

Research Article

A word of caution on Eurocentrism critiques: Orientalism or Universalism?

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Abstract: Eurocentrism is criticized in many academic fields, such as International Relations, History, and many other social science fields. Over the last decades, numerous scholars demonstrated relationships between inequalities and Eurocentric approaches towards many regional studies. Many scholars whose origins are from the Middle East have cited postcolonial literature, such as Said's criticism of Orientalism, as examples of dominant Euro-centric perspectives. Others cited problems of dominant perspectives in social sciences of being Euro-centric, notably, Wallerstein (1997). Therefore, Eurocentric view, narrowing alternativist perspectives can become a problem in the aimed universality. This article does not intend to criticize the critiques of Euro-centric perspectives but rather caution on pitfalls of reactionary approaches to Eurocentric malaise. The discussion is centered on rhetoric that often criticizes Orientalism, to the expense of not contributing viable alternatives to social development. The article takes a threefold approach. First, Euro-centrism in IR, particularly IR Theory, and mainstream History and Social Sciences, in general, are discussed. The second part focuses on Orientalism and Postcolonial literature and warns on reactionary pitfalls. The third part emphasizes the importance of universalism in literature, arts, and sciences. In order to emphasize universalism, the difference of authors such as Amin Maalouf is provided as examples of those who raised awareness and alternative perspectives from the MENA regions without necessarily taking a reactionary approach. The conclusion discusses the analysis and makes recommendations.

Keywords: Eurocentrism, International Relations, globalization, Orientalism, homegrown theory

Avrupa-merkezciliğe yönelik eleştirilere bir tavsiye: Oryantalizm mi, Evrensellik mi?

Öz: Avrupamerkezcilik akademik alanda, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Tarih ve diğer sosyal bilim disiplinlerinde eleştirilmektedir. Son yıllarda, çok sayıda bilim insanı, birçok bölgesel çalışmaya yönelik eşitsizlikler ile Avrupamerkezci yaklaşımlar arasındaki ilişkileri ortaya koydu. Orta Doğu kökenli birçok akademisyen, Said'in Oryantalizm eleştirisi gibi sömürge sonrası literatürü baskın Avrupamerkezci bakış açılarına örnek olarak gösterdi. Diğerleri, özellikle Wallerstein (1997), sosyal bilimlerde Avrupamerkezci olmakla ilgili baskın bakış açılarının sorunlarını dile getirdiler. Bu nedenle Avrupamerkezcilik, farklı bakış açılarını daraltıp sınırlandırarak arzu edilen evrenselliğe ulaşılması bakımından bir sorun teşkil etmektedir. Bu makale, Avrupa-merkezci bakış açılarının eleştirilerini eleştirmeyi değil, daha çok gerici yaklaşımların tuzaklarına dikkat çekmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tartışma, sosyal gelişime uygulanabilir alternatif oluşturamama pahasına, oryantalizmi eleştirme retoriği üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Makale üç yönlü bir yaklaşım benimsemektedir. İlk olarak, Uluslararası İlişkiler'de Avrupa-merkezcilik ile kısmen Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorisi ve genel olarak ana akım Tarih ve Sosyal Bilimler tartışılmaktadır. İkinci bölüm, Oryantalizm ve Post-Sömürge edebiyatına odaklanır ve gerici tuzaklar konusunda uyarıda bulunur. Üçüncü bölüm, bilimde evrenselciliğin önemini vurgulamakta ve Amin Maalouf gibi yazarların farkını, MENA bölgelerinden ille de gerici bir yaklaşım benimsemeden farkındalık ve alternatif bakış açıları yaratmaya çalışmanın örnekleri olarak ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç bölümünde ise analiz tartışılıp ve önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Avrupamerkezcilik, Uluslararası İlişkiler, küreselleşme, Oryantalizm, yerel kuram

