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COMPETING PARADIGMS AND CONFLICTING THEORIES IN THE STUDIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASIAN NICS

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Albert Hirschman (1981) once remarked that the growth of development economics outstripped its object of study, i.e., economic growth in the developing countries. That assessment was perhaps valid in the 1970s; not any more. In the last two decades there has been a race between economic growth in the "Asian Dragons" and the literature about it. The growth of Asian NICs helped produce a bumper crop of development literature. A literature known for its diversity and vitality. The purpose of this paper is not to provide one more comprehensive summary of the development literature on East and Southeast Asia. Wade (1992), Chowdhury and Islam (1993) provide useful summaries on East Asia and Hawes and Liu (1993) on Southeast Asia. The World Bank (1993) also provides an useful, though selective, summary of the literature on the High-Performing Asian Economies (HPAE) that includes Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia.

The main objective of this paper is to examine the changes and persistence of paradigms, modes of analyses, theoretical perspectives and the logic these entail. In so doing this paper goes beyond the theoretical foci and raises questions about the social, political and ideological contexts within which these theories change or persist. The paper also argues that there is a mutual interaction between the changing socio-economic realities and the theories or perspectives that seek to understand these processes. It is expected that these heterogeneous explanations for rapid economic growth in the Asian NICs will have some impact on development theories themselves. More need to be done in terms of the sociology of economics in general and theories of economic development in the developing countries in particular. This paper is a modest attempt from the perspective of sociology of knowledge with regard to the development literature on Asian NICs.

The paper is divided into four sections. In section I, I discuss the wave-like rise and fall of theoretical perspectives in development studies by relating this to the questions of methodology and epistemology. In section II, I pursue the epistemological issues further by way of recounting the rise of development economics which raises serious questions about the universality of economics as a science and sets the background for the discussions and evaluations of the various theoretical perspectives in section III. In the concluding section (IV), I plead for a return to an historically embedded political economy approach and opening more space for methodological sophistication in a post-positivist mode.

I. THE RISE AND FALL OF PARADIGMS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES:

There was a time when the title of any book on economic development or any substantive issue on development would look incomplete without the phrase "political economy" as an adjective and/or a prefix. A two-volume collection of statistics on food prices, agricultural yields and assorted data in Bangladesh was given the title Famine 1974: Political Economy of Mass Starvation in Bangladesh (Alamgir, 1977). This was in the decades of 1970s and the early 1980s. Political Economy became a catch-all phrase in studies of development. Whether it is international relations or domestic issues or whatever the label "Political Economy" was used indiscriminately. However, one of the common themes that ran through many - if not all - of these politico-economic studies is their adherence to some brand of Marxist analysis. The publication of Paul Baran's The Political Economy of Growth in 1957 marked the beginning of this trend. However, in 1957 Baran's was the only book that carried the title political economy compared to 1983 when over 50 new volumes in English were launched with a title that began with political economy (Whynes, 1984:1).

The end of the cold war did not bring an end to publications with the phrase political economy in their title. The Cumulative Book Index of 1994 had 14 titles with "Political Economy of .." compared to 21 in 1993, 23 in 1992 and 40 in 1991. The collapse of the East European state socialism, or as some writers prefer to use the expression "really existing socialism", was followed by a spate of books, articles, conferences etc., extolling the virtues of market, liberalism and democracy. The new approach was not built on the ashes of the failed socialism and the critical social sciences rather the ideas of such prominent critics of socialism as Frederick Hayek, Ludwig Von Mies et al., were revived and given the status of great masters and forgotten heroes.

The crisis of the theoretical approaches of political economy and the ascendance of neo-liberalism as the dominant theoretical current of the 1980s and 1990s confirms the wave-like processes in the rise and fall of theoretical approaches in the social sciences. Earlier examples of such wave-like processes can be seen in the rise and fall of modernization and dependency approaches respectively in development studies.

In the domain of economic theory, the Keynesian Revolution of the 1930s provides a good illustration. The use and popularity of Keynesian and proto-Keynesian ideas in the United States were related to the objective, social circumstances of the United States and its popularity outside the United States owed to a large extent to the superpower status of the United States. Again, in the 1970s when the appearance of "stagflation" raised serious doubts about the Keynesian solutions, supply-side economics also gained popularity in the United States (Hirschman, 1989:347). In a similar vein it is possible to argue that the ascendance of neo-liberalism in the United States since 1980s has been carried around the world by the Bretton Woods institutions through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The collapse of state-socialism provided an ideal ground for trying out the whole gamut of neo-liberal theories and policies.

Once a particular paradigm establishes its dominance it creates a discourse influencing - both promoting and silencing - intellectual trends and styles. In the 1970s following the seminal work of Thomas Kuhn a spate of books had "The Structure of" in their titles. A reviewer in the Times Literary Supplement pointed out that two or three decades earlier similar books probably would have been called "The Logic of..." after the works of Karl Popper. Such trends and fads are not uncommon in development studies.

