Non-Western International Relations Theory and Ibn Khaldun

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Review article of two books:

1. Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, eds., *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and beyond Asia* (NY: Routledge, 2010, 242 pp., USD 36.28, paper).

2. Seyfi Say, *İbn Haldun'un Düşünce Sistemi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Kuramı* (İstanbul: İlk Harf Yayınları, 2012, 808 pp., TRY 32.50, paper).

Discussion of the Western centrism of international relations theory is not a recent trend for IR scholars. Since the 1960s and the 1970s, especially with the decolonization period, Western-centric IR has been criticized by the Dependency School and World System theorists. However, efforts aiming to generate a non-Western IR Theory within peripheral states *is* a phenomenon of recent years. Even though the majority of such studies are located in Asian countries, the Turkish academy is not an exception, regarding the debate on the possibility of an Anatolian school of IR.[1] This review critically examines one of such efforts by another Turkish scholar, Seyfi Say, who in his book *İbn Haldun'un Düşünce Sistemi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Kuramı* (Ibn Khaldun's System of Thought and International Relations Theory)[2] aims to go beyond the Western centrism of IR by employing the ideas of Ibn Khaldun.

As Western-centric IR theories continue to dominate the field despite these persistent initiatives, this review first concentrates on the book entitled *Non-Western International Relations Theory*,[3] edited by Acharya and Buzan, and their introductory question, namely "Why is there no non-Western International Relations theory?" The evaluation of the book ends with its concluding chapter, whereby Acharya and Buzan discuss the possibility of non-Western International Relations theory. Then, the paper moves on to the review of Seyfi Say's piece and analyzes whether his integration of Ibn Khaldun into International Relations creates a non-Western IR theory or whether it reproduces the premises of Western-centric theories that dominate the field.

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[1] See; Ersel Aydinli and Julie Mathews, "Periphery Theorising for a Truly Internationalised Discipline: Spinning IR theory out of Anatolia," *Review of International Studies* 34 (2008): 693-712.

[2] Seyfi Say*, İbn Haldun'un Düşünce Sistemi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Kuramı* [Ibn Khaldun's System of Thought and International Relations Theory] (İstanbul: İlk Harf Yayınları, 2012).

[3] Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan eds., *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and beyond Asia* (NY: Routledge, 2010).

1. Why is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory?

Acharya and Buzan, in the introductory chapter, ask the question of why there is no non-Western IR theory and suggest possible explanations. Even though the book contains chapters covering both the theoretical experiences of individual countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, India and Indonesia, as well as regional study of Southeast Asia, this review will concentrate on this introductory question and the responses in the book's final chapter. It also reviews a chapter written by Barry Buzan and Richard Little, in which they suggest implementation of the world historical perspective in IR theory in order to go beyond Western centrism. As this review is mainly concerned with analyzing whether or not Seyfi Say successfully integrated Ibn Khaldun's thoughts into IR theory with the aim of saving it from the trap of Western centrism, it also gives special attention to the discussion of the Islamic worldview and IR theory in the chapter authored by Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh.

In their introductory chapter, regarding the absence of a non-Western international theory, Acharya and Buzan suggest five possible explanations that concentrate on ideational and perceptual forces influenced by Gramscian hegemonies, ethnocentrism and the politics of exclusion.[4] The first explanation for the Western dominance of IR is the universality of Western IR theory, which implies that Western IR has discovered the right path in understanding international relations. The second one is that Western IR theory has gained a hegemonic status in the Gramscian sense, which in turn leads to an unconscious reproduction of Western centrism by others. The third explanation suggested by Acharya and Buzan for the nonexistence of non-Western IR theory claims that in reality, non-Western theories exist but are hidden due to difficulties such as language. The fourth is that local historical, cultural and political conditions discriminate against the production of IR theory. The last explanation suggests that the West has a big head start and the rest of the world is in a period of catching up.