Introduction

Eurocentrism (or Western-centric perspectives) has been one of the critiques in many fields of academia, including International Relations, Regional Politics, History, and many other social and historical science fields. Numerous scholars have conducted many valuable studies demonstrating the relationships between inequalities and Euro-centric or Western-dominant approaches towards many regional studies in the last decades. Mohammad Ayoob, for instance, has been a

predominant IR scholar emphasizing the inequalities of overwhelming Western-centric approaches to IR Theory (Ayooob 2002). Others such as Edward Said have specifically emphasized the Western Oriented “Orientalist” approaches towards regions such as the Middle East as the dominant literature (Said 1978). Many scholars whose origins are from the Middle East have cited Said and his criticism of Orientalism as an example of how Euro-centric perspectives dominate the literature. Orientalism, a general term often used to describe an interest towards the Orient, i.e., what is to the East of Europe, is not necessarily a unified ideology or approach. Many artists, painters, literary movements from the major colonial powers of the 19th century, such as Britain and France, but also the strand of Russian Orientalists, could be described as Orientalists. Famous painters such as Eugene Delacroix (notably his 1827 painting, *The Death of Sardanapalus*), writers such as Rudyard Kipling (notably his 1901 novel *Kim*), and historians as well as scholars of Turkology (such as Russian/German Vasily (Whilhelm) Bartold) can be named among the wide variety of scholars and artists who could be considered Orientalists. The loose term has a common denominator of a Euro-centric approach of Western scholars mainly discovering the Middle East and the Far East.

Some scholars from the West, whose ancestry is not from the Middle East (unlike Said), have also cited many problems of social sciences of being Euro-centric both openly and then in hidden form. Notably, Wallerstein (1997) compared the Euro-centric dominance of social sciences in general as being increasingly subliminal and a many-headed monster, where if it is overcome in one form, other forms of its “head” may reappear in other manners and thus may not be easily overcome. Therefore, Eurocentric view, narrowing alternative perspectives can become a problem in the aimed universality of sciences and knowledge. This article does not intend to counter the criticisms of Euro-centrism. Nor is it intended to justify either of the perspectives, but rather to caution on pitfalls and shortcomings of reactionary approaches to Eurocentric malaise. More specifically, the discussion will be centered on the pitfalls of the rhetoric that is often criticizing Orientalism, to the expense of not contributing positively to the universal academic literature on the subject of development or social progress. A particular case observed will be contributions to the theories of the body of International Relations (IR) literature. The article shall do so in a three-fold manner. First, Euro-centrism in IR, particularly IR Theory, and mainstream History and Social Sciences, in general, are discussed in the first part. The second part takes a closer look into Orientalism and postcolonial literature and warns on reactionary pitfalls. Particularly the apparent shortcomings of homegrown IR theories to offer a dominant alternative to the prevailing IR

theories are scrutinized. Said's *Orientalism* is at the center of the works scrutinized in this part. Similar criticisms by other IR approaches are also discussed in this part, followed by critiques of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), particularly on the Human Development Index. The third part emphasizes the importance of universalism in science. It puts forth the difference of authors such as Amin Maalouf as examples of raising awareness and alternative perspectives from the MENA region without necessarily taking a reactionary approach. The conclusion discusses the analysis and makes recommendations, especially highlighting the realities of a changing world order with the rise of Asia-Pacific and China in the world economy and a more diverse young population in Europe.

Euro-centrism in IR Theory, history, and social sciences

Many fields in Social Sciences, including History and International Relations, are arguably dominated by Euro-Centric Western perspectives. This is particularly true in the sub-category of the theories of International Relations, where the mainstream academia often overlooks homegrown theorizing. The underrepresentation of non-Western scholars has been one of the crucial debates in academia. For example, the non-Western perspectives are arguably underrepresented in the Postcolonial literature (Lazarus 2004), International Relations Theory debates, or Middle East History (Duijvendak & de Wilde 2016; Buzan & Lawson 2016).

Even in fields such as urban studies, Roy (2016) suggests that many scholars overlook post-colonialism. In this respect, it needs to be acknowledged that there was a problem of euro-centrism and prejudice in many of the literature and academic circles who had a dominant approach to studying the Middle East. Orientalism was not only a feature in Western Europe but also in Tsarist Russia. Russian Orientalism saw the dominance over Asia as even more important for its position. Even though Russia enslaved its people with the serfdom system, it exempted the Caucasian peoples and Tatars from serfdom, tied them to "yasak" taxes, did not engage in assimilation policies, and kept its relations with Asia at a limited level for a long time. However, at the end of the 19th century, the ideas of the colonization of Asia were expressed, especially by slavophile circles. One of the crucial examples of this can be seen in the article "Goktepe - What is Asia to us" published by F. M. Dostoyevsky in 1881. Dostoyevsky stated that Asia is to Russians what America is to Europeans and said, "Asia is our future, we are slaves in Europe, we will be masters in Asia." At the same time, he frequently emphasized that Europe never adopted the Russians, and it should not be

forgotten that Russia is also Asian. (Dostoyevsky 1997 (originally 1881) Hence, Russian Orientalism also had colonial and Euro-centric aspects.

