Islam has a detrimental effect on development. Similarly, the counter-argument that Islam has a positive effect on development is difficult to prove.

Observation that all Muslim countries are underdeveloped does not constitute evidence that they will always be so. Furthermore, the alleged causality, that Islam is responsible for the backwardness of the Muslim countries, is groundless. Following the Popperian argument, one can claim that this observation will be valid until one finds a counter-example. There are now indications that a few Muslim countries are performing well economically, in breaking up the state of underdevelopment.

Blaming Islam for exerting a negative influence on development, as found in the statements of Weber, Sutcliffe, and Parkinson is ill-conceived. They tend to confuse Islam with what Muslims preach. This is the ideal situation one would expect, but the fact is there have always been deviations from the principles of any religion. If every Muslim lived by the principles of Islam, there would be considerably fewer problems facing them. History of the Muslim countries bears witness to the fact that when the principles of Islam were observed closely, the Muslims led the world in many areas of life. History also indicates the times of Muslims' weakness coincided with weak adherence to the Islamic principles. Therefore the blame should be directed to the Muslims and their interpretation of Islam, rather than Islam itself. If one applies the same logic to the western world, the source of many evils and deviant forms of behaviour, one would have to blame Christianity, which is not true.

Notes

1. Polanyi speaks of this period as the "great transformation" and mentions the "acute social dislocations" created by the "ravages of the satanic mills." See K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944) 73.
2. For the work of the well-known proponents of this theory, see D. McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (New York: van Nostrand, 1961); E. E. Hagen, *On the Theory of Social Change* (Homewood, Ill: Dorsey, 1961); D. Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: The Free Press, 1964); S. N. Eisenstadt, *Modernization: Protest and Change* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966); P. Bauer, *Dissent on Development* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976).
3. Among the proponents of this theory Kay and Amin worked on merchant capitalism. See G. Kay, *Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1975) and S. Amin, *Unequal Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976); Fieldhouse worked on colonialism. See D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism* (London: Longman, 1967); and Nkrumah on neocolonialism. See K. Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Nelson, 1965). On Third World dependency see, A. G. Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967). On uneven development in the Third World, see M. Lipton, *Why Poor People Stay Poor* (London: Temple Smith, 1977). For efforts to converge neo-Marxist and neomodernization theories refer to D. Apter,

Rethinking Development: Modernization, Dependency and Postmodern Politics, (Newbury Park: Sage, 1988). Also growing in sociological theory is the focus on understanding how political resources can empower elites, classes or interest groups to shape social change, which is best illustrated in the work of M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

4. Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of the Right*: Introduction," in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978) 54.

5. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Unwin University Books, 1965).

6. See Max Weber's works on China and India: *The Religion of China*, trans., H.H. Gerth (New York: The Free Press, 1951); and, *The Religion of India*, trans. H.H. Gerth and D. Martinda (New York: The Free Press, 1958). Oommen notes that "Weber's analysis rests on European interpretations of Indian culture based on texts..."; also see T.K. Oommen, "Religion and Development in Hindu Society" *Social Compass* 39: 1 (1992): 68.

7. Oommen critically evaluates studies on Hinduism and economic development briefly and notes a few caveats: (1) Americanization of Weber as a consequence of misleading translations of Weber's works into English; (2) The dominant assumptions, namely, that there is something called Hinduism, that it is the national religion of India, that religion occupies a central position in Indian civilization, that the central thrust of Hinduism is otherworldly, and so on, all of which are misconceived; and finally (3) The very meaning of the concept of development has undergone radical change in recent times. See Oommen, "Religion and Development," 69.

8. G. Ritzer, *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992) 147-155.

9. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. E. Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963) 18.

10. *Ibid.*, 265.

11. See K.S. Jomo, "Islam and Weber: Rodinson on the implication of Religion for Capitalist Development," *Developing Economies* 15: 2 (1977): 178.

12. L. Mair, *Anthropology and Development* (London: Macmillan, 1984) 25.

13. J.E. Goldthorpe, *The Sociology of the Third World: Disparity and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

14. *Ibid.*, 208.

15. *Ibid.*, 209.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. Claud R. Sutcliffe, "Is Islam an Obstacle to Development? Ideal Patterns of Belief versus Actual Patterns of Behaviour," *Journal of Developing Areas*, 10 (1975): 77-81.

19. Actually McClelland's claim is that, "Arabs as Moslems are probably generally low in *n* achievement." see D. McClelland, *The Achieving Society*

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(New York: Van Nostrand, 1961).

20. Sutcliffe, "Is Islam an Obstacle to Development?" 80.

21. *Ibid.*, 78.

22. See A. M. Sadeq, "Entrepreneurship, Achievement Motivation and Economic Development," *Islamic Economics* 2 (1990): 39-44, for a more accurate interpretation of the verse.

23. Brian K. Parkinson, "Non-economic Factors in the Economic Retardation of the Rural Malays" in D. Lim, ed., *Readings on Malaysian Economic Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

24. W. Wilder, "Islam, Other Factors and Malay Backwardness: Comments on an Argument" in D. Lim ed., *Readings on Malaysian Economic Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) 341.

25. Parkinson, "Non-economic Factors," 336.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. On this point refer to I. Lichtenstadter, *Islam and the Modern Age* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958) and R. Landau, *Islam and the Arabs* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958). Lichtenstadter argues that Arabs of the sixth century were well-organized and civilized, which is contrary to the general belief that they were backward and uncivilized. Landau emphasizes the leadership role of the Muslim East in science, philosophy, and the arts during medieval times and acknowledges the contribution of the Muslims without which it would have been impossible for the West to develop when it did.

30. Wilder, "Islam, Other Factors and Malay Backwardness."

31. I. A. Ragab, "Islam and Development," *World Development* 8 (1980): 513-521.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Popper answered the question "How do you know?" by saying, "I do not know: my assertion was merely a guess. Never mind the source or the sources from which it may spring.... But *if you are interested in the problem which I tried to solve by my tentative assertion, you may help me by criticizing it as severely as you can...*" [Emphasis is mine] see K. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968) 27.

34. Sadeq, "Entrepreneurship, Achievement Motivation and Economic Development."

35. *Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Kitāb al-Buyūʿ*.

36. H. M. Al-Mutairi, "An Islamic Perspective Towards Development," *Hamdard Islamicus*, 16: 4 (1993): 27-50.

37. Ragab, "Islam and Development."

38. Kelantan Development Statistics (KDS) (Kota Bharu: State Economic Planning Unit, Rekabentuk & Urusctak oleh Faris Design House, 1990) 16.

39. For more details about sample design and weighing refer to Y.Z. Özcan, "Quality of Life in a Traditional Muslim Community: Kelantan" (Unpublished

Research Report, International Islamic University Malaysia, 1993).

40. For a copy of the questionnaire refer to Özcan, "Quality of Life."

41. Popper argues that a finite number of swans being all white does not lead to the generalization that all future and past swans are white. The danger in making such generalizations is shown when black swans were discovered in Australia.

42. Clive S. Kessler, *Islam and Politics in a Malay State, Kelantan 1838-1969* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1978) 229-230.