Whether we can describe the rise and fall of economic theories as paradigm shifts or not is a debate that touches on the problem of unicity which assumes that all sciences natural and social alike should be treated equally with the same methodological standard and criteria of validity and truth-test. The epistemological position that came to dominate social scientific thinking in the post World War ll. period, popularly known as positivism, embraced this thesis of unicity. Since the 1970s positivism has lost much of its appeal to the Social Sciences with the notable exception of Economics. Quite early on, in a trend-setting and somewhat provocative essay, Milton Friedman defended Economics as a positive science as opposed to normative inquiry. He based his analysis on the distinction made by John Neville Keynes in The Scope and Method of Political Economy (1891). The arguments of Friedman remain the standard bearers in the discipline of Economics. According to Friedman, "Positivistic economics is in principle independent of any particular ethical position or normative judgments. It's task is to provide a system of generalizations that can be used to make correct predictions about the consequences of any change in circumstances" (Friedman, 1953:4).

McCloskey, one of the handful of economists concerned with epistemological and methodological issues in economics, points out that the official methodology of economics is modernist. "Modernism views science as axiomatic and mathematical and takes the realm of science to be separate from the realm of form, value, beauty, goodness, and all unmeasurable quantity. Being functionalist and given to social engineering and utilitarianism, the modernist is antihistorical, uninterested in cultural or intellectual traditions..." (McClosky, 1985:6). The positivistic assumption also entails the position that all the previous learning have either been superseded or incorporated into the corpus of the contemporary economic literature. Indeed, classics have no place in the natural sciences save for occasional historical curiosity. It is, therefore, not surprising that a great number of students earn their degrees in economics without ever having to read the classical texts. One writer views that incorporation of the interpretive discourses of Adam Smith, John Maynard Keynes, etc., in the syllabi of economics is a wishful thinking since "admiration of abstract, ahistorical, amoral, mechanistic metaphors and the celebration of science and specialization continue to dominate the world of economists" (Klamer, 1992:57).

Economists, with rare exceptions, are too preoccupied with their own trade to pay attention to related social sciences. As a consequence sometimes stereotypes become substitute for knowledge. Samuelson (quoted in Sen, 1982:90) made a distinction between economics and sociology on the ground that the former deals with the rational aspect of human behavior and the latter the irrational. Although this is a caricature, this view matches the self-perception of sociology as held by many sociologists. The arguments over the complexity and fluidity of sociological subject-matters - not just the irrational domain - led many sociologists to attack positivism in sociology. Majority of the sociologists hold that there are fundamental differences in the nature of social sciences and natural sciences. The sociological skepticism - though not shared by everyone in the profession - over the applicability of rigorous scientific methods in sociological analyses has deep roots in the history of sociology. Part of this can be attributed to the methodological contributions of Max Weber in the early part of the twentieth century. Invocation of Max Weber was important not only because he was skeptical about the nomological ambition of social sciences, but in his own work he displayed the rigorousness of a multi-dimensional analysis of social phenomena without falling either a victim of soft, storytelling sociology or hard, positivistic formalism. Although many economists recognize the Weberian contribution on the role of Protestantism to economic development because that fits the stereotypical role of sociology in the developmental discussions, Weber's economic and comparative history and studies of comparative civilizations were largely ignored by the economists.

Sociologists' engagement with the discussions of development in the post World War II period took off in part from the stereotypical image of sociology which was either dealing with non-quantifiable, non-formalistic variables in the discussions of economic development such as religion, culture, values etc. or to concentrate on the consequences of economic development. The study of the preconditions of economic growth became the classic modernization studies. This discourse began in earnest to look for the cultural bottlenecks and social institutional impediments to economic growth. As industrialization or economic modernization became the staple of the economists, sociologists made their staple the cultural modernization and the impact of industrialization on "society" and "culture". First economic development, then cultural change. The title of the journal Economic Development and Cultural Change, which made its appearance in the early 1950s (in 1952 to be precise) best reflected this circumstance. The division of labor between economics and sociology was institutionalized in the area of development studies.

II. THE RISE OF DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS:

The field of Development Economics has two histories: one official, the other unofficial. The official history dates its beginning in the post-World War ll period, amidst the flurry of economic reconstruction and post-colonial socio-economic transformation. How could societies be given the right (pun not intended) direction for economic development was the concern as much of the US State Department or its European counterparts as of this new sub-field of Economics. Special impetus also came from the UN systems and all the data the specialized agencies of the UN generated (Kuznets, 1977:300). By late 1940s, the Latin American "economic nationalists" had questioned the neo-classical doctrines of comparative advantages and free trade and embarked on an import substituting industrialization. "The belief that a general economic theory was scientifically neutral and valid for all regions was replaced by the conviction that foreign ideas could not provide appropriate remedies for the problems of Latin America (Montecinos, 1995:13).