Acharya and Buzan leave the evaluation of these possible explanations to the final chapter, as how IR theory in different countries and cultures has emerged and developed is analyzed in a detailed way in the following chapters. For the first explanation, which attributes the nonexistence of non-Western IR theory to the success of Western IR theory, Acharya and Buzan claim that the cases in their collection proves that there is no evidence supporting this explanation.[5] In fact, in Chapter 9, Buzan and Little identify five shortcomings of Western IR theories that prevent them from capturing the nature of international relations: *presentism*, or a tendency to see the past in terms of the present; *ahistoricism*, or the belief in the existence of universal regularities that are not bound by time and space; *Eurocentrism*; *anarchophilia*, or the equation of international relations with the existence of anarchic system and *state-centrism*.[6] As to the second line of argument, Acharya and Buzan claim that in the absence of non-Western IR theory, the hegemony of Western IR is regenerated and reinforced by "essentialized Eurocentrism" in the works of non-Western IR scholars as well.[7] The third explanation, which asserts the existence of non-Western IR theories but underscores their absence in the public eye, seems to be irrelevant for Acharya and Buzan. The fourth account,

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[4]   Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory,* 16-22.
[5]   Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory,* 222.
[6]   Barry Buzan and Richard Little, "World History and the development of non-Western International Relations Theory," in *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and beyond Asia,* ed. Acharya and Buzan (NY: Routledge, 2010), 197.
[7]   Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory,* 223.

on the other hand, stands very powerfully for them in explaining the absence of non-Western IR theory. In this respect, local conditions, even though they vary in form from place to place, may create material barriers that may prevent the emergence of a non-Western IR. Another strong explanation, according to the authors, is the fifth hypothesis, which suggests that the rest is trying to catch up the West. In this connection, the authors acknowledge that this is an important reason for the underdevelopment of the non-Western IR theory.

As Acharya and Buzan indicate, the goal of the book is "to introduce non-Western IR traditions to a Western audience and to challenge non-Western IR thinkers to challenge the dominance of Western theory."[8] However, they have not given special attention to developing an overall non-Western IR theory. Instead, they criticize how Eurocentric the dominant IR theories are and assess the possible contributions of the non-Western world to IR theory. Nevertheless, it is possible to extract some premises from their writings suggesting how to go beyond Western-centric IR.

For example, in their chapter, Buzan and Little try to show how an historical perspective may be employed by non-Western IR theories to move away from European history and Western IR theory. They suggest that non-Western IR theorists follow the route charted by non-Western world history theorists, since going beyond Western dominance requires knowledge about the development of international relations in different regions.[9] A global historical perspective may prevent the oblivious entrapment of non-Western scholars in a Eurocentric historical framework. In this sense, Seyfi Say's analysis of Ibn Khaldun's ideas as a source of a non-Western IR theory seems a meaningful initiative, even though his success in doing so is questioned in the following evaluation.

Another proposition to develop a non-Western IR theory is to apply classical traditions and the thinking of non-Western religious, military and political figures to IR theory. From this perspective as well, Say's initiative to develop a non-Western IR theory through applying Ibn Khaldun's ideas seems an important step. Furthermore, Acharya and Buzan suggest recovering civilizational histories previous to encounters with the West and scrutinizing them with the aim of finding alternatives to the Eurocentric Westphalian model. In this respect, for example, Say emphasizes Ibn Khaldun's notion of "*asabbiyah*" (a constitutive principle)[10] for prioritizing a civilizational model to bypass the Westphalian one.

Apart from these ideas that may be discerned from the text, Acharya and Buzan directly suggest a method called "constitutive localization,"[11] which is argued to be more effective in explaining the universality of human experience and go beyond Western centrism. The method is defined as the active construction of foreign ideas by local actors, which results in the latter developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices. In other words, it asserts a mutual adaptation of local and foreign ideas, giving dominant status to the former instead of projecting purely indigenous ideas or completely borrowing foreign ones.

In a similar vein, in her chapter, Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh talks about hybridity as a remedy for going beyond Western centrism. As the main concern of the book is to explore whether Asia or Islam can be taken as the basis for International Relations Theory, one chapter is

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[8]   Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory*, 2.

[9]   Buzan and Little, *World History*, 214.

[10]   There are various terms used for the English translation of "*asabbiyah*," such as group solidarity, natural solidarity, social solidarity, group feeling, etc. I, however, prefer to translate it as "a constitutive principle," since it seems more appropriate in capturing the content of the term.

[11]   Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory*, 229.

devoted to an analysis of the Islamic world. This chapter as a potential source of non-Western IR deserves special attention within this review, as the upcoming pages concentrate on the integration of an Islamic scholar into IR theory.

