

# Assessing the New Washington Pluralism from the Perspective of the Malaysian Model

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*ABSTRACT* This paper discusses the post-Washington Consensus development paradigm, questioning whether the changes it embodies are sufficient to open up the development debate. We show that the new paradigm, which might be called 'Washington Pluralism', harbours three pluralist principles. It maintains that development is 1) contingent on culture; 2) contingent on history; and 3) requiring a multidisciplinary perspective. We assess these principles on the basis of an analogy with the Malaysian Model, which embodied the same three principles. We show that, in Malaysia, the first two evolved into cultural determinism and historicism, respectively, while the third created a discourse in which institutions, politics and culture were reduced to instruments for development. Consequentially the proliferation of the idea of a Malaysian Model has been associated with increasing authoritarianism in Malaysia rather than with increased openness. On the basis of this analogy we conclude that the three pluralist principles are not sufficient to create an open development debate.

The question now is not whether the Washington Consensus is dead or alive; it is what will replace it.

Different contexts require different solutions to solving common problems.<sup>1</sup>

One-and-a-half decade after its codification,<sup>2</sup> the (in)famous Washington Consensus shows ever more signs of being dead. Recent World Bank policy documents signal a shift towards a new perspective, away from the one-size-fits-all blueprints associated with the Washington Consensus. The Report, *Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reform*, for example, acknowledges that 'there is no unique universal set of rules',<sup>3</sup> while the emphasis is 'on the need for humility, for policy diversity, for selective and modest reforms, and for experimentation'.<sup>4</sup> A more open approach, not limited to macroeconomic issues but addressing development from a plurality of perspectives and on a case-by-case basis is propagated. In short, the

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Washington Consensus of the 1990s seems to have made way for a Washington Pluralism. The main ideas behind this pluralism are that 1) context matters; and 2) development is more than just growth.<sup>5</sup>

In a recent paper Dany Rodrik has sketched this paradigm shift as a welcome and radical break with previous thinking.<sup>6</sup> This paradigm shift is not entirely new, however. A similar development can be observed in the debate about Asian development in the early 1990s. The idea of an 'Asian Model' was also inspired by the notion that context mattered: solutions to Asian development problems had to be modelled in an Asian way. The Asian Model was also broader than economy, as it came to include ideas about governance, an Asian Democracy and Asian Values. In these ways, the Asian Model can be seen as an important precursor to the current paradigm shift.<sup>7</sup>

Today official enthusiasm for the new Washington Pluralism seems only matched by the deafening silence on the topic of the Asian Model—let alone Asian Values or Asian Democracy. In the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis, the consensus seems to be that there was nothing to the Asian Model thesis in the first place. The fate of the debate about the Asian Model raises doubts about the paradigm shift observed by Rodrik. If the Washington Pluralism shares its core ideas with the Asian Model, it is likely to share the latter's problems as well. The history of the idea of an Asian Model is an important source of lessons. This paper attempts to draw out some of these lessons, focusing on the Asian Model as it developed in one of the most ardent advocates of the idea, Dr Mahathir's Malaysia. On the basis of this discussion it questions whether the new Washington Pluralism is enough to result in an open debate about development and development strategies.

The structure of the paper is as follows: the following section describes the emergence and content of the Malaysian Model, in order to investigate the kind of pluralism it entailed and make the case that it is in broad lines similar to the current Washington Pluralism. The next section discusses each of the pluralist principles identified in the Malaysian Model, drawing attention to their limits. The paper concludes with a discussion in which we take the derived insights to the current development debate.

### **The Malaysian Model of development**

The notion of a Malaysian development model going beyond mere economics and different from the path taken and promoted by the West is inextricably connected to the figure of Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad. Before rising to power in 1981, Dr Mahathir had already made a name for himself as a staunch Malay nationalist and fervent critic of the economically liberal policies Malaysia had pursued in the first decade after independence.<sup>8</sup> According to Mahathir, state support of Malays was a necessity to redress the strong economic inequalities existing between the various races in postcolonial Malaysia.<sup>9</sup> In his view economic liberalism would only cause the rich Chinese and British to grow richer and the poor, Malay part of the population to become poorer. Indeed, from the 1970s onwards Malaysia had embarked upon a New Economic Policy, in which the state took a far greater

role and which was primarily meant to strengthen the position of Malays in the Malaysian economy.