The contributions of Economic Commission of Latin America (ECLA now, ECLAC) in questioning such classical theoretic assumption as comparative advantage helped develop both the structuralist theory of development as well as inward looking economic policies. Latin America provides an example of theoretical innovation in development studies. "Many Latin American countries, faced in the 1930s and 1940s with the international crisis originated by the Great Depression and World War ll, had in fact already begun to apply these policies: They protected their economies, tapped resources from the export sector, and reinvested them through state action in creating infrastructure, promoting industrial development, modernizing agriculture, and even in providing some limited basic social services such as education, health and housing" (Sunkel, 1993:28).

While the social realities in many parts of the non-industrial world after the World War ll created the ground for the innovation and application of economic theories. The question was whether the universal theorems of economic science were sufficient or a new economics was needed to explain the new situation. Meanwhile, according to Hirschman, the Keynesian Revolution of the 1930s which became a new orthodoxy in the forties and fifties broke the ice of monoeconomics and provided another economics (Hirschman, 1981:6). The emergence of this sub-field was also consistent with the inexorable process of division of labor in the academia. The emergence of development economics has been dated from 1948-49 with the publication of two essays by Paul Samuelson on international trade (Hirschman, 1977:67).

The beginning of the unofficial history of the studies of development and economic growth can be dated to the last quarter of the eighteenth century with the publication of Adam Smith's An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. Incidentally, the publication of this classic in 1776 also marked the inaugural of Economics as a social science, albeit, in the womb of Moral Philosophy. Coats has lamented that the sociology of knowledge has never been applied systematically to the history of economics (Coats, 1993:11). Sociology of economics needs to pursue analysis to account for the rise of economics as a field of inquiry in relation to the rise of state in the seventeenth century, and colonialism, overseas trade and nascent industrialization in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Systematic explorations will provide useful insights in the evolution of classical ideas of economics, say the ideas of Ricardo, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill in light of the changing dynamics of Colonial India which provided, if not a social laboratory for the experimentation of, but at least a foil against which classical economic theories were refined. The classical economists assigned special attention to British India. The English East India Company was chartered in 1600 and after the Battle of Palassey in 1757, by 1760s it assumed the power of tax collection in Bengal fusing economic and political power. "For the new breed of political economists, this turn of events presented both intellectual challenges and professional opportunities" (Barber, 1994:53).

The rise of economics as a field signaled the rise of economic sphere as a separate and separable sphere in society. The trinity of spheres, economy, politics, and society led to the rise of economics, political science, and sociology as three separate fields respectively. In 1890 such autonomous fields did not exist (Wallerstein, 1976). This was a process that also mirrored the increasing division of labor in society. The history of each of these disciplines also shows the further differentiation of sub-disciplines and sub-fields within the discipline. After all, we live in an age of specialization. The rise of market-society, and especially the inexorable development of capitalism has given econommics as a discipline a privileged status.

It is, however, crucial for the moment to point out that Adam Smith was not interested in the economic growth of Britain as such; he used <u>nations,</u> in plural. And clearly, his <u>Weallth of Nations</u> was a seminal text on, what we now call, economic development. Rather than giving more space to the history of the development of economics, let us return to the economics of development. The new, post-War development economics clearly had a certain inauthentic quality about it. As it became more formalistic, it also became more prescriptive. Economists began to enjoy a heightened status among the social sciences because their field could be pressed into service for the political elite more than any other social science. The reliance of the government on economists also has a practical side to it. Coats has pointed out that since time immemorial governments had to tackle economic problems, they needed services of merchants financiers, sycophants, etc., as advisors even before the formal emergence of economics as a discipline (Coats, 1989:109). At the risk of some controversy, one can identify Kautilya, the author of Arthasashtra a confidant of the Maurya ruler Chandragupta (c321 -c297 B.C.) in India as the first official economic adviser. In the modern world of techno-capitalism, the role of economists as advisors has become a global phenomenon.

Whether the economic prescriptions worked or not, it began to enjoy a great deal of legitimacy in both the developed and the so-called developing world. Not only has there been an irresistible rise of the economics as a profession (Markoff and Montecinos, 1993); economic advisors have often been referred to as "money doctors" (Drake, 1994). The rise of development economics has created excellent career opportunities for "money doctors" of varied specialisms advising governments on behalf of various international agencies.

Indeed, the emergence of "Development Economics" has also been criticized for its alleged, inherent pro-dirigist (i.e., pro-planning and anti-laissez-faire) bias. Bauer (1957, 1984), and Lal (1983) also questioned the assumption of a separate economics for studying presumably a separate economy. Following a discussion of the heterogeneity in the "under-developed" world, Bauer and Yamey asserted: "although many of the differences between the different parts of the under-developed world are very deep seated, some of the basic tools and concepts of economics apply widely to underdeveloped countries. This is true, for instance, of the basic elements of supply and demand analysis. Similarly, the theory of inflation, the concepts of substitution at the margin, and of the complementary or competitive relationship between factors of production, are equally enlightening whether used to elucidate events and circumstances in advanced or in under-developed countries. There are no special economic theories or methods of analysis fashioned uniquely for the study of the underdeveloped world" (Bauer and Yamey, 1957:8). This position, in effect, was an endorsement for a universal science of economics that ought to deal with the universal economic behavior of men (and women).