Tadjbakhsh claims that Islam as a worldview has sought a different foundation of truth and the good life; therefore it has the potential of presenting alternatives to Western IR theory.[12] She indicates that a potential non-Western IR theory differs in essence from Westphalian approaches. Within this context, she questions materialism and empiricism as the only acceptable methodology for organizing and processing data. As mentioned by Seyfi Say, Ibn Khaldun's methodology is a combination of materialism and idealism. However, Tadjbakhsh states that although an Islamic IR theory is possible and in fact exists, the challenge is to put it into practice. In this connection, I will turn to Say's work and critically review his attempt to operationalize Ibn Khaldun's ideas through creating a non-Western IR theory.

2. Ibn Khaldun's System of Thought and International Relations Theory

There are many studies on the relevance and importance of Ibn Khaldun's ideas for IR.[13] However, Seyfi Say's book comes into prominence within these studies since it is one of the most detailed works on Ibn Khaldun and IR. The author states that the goal of his study is to analyze Ibn Khaldun's ideas on issues related to the IR discipline and to evaluate the thinker's theoretical contributions to the field.[14] He also indicates that since IR as a scientific discipline came into being in the West and developed with a Western-centric perspective, it has ignored non-Western scholars such as Ibn Khaldun.[15] Say underlines that because IR scholars only concentrate on Western philosophers such as Machiavelli, Grotius or Kant, and ignore non-Western ones, they reproduce the Western centrism of the field.[16] Thus, Say also questions universalism and Western centrism by integrating Ibn Khaldun's ideas.

Say's book is composed of three chapters. While the first chapter is an introduction to Ibn Khaldun's life and his understanding of science, the second one is concerned with the concepts used by Ibn Khaldun. This review briefly discusses these first two descriptive chapters and mainly concentrates on the third part, where Say discusses Ibn Khaldun's ideas on the issues influencing IR, with a special focus on the last part. Say assesses that Ibn Khaldun's theoretical understanding relates to issues of IR but do not compose an IR theory by themselves.[17] Therefore, in this section he tries to integrate Ibn Khaldun's concepts into the IR discipline in order to surpass Western centrism of the field. Thus, as being the only original part of the book, this subchapter deserves further attention.

Before analyzing and accounting for the relation of Ibn Khaldun's ideas with IR, Say explains the main concepts that Khaldun uses, such as *umran* (civilization), *asabbiyah* (constitutive principle), state and state authority and *bedavet and hadaret* (urban and rural life). The concept of *umran* resembles the term *civilization* but it defines social life with all

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[12]   Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "International Relations Theory and the Islamic Worldview," in *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and beyond Asia,* ed. Acharya and Buzan (NY: Routledge, 2010), 174.
[13]   See. Robert Cox, "Towards a post-Hegemonic Conceptualization of World Order: Reflections on the Relevancy of Ibn Khaldun," in *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics,* ed. J. Rosenau and E. Czempiel (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992); see also, Jack Kalpakian, "Ibn Khaldun's Influence On Current International Relations Theory," *The Journal of North African Studies* 13, no. 3 (2008), 363-76.
[14]   Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 6.
[15]   Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 71.
[16]   Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 346.
[17]   Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 674.

of its aspects. In this sense, *umran* is viewed as an entire product of human beings; therefore, it is not possible to talk about Christian or Muslim *umrans*, just as we cannot talk about Christian or Islamic mathematics.[18] Another concept, as indicated above, is *asabbiyah*, which defines the main elements that induce human beings to form a society. *Mulk*, on the other hand, describes an organization equipped with sovereignty. In this sense, the ultimate target of an *asabbiyah* is said to be the *mulk* or, a takeover of state authority. Within this context, Ibn Khaldun perceives the state as an avatar of *umran*, which, on the other hand, is composed of *bedevi* life (rural life) and *hadari* life (civilized life).

The introduction of these concepts is important within Say's study, since in the following parts of the book they are used as the sources of surpassing Western centrism in IR. However, before doing that, Say explores Ibn Khaldun's ideas on issues that may be categorized as the subject matters of IR. These ideas may show the originality of Ibn Khaldun's thinking. However, whether this originality has been transformed into an original study by Seyfi Say is a question to be answered in the last part of this review article.

One example of these ideas in IR is the causal relation that Ibn Khaldun builds between geographical conditions and political events. In a similar vein, Say underlines that Ibn Khaldun analyzes how climate affects the behaviour of societies. Furthermore, the thinker perceives population as an important source of state power. Since he correlates population with production, he views an increase in population as the foundation of an increase in material capability. Natural resources are another source of state power, and Ibn Khaldun sees the existence of these in a state as a source of peaceful foreign policy.