Prominent Western and European scholars, such as Wallerstein (1997) and Wæver (1998), also drew attention to the sociological inequalities of the focus from one perspective to a discipline that is supposed to be international. Furthermore, the foundations of many of the emancipatory theories are also scrutinized on the premises of being based on Euro-centric presumptions (Allen 2015). While some perspectives suggest that temporality may a subject of importance to understand such issues (Ganguly 2004), others, such as Bhabra and the contributors to *Foreign Policy's Analysis* (2020), suggest that mainstream International Relations is blind to racism and other forms of discrimination precisely due to the colonial and imperial history of the dominant countries where the academia is based in the West. They furthermore suggest that the modern state system and the international order shaped by it cannot be understood without acknowledging the central role of race and colonialism in world affairs (*Foreign Policy* 2020). Therefore, the dominant literature is facing a wave of criticisms of underrepresentation of non-Western perspectives and one where the foundations of many academic fields rest upon Euro-centrism. Euro-Centric foundations, in turn, are arguably parts of the reasons why mainstream approaches from these disciplines are not sufficiently addressing the ills of the colonial era.

The postcolonial literature as well as many historical analyses, not only from non-Western scholars but also from Western scholars, make correlations between the 19th century Imperialism competitions over Central Asia and the modern rivalries in accessing energy resources in Central Asia. For instance, the Imperial Great Game's analogy has been applied to the 21st century by prominent Western scholars such as Hopkirk and Kleveman, as well as by non-Western authors such as Ahmad Rashid.

The Imperial Great Game describes the imperialistic struggle between Tsarist Russian Empire and the British Empires in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. The "New" Great Game that had been of much attention on energy resources makes similar comparisons. The "New" Great Game applies a similar geopolitical competition in the 1990s and early 2000s to describe great powers rivalry to access energy resources of Central Asian Republics (See Hopkirk (1996 and 1996); Rashid (2002); and Kleveman (2003) for more on Great Game and New Great Game).

Having said that, Gueldry & Liang (2016) pinpoint that the quest to access energy resources in developing countries, including the so-called "New Great Game," is not confined to Central Asia but is played out globally and not only by

Western powers. In particular, China's energy-related foreign policy and diplomacy have been involved in many debates regarding access to natural resources in Central Asia, Africa, and worldwide (Gueldry and Liang 2016). Hence, the current energy resource access competition is already played out beyond Eurocentrism, and Western companies are not without competition from China in their attempts to access these resources.

Moreover, albeit the continued importance of issues such as the secure access to energy resources by the European states, societies in Europe still have other issues ranging from the economy to migration. Migration, in particular, may be associated with various problems of prejudices and Eurocentrism. Europe still faces many issues of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and the rise of the far-right, which is seen as a direct consequence of the increased number of refugees and asylum seekers to Europe over the last decade. The hidden history and sometimes not-so-hidden history of slavery, racism, and colonialism in Europe (Matache 2020) make it easy to blame Eurocentrism on past colonial and imperial prejudices of seeing Europe and the West at the heart of the world affairs as the most and only significant actors. However, even though many such problems persist in Europe, it would be unfair to restrict European history exclusively to a history of colonialism and racism. Such a simple "blame game" would do injustice to many universal values of human rights, liberalism, and humanitarian values that were developed over centuries of intellectual movements and revolutions in Europe and the West. Furthermore, simply blaming Eurocentrism can have intellectual pitfalls, as illustrated in the next section.

Orientalism and reactionary pitfalls

The critiques of Orientalism directed towards the general body of postcolonial literature are not erroneous to highlight the Eurocentrism of mainstream academia. The discipline should indeed be more representative and representing diverse perspectives. However, there is a trap of simply criticizing without effectively providing any viable alternatives with universal validity and adaptability. Among such pitfalls observed, it is interesting to particularly assess some of the shortcomings regarding the attempts of Homegrown Theorizing.

Homegrown theorizing remaining too local

The need to develop alternative perspectives to Eurocentric ones to make academic disciplines, such as International Relations (IR), more diverse has been the desired objective by many. While Kuru (2017) and Tickner (Tickner and Smith

2020; Tickner and Waeber 2009) provide an account of various Global South perspectives, one feature is the locality of such approaches. For instance, a recent wave of Eurasianism (as described by Karasar (2008), among others) suggests alternative forms of regionalism for Turkey's foreign policy. However, as the name suggests, the emphasis is for a particular region, and the case is not necessarily universally valid for other countries and regions, suggesting whether the regional groupings should be strengthened or not, and if so, how it should be decided on which premises to strengthen which regional groupings.