In the late nineteenth century, the rise of Japan, the first industrial economy and also the first imperialist polity outside the orbit of the Western original industrialist (and imperialist) countries challenged many of the assumptions of the classical economic theories. Was it Japan's unique culture, Tokugawa religion, escape from colonial subjugation? Hypotheses abound. Of course the standard economic theories such as ability to extract surplus from the agriculture, high savings, entrepreneurship (Schumpeter), etc., do explain Japan's economic rise. But the crucial factor that all and sundry came to acknowledge was the role of the Meiji rulers, in other words, the role of the state. Japan came to be defined as a guided capitalism. Did Japan pursue her own development trajectory without the benefit of any (western) economic theory? In a globalized world that was highly unlikely. Japan did learn from the West both the theory and practice of economic development. The nineteenth century economic thinking in Japan was influenced by the theory of Friedrich List, a nineteenth century Austrian economist in which the cornerstone was protection of infant industries. List's theory was, in turn, based on the protectionist practices of the early nineteenth century U.S. economy (Najita, 1993).

The rise of the "Asian Dragons" (Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore) posed additional challenges to the conventional development theories. The success stories questioned the adequacy of a set of common theoretical framework that would apply to all the so-called developing countries uniformly. As Hirschman held, "the concept of a unified body of analysis and policy recommendations for all underdeveloped countries, which contributed a great deal to the rise of the subdiscipline, became in a sense a victim of the very success of development and its unevenness" (Hirschman, 1981:20).

The neo-liberal orthodoxy cannot explain this rapid development for the simple reason that the state was a key actor in the development process. At the same time the involvement of state in several other contexts was the reason for economic stagnation. It is, therefore, not enough simply to factor in state as an additional variable. The conditions and the context for the successful role of a developmental state are subjects which can not be easily captured by the conventional neo-classical economic theories. In pure economic terms, however, one can present the standard check list of factors for economic development: high savings, human capital, entrepreneurship etc. to account for the growth of the NICs. Still the nagging question of why similar policies in country X failed remains unanswered. The export-led growth in all the "Four Dragons" presented with an unmistakable evidence for the vindication of the classical and neo-classical economic theories. One of the emphases in Smith's classic was the role of export in economic growth. This, some how, compensated for the absence of a minimalist state as "recommended" by Adam Smith. A closer look into Smith's oeuvre, however, reveals that Smith was not against the state as he is made out to be by his successors. We will return to this matter in the concluding section of this paper.

III. COMPETING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN EXPLAINING THE RISE OF THE NICS:

The spectacular rise of the Asian NICs has also led to an equally spectacular output in the analyses and explanations of this phenomenon. What is interesting is to explore the diversity in the existing interpretations. A closer examination reveals that the diversity is not just theoretical. Often ideological positions overtake theoretical analyses. Theoretical debates within "Development Economics" emerged as the existing circumstances in East and Southeast Asia were somewhat elusive for the dominant neo-classical theory to deal with. This led to the classic Khunian "Paradigm Crisis". The variety of available explanations can be grouped into the following categories:

1. The neo-classical or neo-liberal explanation: Let me begin this section by quoting from Bauer at length. Here Bauer is describing a conference in Japan:

> In 1964, the International Economic Association organized a Round Table in Tokyo on the subject of Economic Development in East Asia. One of the presented papers was by Professor H. Kitamura of Tokyo University, a prominent Japanese development economist who was then on the staff of the United Nations Commission for Asia and the Far East. He wrote: "Only planned economic development can hope to achieve a rate of growth that is politically

> acceptable and capable of commanding popular enthusiasm and support." This categorical statement has already been contradicted by the experience of Japan, and of many other Far Eastern countries including Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. But not one of the participants, all leading development economists from many different countries, commented on the evident incongruity between these facts and Professor Kitamura's statement (Bauer, 1984:20).

What is important in the above quote is an irony which was lost on Professor Bauer. Maybe most of the development economists present were in agreement with Professor Kitamura's statement. It is not Asian tradition of deference that kept them silent, but a pragmatic assessment of the historical experiences of development in Asia. Neo-liberal economists show a high degree of intolerance for such words as "planning", "government" etc. To be fair to Bauer, he viewed planning as "Central Planning" which is "extensive state control of economic activity outside subsistence farming" (Bauer, 1984:20). However, Bauer's position is clearly articulated in his reversal of the received wisdom on the impact of colonialism. Refuting the ideas that commercial contacts with the West were damaging to the former colonies, he asserts: "In fact, commercial contacts with the West have been the prime instruments of material progress in the Third World. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America the level of material achievement declines as one moves away from the impact of Western contacts. To say that commercial contacts inhibit economic advance is the opposite of the truth" (Bauer, 1984:21-22).