In short, by assessing the relation that Ibn Khaldun establishes between the social form of life, economic structure, geography and physical environment, Say tries to demonstrate how Ibn Khaldun's ideas embrace issues related to IR and how original those ideas are. He underlines that according to Ibn Khaldun, societies do not have stable characters but they have environmental conditions. Say suggests that Ibn Khaldun's conceptualization of *asabbiyah* appears as an original term in understanding this changing character, since as environmental conditions change, the conditions providing a social group the potential to establish their power within a given territory change. In other words, the *asabiyyah* changes. Therefore, understanding the nature of *asabiyyah* and physical conditions such as population, climate, availability of natural resources, production, etc. may provide us a true understanding of IR, according to Say. Apart from that, Say thinks that through the ideas of Ibn Khaldun, IR may go beyond the international-domestic divide since his notion of "Mulk-u Hakiki" (*the real sovereignty*) deals with both the internal and external dimensions of sovereignty as it defines the situation of the effectiveness of a state in internal affairs and its ability to protect itself against outside powers.[19]

As indicated above, the last part of the last chapter evaluates the importance of Ibn Khaldun's ideas for the IR discipline. Two main propositions come to fore in this part. First, similar to Buzan and Little's proposition, Say underlines the importance of the historical perspective. He suggests that a process has already started in IR in which positivism is being replaced by historicism, enabling IR scholars to go beyond state-centric analyses.[20]

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[18] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 310.
[19] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 569.
[20] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 665.

He echoes Wallerstein's argument[21] and claims that positivism enables Western-centric IR theories to assert objectivism and universalism by neglecting the fact that they are a product of their own historical conditions.[22] He maintains that civilization as a level of analysis may be useful to get beyond Western centrism. In this sense, he points to Ibn Khaldun for the historicism and civilizational approach. He states that Ibn Khaldun does not accept dominant theories' unitary understandings of state and views them as functionally different. Say notes that Ibn Khaldun underlines not only the difference between states but also points out the structural transformation of such differences triggered by time and space. In this sense, Say claims that Ibn Khaldun has a historical perspective that reflects on changes in the context of time and space. In this way, according to Say, Ibn Khaldun appears as an important reference to capture the change, dynamism and renewal of IR. Furthermore, his *umran* science claims to enable us to go beyond the state-centric approach and think about civilizations as the unit of analysis in international relations.[23]

Say also contends that Ibn Khaldun's ideas may be seen as a source of synthesis of Realism and Idealism.[24] He asserts that, contrary to Machiavelli, who refuses idealism and buckles down to realism, Ibn Khaldun one can find elements of both Idealism and Realism. For example, while he accepts the importance of power, similar to realists, he makes a distinction between fair/unfair and faithful/unfaithful powers. Say maintains that this understanding gives Ibn Khaldun a normative dimension that may be seen as a bridge between Idealism and Realism.[25]

3. Ibn Khaldun and Non-Western IR Theory

This part of the article is devoted to a critical evaluation of Say's book, particularly with regards to its main goal of integrating Ibn Khaldun into the IR discipline and creating a non-Western theory. In other words, my aim here is to assess whether Say's work goes beyond Western-centric IR theories. From the outset, it should be noted that Ibn Khaldun's ideas possess the potential to provide a ground for a non-Western IR. As Acharya and Buzan suggest, one way to go beyond the Eurocentric Westphalian model is to recover civilizational histories.[26] Moreover, Acharya and Buzan also underline that one of the themes in Eurocentric narration is Realism's role in defining the mainstream subject matter of IR in state-centric terms.[27] Within this perspective, Ibn Khaldun's conceptualization of *umran* provides a basis for a non-Western IR theory, as it suggests a civilizational approach instead of a state-centric one. However, Say fails to transform Ibn Khaldun's original ideas into an original study that challenges the Western centrism of mainstream IR.

One of the reasons for this failure is mainly related with the book's organization. It is almost 800 pages but only 40 pages are reserved for the original part, where Say tries to integrate Ibn Khaldun into IR theory. The rest of the book is descriptive, in that it summarizes the life, ideas, concepts, understanding of science, and methodology of Ibn Khaldun in detail. In other words, the book concentrates more on Ibn Khaldun's ideas and their importance

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[21]   Immanuel Wallerstein, "Eurocentrism and Its Avatars: The Dilemmas of Social Science," *Sociological Bulletin* 46, no.1 (1997): 21-39.