Although Chinese business suffered from these policies, it was the foreign business sector, mainly the British, which bore the brunt of redistribution most strongly. Economic policies were informed by a Malay nationalism that was not only formulated against the Chinese, but perhaps even more so against the West, and the former coloniser the UK in particular. In the early 1980s a 'Buy British Last' campaign was instigated, for example. That this was part of a larger trend was evidenced by a 'Look East Policy', Mahathir's initial boycott of the Commonwealth meetings, and a decidedly anti-Western tone in various speeches Mahathir gave to the UN General Assembly, among others. Such anti-Western sentiments were also present in Mahathir's book *The Challenge*, in which he argued that the Western world, having risen to world dominance because of its superior values, was now in crisis because it had abandoned these values in favour of immorality.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Looking East and the birth of the Asian Model*

With hindsight the Look East policy of the early 1980s was a first step towards the formulation of a Malaysian and Asian model. First, it was inspired by the idea that late development required another model of economic policy than that propagated by the market-economy Western style, and that this model could be found in Japan and Korea. Copying South Korea in the 1970s, the Malaysian state took a leading role in the development of new, capital-intensive industries such as steel, petrochemicals, shipbuilding and, most notoriously, cars. It thus played the role of the allegedly typically Asian 'strong state', with its 'insulated bureaucracy' that was concerned with—benevolently—'governing the market'.<sup>11</sup> Second, it justified its alternative model not only by pointing out Malaysia's 'Southern' late-industrialising status, but also by referring to 'Eastern' Values. One element of the Look East campaign was taking Korea and Japan as an example in cultivating an Eastern work ethic.<sup>12</sup> This was also the background of the Islamisation campaign instigated in the early 1980s.<sup>13</sup> Correct understanding of Islam, in Mahathir's view, included certain beneficial values in which Malaysian development could be rooted.<sup>14</sup> Third, and most surprising given the tense ethnic relations within Malaysia and Mahathir's stature as a staunch Malay nationalist, the Look East policy was a first step towards a model rooted in a set of values that were situated in an Asian identity rather than one that was ethnically Malay, Chinese or Indian. With its opposition to the West the Look East policy overcame ethnic divisions within Malaysia and moved towards a political-economic paradigm based on a common Asian identity.<sup>15</sup>

With growth gathering steam and talk about an Asian Miracle taking hold in the late 1980s and early 1990s, these ideas began to evolve into the proposition of an Asian Model, rooted in Asian Values. In this perspective the strong, benevolent, insulated and capable state that characterised the successful Asian economies was linked to such values as dutifulness,

hierarchy, meritocracy and rationality,<sup>16</sup> which were deemed typically Asian. Asia's rising economic prosperity and relative political and social stability came to be seen as proof of the superiority of the entire East Asian way of doing things. In Singapore parliament identified communitarian values like filial piety, collectivism, consensus, discipline and respect for authority as the basis for Singapore's socio-economic success.<sup>17</sup> Referring to such Asian Values, it not only began to defend a separate economic model, but also something called 'Asian Democracy',<sup>18</sup> challenging the universality of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the Bangkok Declaration of 1993.<sup>19</sup> In Malaysia the new confidence was evidenced by the declaration of the ambitious *Wawasan 2020* (Vision 2020) programme by Mahathir, in which he set out plans for Malaysia to be a developed country by 2020. It reads as a blueprint of the Asian Model, giving priority to economic growth through state-led capitalist enterprise; it puts moral development and the cultivation of the right values central; and it pays explicit attention to social harmony and the need for consensus.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, *Wawasan 2020* strikes a nationalistic tone, presenting Malaysian development as emancipation after centuries of domination by Western powers. Rallied behind the new national battle cry *Malaysia Boleh!* (Malaysia Can!), Malaysia sought to prove to the world that it could 'stand as tall and sit as low as any other'. Economic development had become a statement of political nationalism, for Malaysia and Asia as a whole.<sup>21</sup>

*The Asian Model: a case of Washington Pluralism?*

To argue for the prerogative of Asian societies to take development their own, Asian way, or even to claim the superiority of such a way, is not yet the same as presenting it as a model for others to follow. Whereas Asian governments such as those of Malaysia and Singapore certainly subscribed to the idea of a common Asian Model, rooted in cultural heritage and responsible for the social-economic success of the region, the idea of holding it up as an example to others was almost exclusively Western in origin.<sup>22</sup> The emergence of the idea that Asia provided moral lessons for Western societies has been linked to a conservative political agenda in the West.<sup>23</sup> From another side authors like Wade and Amsden saw in East Asian development a model for late development in general, a theme picked up by the World Bank.<sup>24</sup> An explosion of management handbooks referring to Asian wisdoms added to the message.