Bauer does not mince words to say that Paul Baran's thesis is "patently untrue" and the idea that commercial contacts with the West perpetuated backwardness in the less developed world reflect Baran's Marxist-Leninist position, a position that can also be found in the so-called dependency theory (Bauer, 1984:156-157). It is with some anguish that Bauer mentions that Baran was full Professor of Economics at Stanford University from 1951 until his death in 1964 and he wrote the chapter on economic development in the American Economics Association's Survey of Contemporary Economics (Bauer, 1984:157). Rather than trying to resolve whether Baran is right or Bauer is wrong by sifting through five hundred years of historical evidence of colonialism, it may be interesting to locate Bauer's critique as a theoretical debate which only transparently covers an ideological division. Bauer's vehement opposition to the very idea of "planning" is based on a two-step inference that planning is central planning and central planning is Socialism. It is one thing to assert one's support for a particular theoretical position, i.e., neo-classical economics but then to treat it as the ultimate truth and seeing the competing explanations categorically as true or false betrays an ideological commitment. Milton Friedman held that "[t]he ultimate goals of a positive science is the development of a "theory" or "hypothesis" that yields valid and meaningful (stress added) (i.e., not truistic) predictions about phenomena not yet observed" (Friedman, 1953:7). The zealous followers tend to outdo their masters in search of the ultimate and infallible truth. Deepak Lal, another sophisticated believer of neo-liberal creed is particularly tormented by "dirigisme" which for him is the source of all evil. By implication, the magic wand of free trade would solve all the economic problems of the world. Lal's analysis provides a good illustration of neo-liberal explanation for East Asian development. In support of his position, Lal quotes Little's conclusions: "The major lesson is that the labor-intensive, export-oriented policies, which amounted to almost free-trade conditions for exporters, (emphasis added by Lal) were the prime cause of an extremely rapid and labor-intensive industrialization which revolutionised in a decade the lives of more than fifty million people, including the poorest among them" (Lal, 1983:45-46).

When fellow (non-Marxist) economists pointed out that the South Korean state was, indeed, interventionist, Lal argued that had there been governmental neutrality, Korea could have done even better (Lal, 1983:46-47). The evidence against laissez-faire was dealt with by approving Little's distinction between free trade and laissez-faire. His attack on dirigisme is noteworthy for its virulence betraying again an ideological commitment. Adherence to dogma often gets the better of search for plausible explanations. Consider, for example, Milton and Rose Friedman's assertion: "Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan - relying extensively on private markets - are thriving... By contrast, India, Indonesia, and Communist China, all relying heavily on central planning, have experienced economic stagnation" (1980:57). A neutral state - regardless of its empirical basis - was an essential part of the neoclassical orthodoxy. "If the neutral state is required to explain Hong Kong's growth (as the neoclassicists would have it)," Nigel Harris (1986:68) argues, " it does not explain the performances of the other three, [South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore] where there was consistent state intervention".

The publication of World Bank's The East Asian Miracle (1993) based on the Development Report of 1991 created a new wave of debates. The World Bank attributes two set of factors to the rapid growth of the High-Performing Asian Economies. First, the fundamentals were gotten right and there were careful policy interventions. Although, recognition of the role of public policy intervention was hedged in its pronouncement that: "It is very difficult to establish statistical links between growth and a specific intervention, and even more difficult to establish causality" (World Bank, 1993:6). Amsden (1994) in her review charges that the World Bank was narcissistic in seeing reflections of its own "market friendly" policy recommendations in the growth experiences of the Asian high-performing economies. She finds the assertion that these economies would have grown as fast or even faster without governmental interventions doctrinaire (1994:628).

While Amsden recognizes that the World Bank distances both from the neoclassical orthodoxy and the alternative state/society-centered, institutional (so-called revisionist) approach to propose a "third way", a "market-friendly approach", Lal finds it odd that the World Bank concedes to the revisionist, dirigiste arguments of Amsden (1989) and Wade (1990). In the mood of "et tu Brute!" Lal (1994) was reflecting on the World Development Report of 1991. In attacking the, what he calls, "functional dirigisme , i.e., market-governance school of Chalmers, (sic) Johnson, Amsden, and Wade" (Lal, 1994:136), he provides both econometric and comparative analytical economic historical evidence. I can only address some aspects of the latter. Lal seeks to compare India with Asian NICs. "With independence, India turned its back on an open economy, and also sought, on ideological grounds, to counter "the economic power" of corporate business by reserving the so-called commanding heights of the economy - capital-intensive heavy industry- for the public sector" (Lal, 1994:148). Now even if we argue that if India had taken a neo-liberal, open-economy policy in 1947 it could have achieved high economic growth is a purely hypothetical exercise. With enormous development in historical data gathering and methodological sophistication, historians and sociologists are still puzzled by what happened, let alone what did not happen in history and why. Any such retrospective comparison shies away from dealing with the historical, structural, and situational contingencies - both global and local - that either constrain or facilitate decisions or outcomes of development.