While the Center-Periphery discourse (Onuf 2017) is rather global and local, its origins are nonetheless based mostly on Western and Eurocentric scholarships. In that sense, there are similar situations to those of IR Critical Theory, which sees emancipation as a panacea but does not explain the mechanics of how it would happen. Some of the more critical theories adopt an approach whereby claiming not to be problem-solving theories. Such approach of criticizing have their merits as the critique does lead to valuable changes in approaches. Mainstream IR has been accused (and often with merit) of understanding the world from one dominant perspective. However, critical approaches may face a recurring problem in IR scholarship that is critical of Euro-Centrism. One of not suggesting how to reconstruct a global scholarship and universally valid body of literature. Some critical approaches further accuse scholars who try to provide non-conventional perspectives of doing so with established Eurocentric methods. For instance, from an Asian perspective, Krishna (2017) is criticizing Kang (2010) not necessarily for espousing Euro-Centrism, but using explanations and theories that are Eurocentric. Krishna (2017) suggests that the method of Kang (2010) is mimetic of the mainstream approaches. Criticism-only approaches, which often claim to be non-problem solving, are elusive on how criticism alone would provide an alternative whose methods are not mimicking the mainstream approaches.

By contrast, many mainstream and Eurocentric literature focus on the lack of human development and human rights in the MENA region and propose developmental remedies to such problems through developmental programs, which are the actual inequalities that the critical approaches often criticize most.

Current critiques in MENA, not advancing human development

Bernard Lewis was a name often criticized by the postcolonial critical scholars who often were critical of Orientalism. By contrast, Lewis was a critique of their approach (especially in *What Went Wrong*). However, Lewis, albeit with criticism of reinforcing Orientalism and thus the established order based on a Eurocentric approach towards the Middle East, was a valuable historian who contributed to

the universal scholarships with many works (Notably on the Middle East). Furthermore, he was one of the most eminent historians who analyzed many lesser-known historical issues (assassins, a radical sect in Islam). These works make invaluable contributions universally to future scholars who study the region, regardless of whether they are from the Middle East or Asia, Latin America or Europe.

More importantly, Lewis, in *What Went Wrong*, tried to emphasize how the problematic question of what went wrong has often been treated by postcolonial literature as a blame game to someone else. Though Said's Orientalism is invaluable in determining the non-western perspectives as well as criticizing many Euro-centric prejudices towards the region, the criticism has often been focused on placing the blame on Westerners or other Middle East empires (such as the Ottoman Turks), rather than making self-criticism.

According to the Human Development Index of the UNDP's Human Development Report in 2020, Israel (19th) is the only country from the Middle East in the top 30. In contrast, the most developed Middle Eastern States include United Arab Emirates (31st), Saudi Arabia (40th), Bahrain (42nd), Qatar (45th), Turkey (54th), and Oman (60th); which are in the range between 30th and 60th.

Most of these postcolonial studies are based on emphasizing the prejudices of the Euro-centric scholars and may often initiate a blame game. In Turkey, it is often common to point to such Eurocentric prejudices rooted in the European approach. However, regarding human rights, Turkish citizens and institutions have the option to take matters to the European Court of Human Rights under the Council of Europe, to which Turkey is a founding member (ECHR, nd.). Therefore, despite all the criticisms, universal rights such as human rights are valued, regardless of their origins. This is the pitfall that many postcolonial and non-Eurocentric criticisms may find themselves in: The situation of not providing alternatives or simply vilifying everything of European and Western origin as a form of Eurocentric attempts of cultural superiority. Homegrown non-Western theories of IR, which often remained unfortunately local, have so far not effectively produced many viable alternatives to the dominant mainstream or critical IR theories. Universalism in science, literature, values, and IR is necessary to provide effective discourse, and the next section analyzes why it is essential.

Universalism and why it is important

Nevertheless, despite the existing Eurocentrism, not all work delivered from the West was prejudiced. There were genuine interest and appreciation towards the region, and Maalouf portrays this more sincere interest in Orientalism in his book *Samarkand*. For instance, he references an American martyr in Persia, Baskerville,

who is considered a hero by many Iranians (Ghazvinian 2009), and also makes positive references to the literary Omar societies as a wave of interest towards the beauties of the Orient.