The notion of an Asian Model as an alternative to dominant approaches to development policy and thinking was informed by a desire to develop such alternatives. Its advocates saw in East Asia not only an alternative model for development, but also an argument for alternative development models. The idea that there was a separate development path to be taken by Malaysia or by Asia in general could therefore be said to represent pluralism, in the sense that it was motivated by ideas and views advocating a plurality of approaches to development. It was based on three pluralist arguments, which are similar to the new Washington Pluralism. First, it was inspired by the view that for

late industrialising, developing countries, a different approach to development was needed that was adapted to the specific political-economic circumstances of such economies. Second, the need for a separate Malaysian model—like the Asian Model of which it was a special case—was defended on the basis of cultural diversity. The position that development thinking should take particular cultural circumstances into account supported a Malaysian (or Malayan or Asian) Model, adapted to local culture and values.

In addition to these pluralist arguments, which could be labelled historical contingency and cultural contingency, respectively, the Asian Model was pluralist in explicitly incorporating cultural, historical and institutional factors. The eager reception of the Malaysian model was informed by the view that, in order to be effective, development models should be about more than the exclusively macroeconomic focus of the Washington Consensus. Only such an approach could be effective, because the reality on the ground was plural: distinctions between the economic, the institutional, the social and the cultural perhaps made sense in scholarly debate, but in order to achieve anything in reality one had to create bridges between them, because they could not be separated. All these justifications for a (Mal)a(y)sian Model underpin the insight the World Bank would gain one-and-a-half decade later; that a broader look was necessary, recognising that there is no unique universal set of rules.

### **Restrictions on pluralism in the Malaysian Model**

Looking at the three pluralist principles underlying the idea of the Malaysian Model, ie pluralism based on historical contingency, pluralism based on cultural contingency and disciplinary pluralism, we can ask ourselves whether these pluralisms are adequate. To answer this question, we will critically review all three forms of pluralism which the Malaysian Model could be said to represent.

#### *Development as contingent on history*

The idea that East Asia provided an alternative development model specifically suitable for the political-economic environment in which late developing countries operated came up in earnest in the late 1980s, and can be seen as a reaction to the neoclassical counter-revolution sweeping through development economics since the late 1970s.<sup>25</sup>

The take-off of East Asian development in the 1970s had more-or-less coincided with the neoclassical counter-revolution. The two trends reinforced each other. The argument soon ran that, whereas the rest of the Third World faced stagnation and continuing poverty because of the interventionist policies proposed by modernisation or *dependencia* theorists, the Newly Industrialised Economies reaped the benefits of their market-oriented strategy. This was all the more proof that the free market was best for everyone.

Those more in favour of state intervention at first countered this argument by denying the success of East Asia, presenting it as an extreme case of unsustainable, dependent development, solely based on the exploitation of cheap labour.<sup>26</sup> When this claim became untenable, they turned towards a stronger argument, claiming that the successful Asian economies were in fact models of successful state-led development.<sup>27</sup> The argument here was that late industrialisation required different approaches than early development. In order to catch up, countries needed to invest heavily in capital- and technology-intensive sectors, shielding them (temporarily) from competition on the domestic market but at the same time forcing them to compete on export markets. Such a strategy was required because late industrialising economies had to fight their way into a system in which other economies had already arrived and were therefore better equipped to reap economies of scale and secure access to high technology.

The argument that being late justified an alternative development path and approach is pluralist in the sense that it revolves around the position that differences in historical context require differences in development model. In many ways this argument was hardly new; it was the reason for carving out the separate sub-discipline of development economics in the first place. The idea had only been rejected in the neoclassical counter-revolution, on the basis of the argument that economic principles were universal, thus denying the need for a separate development economics. To advocate a plurality of models on the basis of an argument of historical contingency is thus not something novel, and in fact reflects a core idea in Western thinking, integral to the concept of modernity—historicism, ie ‘the idea that to understand anything it has to be seen both as a unity and in its historical development’.<sup>28</sup>

Historicism was what underlay theories such as the modernisation theory of the 1950s and 1960s. The idea that anything should be viewed in its historical context implied that there was one common, overarching dimension of history in which all events and things could be positioned. Historical time thus became a measure of the institutional and technological distance between the West and the non-West.<sup>29</sup> Those countries and regions that were assumed to be different from the developed world were labelled traditional, backward, not-yet developed. Historicism implied they were not categorically different; they were simply further behind on the same track.<sup>30</sup> Thus historicism ‘made modernity or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it’.<sup>31</sup> Such an idea supported ideologies of colonialism and completely justified internalist histories of Europe, coupled with historical descriptions of the rest of the world in terms borrowed from European experience. After all, all non-Western development was simply imitation, a reliving of the experiences already undergone by the Western centre.