In explaining the rise of the East and Southeast Asian economies, if one wants to emphasize the role of foreign trade as an engine of growth, it still does not explain why some of these countries adopted trade as a route out of poverty. Is it simply a matter of policy choice, or were there certain favorable conditions generated by the workings of the world capitalist system? What was the role of government in creating a favorable domestic or internal condition that could help businesses - local and multinational - to take advantage of the buoyant international economic climate? It can be argued that the supremacy of the free-trade in neo-liberal approach as an explanation for growth seems to have been misplaced because it does not deal with two important sets of interrelated factors. First, the role of the state was crucial in the development of East and Southeast Asia. More relevant question, however, is what were the historical preconditions that first, created a developmental state and second, enabled that state to effectively implement a variety of pro-market and pro-business policies? The second set of factors are related to the international economic and political situation.

2. An eclectic-institutional approach: It can be argued that the inadequacies of the neo-liberal approach forced to widen the analytical framework which led to the development of an eclectic-institutional approach. It became a common wisdom that economic development is the outcome of a multiple set of factors. A number of writers began to emphasize the importance of such non-economic factors as (a) the role of the state, and (b) culture. Both political scientists and sociologists began to play an active role in this new discourse.

(A) Role of the State: History of Japan's economic development, especially the post-war spurt can hardly be discussed without mentioning the role of Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), or Economic Planing Board (EPB) in South Korea, or for that matter, Singapore's development experience is as much related to Economic Development Board (EDB). However, behind MITI, EPB or EDB lay the visible hands of the government. South Korea's development experience, especially between 1962 and 1980 "was the period of active state intervention within a market framework. The state mobilized and allocated the nation's resources to enhance national wealth and industrial strength, directing private sector activities to this end....The Korean experience in trade and development contradicts in many ways the traditional argument for free trade" (Kim, 1995:88). This is contrary to Westphal's position: "Korea provides an almost classic example of an economy following its comparative advantage of reaping the gains predicted by conventional economic theory" (Westphal, 1978:29). The critique of the neo-liberal position was forcefully articulated by Jones and Sakong. In their words: "The 'Korean Miracle' is not a triumph of laissez faire, but of a pragmatic non-ideological mixture of market and non-market forces. Where the market works, fine; where it doesn't, the government shows no hesitation in intervening by means that range from a friendly phone call to public ownership" (Jones and Sakong, 1980:3 quoted in Luedde-Neurath, 1988).

In the case of Singapore, the market-state relationship was heavily tilted towards the state. One of the architects of Singapore's development, Deputy Prime Minister Goh Keng Swee (1976:4) held: "... the laissez-faire policies of the colonial era had led Singapore to a dead-end, with little economic growth, massive unemployment, wretched housing and inadequate education. We [the government] had to try a more activist and interventionist approach". Rather than fighting over whether "market" or "state", in a good eclectic tradition, it can be posited that it is not the fiat of the state alone, or the spontaneous workings of a free -market that account for East and Southeast Asian development but rather the combination of the two that brought about the miracle. If existing theories of development do not fully account for this situation, let's change the theory not the empirical referent. White and Wade (1988:6) suggest that "[t]he economies of Taiwan and South Korea are guided market economies. They are market economies in the sense that initiative rests mainly with the enterprise, profits remains the enterprise's main motive, and enterprises which do not make profits will in most cases go out of business. In general, but with many important exceptions, the state tries to get things done by influencing the market, by shifting the composition of what is profitable, rather than by direct regulation or direct production." The role of state, in the case of Taiwan is further documented by Gold (1986) and Amsden (1985) and for Korea (Amsden, 1989).

(B) The Culturalist explanation: An interesting consensus developed among sections of western academics, nationalist leaders and Asian scholars on the role of culture as an explanation for East and Southeast Asian economic development. The uniqueness of Japanese culture was the starting point. A large number of studies on culture and development in the context of the rest of the growing Asia began to emerge.

Contrast the hardworking, submissive, discipline-oriented images of Japanese workers against the following evaluation made by a foreign (Prussian) visitor in 1908. "The Japanese worker is hardly willing to submit himself to the military discipline which according to our standards must rule the modern factory. He takes his holiday whenever he likes, he comes and goes as he pleases, and if he is scolded for such behavior, he leaves the company" (quoted in Iwabuchi, 1994). The modern Japanese worker is a product of modern industrialism not of a Shinto culture. The traditional values and culture that tend to dominate East and Southeast Asia today are constructed or re-constructed by the modernist experiences. The discourse of contributions of religious and cultural values to economic development got a major impetus from the discussions in the Japanese context. Robert Bellah's Tokugawa Religion(1957) and works of Morishima (1982) are noteworthy in this regard.

Following the Weberian tradition of the "elective affinity" between Calvinism and the early Capitalistic spirit, many writers were looking for functional equivalents of Calvinism in the Asian context. Bellah, who in his earlier work dealt with the possible relationship between Tokugawa religion (Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism) and cultural values that led to the rise of Japanese capitalism, came out clear to recommend a more institutional approach in explaining Japanese transformation (Bellah, 1968). Compared to several recent writings in this genre, Bellah's early work even though it was his Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard and being so was influenced by Parsons' functionalist sociology is a high water mark.