[22]   Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 669.

[23]   Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 667.

[24]   Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 684.

[25]   Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 697.

[26]   Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory*, 228.

[27]   Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory*, 6-7.

instead of trying to integrate his ideas into IR in a sophisticated manner to create a non-Western IR theory. Even though this descriptive part is quite comprehensive for readers wishing to learn about Ibn Khaldun and his ideas on issues related to IR, it does not create an original study on a non-Western IR theory. For example, in the last part of the last chapter, Say claims that Ibn Khaldun combines Idealism and Realism with his normative dimension. However, he does not explain how through this combination it is possible to produce a theory that surpasses Western centrism.

He also does not define IR. And as he does not identify what he means by the subject he studies, the book stands out as a collection of Ibn Khaldun's ideas on any subject that may be incorporated into the subject matter of IR. Therefore, rather than employing the thinker's ideas to create a non-Western IR theory, Say uses them to expose the Eastern origins of Western theories, or Western centrism. In other words, his initiative seems to aim to demonstrate how the ideas that are associated with the West have actually been discovered/discussed before by Ibn Khaldun. In this sense, he legitimizes Western-centric theories by showing that Eastern thinkers reached same conclusions long before they did. For example, Say argues that it is possible to find the distinction that Ibn Khaldun makes between *bedavet* (rural) and *hadaret* (civilized) in Durkheim's works.[28] In a similar vein, he also contends that Ibn Khaldun was well aware of the impossibility of explaining the social reality with one variable even before Darwin and Marx.[29] Say also notes that Ibn Khaldun had studied climate before Bodin and Montesquieu and rural life before Weber.[30] Further, he deems Ibn Khaldun as the real pioneer of Keynesianism and the real father of Economic Liberalism.[31] Perhaps the most extreme example where he complains about the attribution of parallel ideas to Western thinkers instead of Eastern ones is the part where he finds the roots of the concept of "balance of power" in Ibn Khaldun. Despite the fact that he himself is very critical of the concept of balance of power as a product of Western centrism, which forces IR scholars to pay attention to great power politics only and ignore the rest,[32] in the following parts he claims that even though Ibn Khaldun did not use the term "balance of power," he in fact defined the same situation.[33] Moreover, Say views Ibn Khaldun as the founder and pioneer of Realism and Social Constructivism, and claims that it is possible to find elements of Liberalism, Marxism and Postmodernism.[34] In this sense, Say ironically justifies Western-centric concepts and theories by Ibn Khaldun's ideas, and thus fails to go beyond Western centrism. Against the emphasis of Say on the Eastern origins of Western texts, one can point to Acharya and Buzan's critique in their concluding chapter, where they claim that the existence of non-Western sources of IR does not mean that there would be a non-Western IR theory.[35]

Say also fails to go beyond Western-centric IR theories in another way, for instead of transforming Ibn Khaldun's ideas into a non-Western IR theory, he rather integrates the thinker's ideas into the concepts of IR that have developed by Western-centric theories. This dislocation in turn results in an anachronism that is dominant in the book. For example, he associates Nationalism, a term that emerged after the French Revolution, with Ibn Khaldun's

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[28] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 333.
[29] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 396.
[30] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 407-28.
[31] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 465-71.
[32] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 345-51.
[33] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 429.
[34] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 72 and 682.
[35] Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory*, 234.

conceptualization of *asabbiyah*. By claiming that Ibn Khaldun's *asabbiyah* is not much different than the nationalism of today,[36] he ignores that these institutions are products of historical processes. Another example of a similar fallacy is that Say explains Imperialism – a nineteenth-century phenomenon – by employing Ibn Khaldun's idea that a state would be a warrior and expansionist at the time of its creation. This weakness of the text is further reiterated by the fallacy of tempo-centrism. Say claims that in order to go beyond Western centrism, IR should be rescued from chronofetishism, a term used by John Hobson to define the theoretical mistake of explaining the present only by examining the present.[37] However, Say falls into tempo-centrism, which Hobson in the very same article labels as the second mistake that mainstream IR theories have made. Tempo-centrism is defined as a way of thinking that assumes there is a regular tempo in history that beats to the same rhythm of the present.[38] Say openly claims that Ibn Khaldun's ideas are crucial for the contemporary world since the period in which Ibn Khaldun was alive is not really different than today's world.[39] In other words, his reason for proposing Ibn Khaldun's ideas as an important source for understanding IR today is that in his time there was a similar historical structure to the contemporary epoch. Furthermore, through this tempo-centrism, Say establishes links between Ibn Khaldun's concepts and the current structure of IR, and thus constitutes a narration not much different than realists do. For example, he argues that an analysis of international relations through the concept of *asabbiyah* leads to the conclusion that realists are right in their claim that cooperation between states under anarchy is not possible without the existence of a hegemonic power.[40] In this repect, Say appears to employ Ibn Khaldun's ideas to reproduce a realist discourse of anarchy that accommodates and reinforces Western centrism.