Of course, the idea of historicism does not necessarily imply that Europe is set as a standard. However, when confronted with the argument for an alternative Malaysian model because of the different historical context of late development, the questions always emerge: late for and relative to what?

Regardless of the specific centre around which the idea of historicism is constructed, the argument that being late brings about specific demands and challenges reproduces a classification of the society in question as being not-yet. Although the argument is used to justify alternative development models, the very fact that the reason why we are in need of alternatives is that there is a way in which societies are late already reproduces the universal dimension of development along which some societies are more advanced than others. Perhaps the late developing society needs to employ different means to come to progress; but these means are only required for it to live through the same path developed societies have already taken. All in all, where being at different stages of development merits different strategies for societies to follow, history and development processes themselves are still not opened up.

*Development as contingent on culture*

Although historicism does not inevitably have the form it took under the influence of European colonialism, pointing out the relation between the two does serve the purpose of sensitising one on the political side to the idea. The tendency to confront the world in terms borrowed from European experience, assuming that European experience represented the future of the less developed world, was inextricably connected to the political dominance of 19th century Europe over the world, and to the 20th century dominance of the USA. It was not only informed by this dominance, but also legitimised and reproduced it, denying the other societies the possibility to speak with their own voices and act now rather than be not-yet.

Modernisation theory, as it emerged in the 1950s and 1960s around authors like Hoselitz, Eisenstadt, Nash and McClelland, is a clear case of such historicist ideas. It sought to remake the world in the image of the USA, equalising modernisation with development. In this formulation of development and societal difference modernisation theory was clearly related to the geopolitical dominance of the USA after World War II. This political side to historicism caused people to criticise modernisation theory precisely on one of the issues with which the Washington Consensus has been charged more recently—ethnocentrism and lack of pluralism.<sup>32</sup> In reaction to the paradigm, a desire for newly independent countries to break away from a model in which the emulation of the West was the most that could be achieved caused societies to produce alternative development models focusing on locally constructed centres.

In Malaysia two such moves can be observed. First, the Look East campaign instigated by Mahathir replaced the Western world as the highest step on the evolutionary ladder of development by the presumably fellow Asian societies of Japan and Korea. This move was informed by a desire for emancipation *vis-à-vis* the West, and the UK as the former coloniser in particular. Second, when increasing economic fortunes brought about the self-confidence to start presenting Malaysia itself as a model, development was reformulated in terms of some essentially Malaysian developedness, which was adapted to its culture as an Asian, Islamic country and a

multiracial society. The proclamation of Vision 2020 is the most explicit example of such a reformulation; in it Mahathir called for Malaysia to 'be a developed country in our own mould'.<sup>33</sup> The Islamisation campaign, seeking a more prominent role for Islam in public life, could also be seen as an attempt to replace the West as developmental ideal by the notion of progressive Islam.

These projects of reformulating development with regard to locally constructed centres are in many ways concretised—or more accurately, glass-and-steelised—in the futuristic Petronas Twin Towers dominating the Kuala Lumpur skyline. Apart from being an icon of economic growth, the building, which actually consists of five towers, is a reference to the five pillars of Islam, thus embodying the compatibility of modern Islam with economic progress. In addition, the fact that Malaysia hosted the tallest building in the world proves that it is not inferior to any other nation, and has become a source of pride for all Malaysians. The Towers being built by Korean and Japanese construction companies signifies Asian pride and independence (Look East!). The Petronas Towers thus very accurately capture the idea of a Malaysian or Asian development model, rooted in its specific cultural characteristics, as an alternative to Western development.

Advocating a separate Asian or Malaysian development model on the basis of the principle that development models should be culturally specific should thus be seen in the light of the critique levelled against Western domination in historicist development theories. However, the question emerges of what exactly this culture is in which development models ought to be rooted. In the case of Malaysia, for example, there is a strong ambiguity about whether the culture in question is a Malay, Malaysian or Asian culture. Before the mid-1980s Malay culture—opposed then to both the West and the other races making up Malaysia—was the dominant frame of reference. From the late 1980s onwards, however, a trend towards a more inclusive Malaysian identity could be witnessed, culminating in Mahathir's Vision 2020. Moreover, whereas the National Cultural Policy of 1971 even went as far as formally defining Malaysian culture as Malay culture, with the other races being regarded as recent foreign influences without any historical-cultural links to the country, in the 1990s very different accounts of Malaysian cultural history began to emerge, emphasising 'that since time immemorial, their region has been the theatre where the great civilizations have crossed paths'.<sup>34</sup> The claim of Asian Values was perhaps even more peculiar in the Malaysian context; Asian Values were most readily associated with (neo-)Confucianism, whereas Malaysia is a predominantly Islamic country in which Chinese influences, such as Confucianism, have usually been considered alien and not part of Malaysian culture.<sup>35</sup> The idea of one uniform development model rooted in one uniform set of values for the whole of Asia therefore can best be seen in the light of Orientalism; it reproduces a dichotomisation of the world into East and West, in which the East is conceived as an essentially traditional place.<sup>36</sup>