Phrases such as "post-Confucianism" and what Peter Berger called "vulgar Confucianism" or what may be called "every day Confucianism" in distinction from the "High" Confucianism of the elite generated a great deal of interest in the 1980s. It was argued that Confucian values promoted a "work ethic", strengthened "family values" and fostered respect for authority and overall industrial and social discipline. All these values were regarded as useful for sustained economic growth. The emphasis on Confucian value system in the hands of the enthusiastic supporters and spokespersons, especially in the West, became a not too subtle form of racism. As Berger held, "it is inherently implausible to believe that Singapore would be what it is today if it were populated, not by a majority of ethnic Chinese, but by Brazilians or Bengalis -or, for that matter, by a majority of ethnic Malays" (Berger, 1986:166).

The features of Confucianism that seemed to have played a contributory role in economic development in East Asia included such values as: a social order based on family collectivism, strong emphasis on learning and that Confucianism was more of an ethics than a religion (Nakajima, 1994). Singapore's leader Mr. Lee Kuan Yew in a recent interview with Foreign Affairs stressed the importance of such cultural values as "belief in thrift, hard work, filial piety and loyalty in the extended family, and, most of all, the respect for scholarship and learning" (Zakaria, 1994:114). At the same time, he emphasized the positive contributions of selected western values. In Mr. Lee's words, "...if we did not have the good points of the West to guide us, we wouldn't have got out of our backwardness" (Zakaria, 1994:125). The culture of Singapore can be seen as an amalgam of indigenous Malay tradition, Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism and exposure to the Western values since the British colonial rule. The important point to note is that a discussion of Singapore's culture can hardly be contained within the politico-juridical boundary that we call Singapore.

3. Political-economic approach: What is important here is to stress that there are several variants of political economy approaches (Whynes, 1984). Apart from the classical political economy, one could identify at least two other types of political economy approaches.

The Marxist political economy which was originally intended as a critique to political economy and the public choice variant of political economy. In the latter, it was meant to be an economic analysis of politics, especially public policy. Rather than glossing over the differences within each of these politico-economic traditions, we could locate a range of positions within each of these groups. A number of critics of Asian development continue to use a very radical (leftist) political-economic approach. The critique of Andre Gunder Frank (1982) of Asian NICs development is a case in point. If political economic approach can not liberate itself from some of its ideological orthodoxies, it will only appeal to the believers, the committed soldiers, and would fail to persuade others. However, a modified, self-critical political economic approach will have a much wider appeal.

A quick survey of the literature will reveal a return of the political economic approaches in various fields of social sciences. Though the new "political economy" approach is in many ways premised upon the earlier critical political economic approaches, there are certain crucial differences. This leads one to examine the tenacity of certain perspectives in social sciences. It also raises, at the same time, more fundamental questions about the relationship between, to borrow Marx's phrases, social existence and consciousness, between socio-economic processes and knowledge about them. From the vein of Sociology of Knowledge, one needs to look at the return of political economy approach in the studies of development in East Asia.

A number of writers such as Bruce Cummings, Frederick Deyo, Alice Amsden, Thomas Gould, Robert Wade, Pang Eng-Fong, Stephen Hagaard, Manuel Castells, and Gary Rodan have adopted an approach in analyzing East and Southeast Asian development that can be called a political economic approach. What is common in these approaches is a holistic view of society, an interactive view of state and economy, and an attempt to situate development in a comparative-historical framework. Pang Eng-Fong recognizes the importance of historical factors in explaining development of Singapore and Hong Kong (Pang, 1988:224). Bruce Cummings emphasizes the incorporation of both historical and integrative regional approaches. Making a plea for a longer perspective, Cummings points out that it would be ahistorical to think that the Asian miracle began to occur since 1960. He notes that "ahistorical disaggregation is the most common approach" (Cummings, 1987:46).

Nigel Harris also questions the tendency to treat each 'state', 'society' and 'culture' as if they are independent of each other (Harris, 1992). Haggard and Cheng propose an institutional model with special emphasis on the role of foreign capital in explaining New Asian development (Haggard and Cheng, 1987:84). Following Thomas Gold's (1986) lead of the relationship between state and society and the contribution of the super power contest, Hagen Koo provides a more comprehensive analytical framework of a triangular relationship among state, class and the World System. He incorporates both Wallersteinian notion of world capitalist system as well as Skocpol's idea of inter-state system. His analysis is structural as well as comparative-historical in which he redefines dependency perspective and provides a useful framework (1987). Following but at the same time refining dependency framework, Deyo looks into the relationship between the state and the working class in explaining the rise of the NICs. It is commonly agreed that East Asian NICs pursued an export-oriented strategy for achieving rapid economic growth. In a competitive market low-cost, quality labor made an important difference. Deyo analyzes the ability of the state in ensuring a disciplined and low-cost labor which has been a prerequisite of development (Deyo, 1987). This analysis connects the politics of strong state with the logic of export-led growth economy.