Lastly, it would not be wrong to argue that Say's work suffers from what Buzan and Little call "essentialized Eurocentrism."[41] This may be related to what Acharya and Buzan state as the second possible source of the nonexistence of a non-Western IR theory, i.e. that Western IR theory has gained a hegemonic status in the Gramscian sense, which results in the unconscious reproduction of Western centrism by others.[42] For example, Say makes an analogy between mainstream IR theories' premises that economically underdeveloped states follow aggressive foreign policies, and Ibn Khaldun's proposition associating the simple lives of *bedevis* with their inclination for waging war. However, the author ignores the fact that the association of peace with development is a phenomenon that entered IR in the post-Cold War period, and that this association lies at the heart of Western centrism as it legitimizes certain policies towards the developing world. As Rajagopal points out, "The articulation of an intricate nexus between peace, democracy and development has become a central feature of international interventions in the Third World."[43]

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[36] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 529.
[37] John M. Hobson, "What is at Stake in Bringing Historical Sociology Back into International Relations? Transcending Chronofetishism and Tempocentrism in International Relations," in *Historical Sociology of International Relations,* ed. S. Hobden and J. M. Hobson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 6.
[38] Hobson, "What is at Stake*," 9.
[39] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 441.
[40] Say, *Ibn Haldun*, 537.
[41] Buzan and Little, *World History*, 201.
[42] Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory*, 17.
[43] Balakrishnan Rajagopal, *International Law from Below: Development, social movements, and Third World resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 138.

In light of the above points, it should be concluded that Say's study not only fails to go beyond Western centrism but also serves to reproduce or legitimize Western-centric ideas. In this sense, the book appears to be an avatar of Eurocentrism, as coined by Wallerstein.[44] Furthermore, the author fails to develop a theory out of Ibn Khaldun's original ideas. Therefore, one can regard the theoretical contributions in this book as a *pre-theory*, which is defined by Acharya and Buzan as elements of thinking that do not necessarily add up to a theory in their own right.[45] Acharya and Buzan also maintain that parallel with Western IR theory's focus on key figures such as Thucydides, Hobbes, Machiavelli or Kant, there are theories concentrating on non-Western philosophic, religious, political or military figures, and it is more suitable to call these initiatives *soft theories*.[46] In this sense, it is possible to label Say's initiative as a soft theory.

4. Conclusion: What is to be done?

The majority of studies aiming to go beyond Western centrism unfortunately ends up with an unintentional reproduction of it, mainly because these initiatives adapt IR concepts and issues without subjecting them to epistemological and ontological questions. As the epistemological and ontological choices of Western-centric theories impose certain patterns of thinking, adaptation of them by non-Western intellectuals results in the reproduction of the same understanding. Therefore, we should first study the roots that make social science Western centric and attempt to avoid or replace them. In this respect, Wallerstein defines five different ways in which social science is said to be Eurocentric. The first way is *historiography*, which is the explanation of European dominance of the modern world by virtue of specific European achievements. The second way is the claim of being *universal*, which is the view that there exist scientific truths that are valid across time and space. The positivist epistemology enables these theories to claim to be universal. The third one is *civilization*, which refers to associating certain civilized characteristics with the West and contrasting them with primitiveness and barbarism. The fourth is *orientalism*, which refers to a stylized and abstracted statement of the characteristics of non-Western civilizations. The last is the *belief in progress*, which may be associated with Enlightenment thinking.[47]

Theoretical efforts in creating a non-Western IR theory should question these epistemological and ontological fallacies in order to shake the basis of Western centrism. As Seyfi Say's study shows, efforts to surpass Western centrism without examining its roots are unable to escape from the trap of Western centrism.

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44 Wallerstein, "*Eurocentrism,*" 21-39.
45 Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory*, 6.
46 Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western IR Theory*, 10.
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