Eminent writers, such as Amin Maalouf, also show the other side from conventional accounts, such as about the perspective of the crusades from the point of view of Arabs (Maalouf 1984; Lewis 1982). Other approaches, such as the *Muslim Discovery of Europe* by Bernard Lewis (1982), also try to emphasize the Middle East people. However, Lewis's works are sometimes criticized for intuitively reinforcing Eurocentric approaches. Nevertheless, Maalouf and other empathetic writers are able to preserve the universalism of academic work rather than entering a blame game.

This Blame Game is the pitfall, never critical towards the Middle East societies, and always blaming others. By contrast, the more Universalist approach of Maalouf tries to make all readers empathetic towards the Middle East and provides a genuine appreciation of some of the early Orientalist Movements as being part of a Universalism.

In Samarkand, Maalouf's historical novel (where historical characters have been novelized), Maalouf focuses on a string of events in the 13th century, when the Great Seljuk Turks ruled the region. The famous trio involved was Nizam Al Mulk (Author of the *Siyasetname*, where advice was given for rulers), Hassan Sabbah (Leader of the Ismailis and Assassins), and Omar Khayyam (Poet, Astronomer). The latter part of the story explores early "Orientalists" trying to find the last original copy of Khayyam's work. In a string of events in Persia, which account actual historical figures such as Baskerville (Dirioz 2013).

Throughout the book, the universalism of science, human values, love, and poetry are praised. In addition, Maalouf brings forward issues about individual liberties and freedom. By contrast, Khayyam is not portrayed as a brave man. On the contrary, Maalouf's interpretation of Khayyam is that of a person who tries to be as distant as possible from social or political upheavals and would not fight for a cause. In fact, the author can be criticized for such a non-political stance, which can perhaps be interpreted arguably as senselessness and having feelings only in words but not in actions.

In general, Maalouf's books, especially *Samarkand*, were critically acclaimed for displaying many layers of culture, history, philosophy, and storytelling while increasing the general awareness about the region's history and culture. Thus, it is not from a Eurocentric perspective, yet it is not reactionary to it either. On the contrary, it is trying to show further certain elements of appreciation of the early "orientalists" that had a genuine interest and passion for the Orient. The book, a

fictional work that heavily draws on historical characters, is full of symbolism and leaves many conclusions open to the readers' interpretation.

The symbolism one can adopt from Maalouf is that universalism and genuine interest towards the Middle East by the early orientalist were in some part sincere, and they have contributed significantly to the literature on the Middle East. In that sense, we can extend the established order of Eurocentrism to the Established order of Nizam, who produced a written work (*Siyasetname*) to promote and strengthen the established order. We can interpret this perhaps as Lewis and the continued Western-dominant established order. However, more importantly, nearly a thousand years ago, Nizam wrote the *Siyasetname*, which is a work advising rulers in a similar and universal manner to Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, Plato's *Republic*, or Machiavelli's *Prince*.

The reactionary to Nizam has been Hassan Sabbah. Likewise, many of the critiques of Euro-centrism and Orientalism fall to the situation where their works are labeled as simply reactionary and blaming others. Though it could be argued that such criticisms are often unfair or made by those who do have a Eurocentric approach, it does not change the lack of universality in the reactions. The Middle East had and still has genuine problems that do not stem from foreign interventions but that are caused due to many problems of underdevelopment, corruption, low human development indexes, gender gaps, or income inequality. These are more important to resolve than simply maintaining the undeveloped status quo with the historic blaming of other external foreign powers.

For many years, Turkey and the majority of the elected rulers of the Republic had been "accused" of imitating the West. However, Turkey's reforms that followed Western practices and institutions allowed progress and development in many industries and economic fields. Turkey's industry and economy developed despite the lack of significant fossil fuels and valuable natural resources reserves. Unlike the Rentier states in the Middle East (which possess abundant natural resources), Turkey's integration with Western political and economic institutions and emulation of the developmental model and education of the West did produce a modern industrialized society with a diversified economy that can produce technology, as well as having a significant service industry. Albeit economic difficulties in recent years and cyclically, Turkey has consistently been among the top 20 economies in the world (World Bank 2021).