Manuel Castells provides a cogent, tightly-argued, comparative analysis of the rise of the four Asian Tigers. Noting the failure of both dependency and neo-classical theories in explaining the rise of the Asian NICs, he provides a nuanced, and plausible explanations of "the complex web of relationships between the society, the state, and the economy" by following "a historical-structural approach to development" Castells, 1992:35). Stephen Haggard has underscored the need for doing more comparative study. In his recent work (1990) which is clearly comparative between East Asia and Latin America, Haggard focuses on the relationship between "elusive quest for national autonomy" - a political goal - and "import substitution", an economic objective. He also takes into account the role of crisis and shock - international or local - as the stimuli for changes of policy.

Once we have examined all the above explanations, how do we adjudicate which theory or framework provides a better explanation? What are the evaluatory criteria do we use? Here I suggest that we take the correspondence theory of truth which suggests that truth value of a statement must be ascertained by seeing how well it corresponds to the existing reality. An additional criterion is our intuitive satisfaction in terms of the plausibility of the account. For example, among the following four competing explanations of Singapore's development: (1) "Singapore followed a laissez-faire strategy towards economic growth"; (2) "Singapore inherited a Confucian culture"; (3) "Singapore had a "soft authoritarian" state" and (4) "Singapore's pragmatic leadership pursued an export-oriented development strategy by enlisting the support of multinationals", I find the last explanation most plausible. The burden of evidence - from a scan of the Yellow pages of the Phone Book to government reports, not to mention scholarly works - is persuasive.

The second and third explanations are only partly true. The first explanation is not true because one can easily provide evidence of positive state intervention. There will be little disagreement over the portrayal of Singapore government as pragmatic and the export-oriented nature of economic growth. Once we accept the role of MNCs in the economic growth of Singapore we have to account for other causal factors, say, why MNCs are in Singapore rather than in country X. The quality of labor force - skilled and disciplined, infrastructural support, sophisticated telecommunications, rule of law, political stability, high standard of education and training of the managerial class, etc., can be cited. Here, we find the role of the "soft" authoritarian state which is very hard on corruption, and the role of culture in creating an environment where such practices become acceptable.

Students of development ought to have good detective skills of following one clue to the other thus advancing a composite picture, a solid explanation. Scitovsky (1995:232) recollects that comparing Taiwan and South Korea "required detective work more than economic analysis". If we put all the evidence, as if they were pieces in big zig-saw puzzle together, I would contend that the plausibility of the explanation will be enhanced.

IV. CONCLUSIONS:

Political economic approach provides both an institutional and historical approach. For quite some time the discussion of Asian development has been marred by the question: whether it was market or state that best explains the development? Interestingly, posing this debate in such a categorical manner reflects more of the paradigmatic (even ideological) conflicts and made more sense in the Western academic and political context than in the empirical context of Asia where this question had dubious relevance. As Wade's (1990) study has shown that in certain cases government led and in other cases only "prodded" the market thus both market and state were important.

There is a belief that the classical political economy was anti-state. This reduction of the rich ideas of the classicists to Reaganomics or Thatcherism was a great propagandist feat. Although, J.S. Mill regarded economic growth as a natural process, he recognized the need for a certain kind of government to facilitate, if not to propel the process. The institutional means development, according to J.S. Mill, were "... first, a better government; more complete security of property; moderate taxes, and freedom from arbitrary exaction under the name of taxes; a more permanent and advantageous tenure of land, securing to the cultivator as far as possible the undivided benefits of the industry, skill, and economy he may exert. Secondly, improvement of the public intelligence [education]...Third, the introduction of foreign arts ... and the importations of foreign capital,...." (Mill quoted in Reynolds, 1994:230).

It is also important to remember that Adam Smith gave central attention to a "progressive state" in his analysis (Meier, 1994). For Smith, the objects of Political Economy, a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator are "first, to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and secondly, to supply the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services" (Smith, bk IV, Introduction, quoted in Meier, [1994:6]).

A substantive, nuanced, and truly classical political economy in conjunction with historical and comparative insights drawn from Marx and Weber can provide us a sound analytical framework. Particular attention should be given to the logic of comparative method (Mill). It is through comparison of historically constituted social systems, within the larger global contexts that we can develop and refine our theories and understandings. Comparative studies are needed not only among "successful" countries but also between "successful" and "failed" countries within and between regions, and between different periods of time. Why did the Philippines government fail to embark on an export-led economic growth in the 1960s when it had the second highest per capita income in Asia as well as a large pool of English speaking entrepreneurs and work-force? A systematic examination of "failed" countries may give us as much insight as the study of the "successful" countries. It will be also useful to examine how much conscious policy formulation lay at the background, or whether such policy packages were constructed in a coherent fashion only after the country has become "successful"? Rigid adherence to theories, paradigms and ideologies will ill-prepare us to deal with a social reality which is at once interconnected, part of a larger whole, and changing.

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