In contrast to Turkey's development, despite abundant natural resources, many rentier states suffer from a condition that is described as a "resource curse" (Hertog 2010). This is a situation where a state has abundant natural resources and the economic means necessary for development. However, unequal distribution of income and power concentrated the wealth on the hands of a few

as well as the national economy over depending on the revenues from the sales of a single industry (often energy-related fossil fuels). Such rentier states that experience a resource curse often have low human development index, social inequalities, and sudden shifts in the political landscape with an overnight change in the top-level leadership.

Therefore, the value of universalism should not be overlooked at the expense of a reactionary approach. Amin Maalouf, who could be more than his own protagonist, Omar Khayyam, does not take an “either-or” approach of imitating the West by accepting the existing Eurocentrism or adopting a more reactionary approach. Instead, just like Khayyam, Maalouf may represent the universality across regions, religions, and generations of good literature and science.

Conclusion

Overall, this article warned about the possible pitfalls of reactionary critiques to Eurocentrism. Instead of having a reactionary approach to Eurocentrism, it emphasizes the necessity of providing alternative approaches that are universally and globally valid. The importance of promoting universal values is necessary for emphasizing the universal approaches. Universal approaches help to cumulate the intellectual body of literature on the subject. Universality is helpful for scholars across various disciplines in many regions of the world. Like Maalouf, there have been instances where scholars who are initially from the region (sometimes immigrants) have provided alternative perspectives in a non-reactionary way, instead emphasizing empathy and universal knowledge. Without a doubt, improvements and better representation of alternative perspectives and scholarship from non-Western countries need to be better represented. The accelerated trend of shifting economic importance of Asia-Pacific trade compared to the Euro-Atlantic area also suggests the need to encompass more applicable Asian cases. Economically speaking, as of 2021, the world’s biggest trade deal is the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), consisting of the ten countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – ASEAN, plus China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. The RCEP is more extensive than either the European Union’s Economic Area, or the United States Mexico Canada – USMCA (Formerly known as NAFTA) free trade area (Whiting 2021). However, the universality should be highlighted in this case as well, as the RCEP is founded on the pragmatism of universal free trade, rather than a more reactionary political grouping that was at the origin of Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa BRICS group of non-OECD countries. If the reality on the ground increasingly suggests a pivot towards the Asia Pacific,

the scholarship shall eventually tilt towards literature originating increasingly from non-Western perspectives. However, the RCEP countries represent many different languages, religions, cultures, and political systems and are very heterogeneous. Thus only the universal objectives of simple free trade and basic principles would bind them together rather than a reactionary move against certain other groups. Likewise, the literature should also focus on common denominators for progress rather than blaming others for the past, no matter how unfair such pasts might have been.

The article suggests promoting multiculturalism and universal values rather than simply adopting a more toxic reactionary blame game approach. In so doing, the intent should not be confused as an effort to justify existing inequalities either. As Hobson (2020) points out, the need for more inclusive and universal non-Western discourse is necessary to present a complete picture of globalization rather than a Western-dominant Eurocentric perspective that is “masquerading” as globalization. Furthermore, many immigrants, especially in the younger generations, are successful in many parts of European Society. Thus, European perspectives and policies are likely to be shaped by the perspectives of these younger generations. Finally, many know that there is a genuine problem of racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia in specific segments of society in Europe (as visible with the rise of the extreme right-wing parties). Multiculturalism and universalism are needed to overcome the change in perception caused by racist and xenophobic behavior in western societies towards non-western regions. Therefore, promoting universalism would also be accompanied by a word of caution. The word of caution is thus not only addressed for the postcolonial critiques and the comprehensive collections of reactionary literature but also towards the established existing order, which sometimes tends to adopt assumptions based on Eurocentric perspectives. With the rise of the Asia-Pacific region in the world economy, the influence of Eurocentric perspectives may further fade. Progressive and more diverse perspectives and multicultural values would be adopted universally by Eurocentric and non-western scholars alike.

A final word of caution should be made with a story from Turkish culture, in which Tamerlane summons Nasreddin Hoca. According to the story, when Tamerlane asked where the center of the world lies, Nasreddin Hoca says it is where the rear left-hoof of his donkey is. When Tamerlane is infuriated, Nasreddin Hoca responds by challenging Tamerlane to go and measure if he does not believe him.

Even in 15th century Anatolia, a worldview from a local perspective is seen as natural. Nevertheless, the lesson to be taken today is that the emphasis should

be on how global the world is, and yet the center point is where one stands, not necessarily wherever Nasreddin Hoca's donkey steps.

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