Contrary to what the cultural pluralism argument suggests, this goes to show that there has never been one single, uncontested culture underlying

Malaysian development. Several conflicting identities exist simultaneously, vying for dominance or some form of alignment. Rather than being given, the culture that comes out on top is the outcome of social and political processes. The intellectual gymnastics through which Malay elites sought to claim Asian Values by reinventing them as Islamic Values are an illuminating illustration of the constructed nature of culture.<sup>37</sup> Taking Malaysian or Asian culture as a reference point for economic development strategies was not obvious or uncontested. Sub-national ethnicity might have been a framework as well, and very different cultural elements could have been taken out of the complex of cultural heritages of Malaysia. More fundamentally one might not just have formulated economic policies and development models referring to a different culture, but also without referring to culture at all.

When one defends the separate Malaysian development model on the grounds that development should be grounded in the specific cultural context, one effectively closes off all these rival possibilities for framing development strategies. The argument is a way of saying that a certain development model is intrinsic to Malaysia as a nation because of its culture, so that debate about its desirability is effectively ruled out. Certain strategies, policies and governance structures are inevitable because they follow from Malaysian culture. Moreover, the argument presents Malaysia as a cultural unity that speaks with one voice, thus repressing the many rival voices of individuals, classes and ethnic groups that are not allowed to speak. In Malaysia the emergence of the essentialist Malaysian model coincided not accidentally with an increasing monopolisation of power by Mahathir. Although the principle of cultural contingency was perhaps emancipatory for Malaysia in the global arena, in its essentialism it ruled out any political debate about development strategies within the country, fostering authoritarianism and the dominance of Mahathir's ideology.

### *Disciplinary pluralism*

Where the principles of development models being contingent on history, and of development models being contingent on culture, have been argued to close off debate about history and culture, respectively, the third pluralist principle—the nature of development requiring a multidisciplinary approach—can be argued to represent pluralism in a limited form only as well. For a development model to be effective it needs to address not only economic, but also institutional, ethical, cultural and political aspects of a society. The Malaysian experience, and the Asian experience in general, is supposed to have proved this. Effectiveness, however, is a concept that only has a meaning in relation to a certain objective. The question that springs to mind, therefore, is what this goal is.

The short answer is, of course, development. However, this answer presupposes that development itself is an uncontested, objective term. Otherwise it is not an answer at all, but a mere shifting of the question towards the problem of the definition of development. Here the pluralism of the Malaysian model seems to end. Rather than fostering an open discussion

about what development is or ought to be, the argument that, in order to achieve development, one has to confront it from a plurality of perspectives awards development a monist, ontological status. Development, in this vision, *is* a certain process; it is not subject to contentious formulation in political debate, but a phenomenon that we need to approach as given. It is in relation to this given objective and process that we can distinguish several approaches with regard to their effectiveness. In the Asian Model debate, moreover, it is interesting to note that this objective development is often equated with economic growth statistics. The Asian Model proves that a theoretical pluralist approach is more effective, since the growth figures of the economies making up the model have been extraordinarily high. Malaysia, with its broader formulation of development objectives in Mahathir's Vision 2020, is something of an exception in this respect.

Even such a broader formulation of what development entails—economic prosperity, political unity, psychological liberation and self-confidence, mature democracy, a fully moral and ethical society, ethnic integration and harmony, a scientific and progressive society, economic justice, a caring society and caring culture built on the family as a basic unit—still reproduces the idea that development is something before formulation. Discussions about the necessity of breaking up the overtly narrow operationalisations of development as economic growth, because 'development is more than just growth', do not break away from the idea that there is a single way in which we should think about development, because such a definition of development is unchallengeably true. The discussion about objectives is thereby effectively closed off; although one might still have other objectives alongside development, the attainment of these is restricted by the objective necessity of the developmental process. In Malaysia this has led to what Francis Loh Kok Wah has labelled 'developmentalism', a discourse in which all debate has been reduced to the question of whether one can deliver economic development.<sup>38</sup> Other preferences—such as a concern with individual political rights for example—enter as secondary objectives, representing a trade-off with development. Such rhetoric has stifled debate and strengthened the position of Mahathir, fostering the monopolisation of power in Malaysia in the early 1990s.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of the debate about the Washington Consensus, it could be argued that the main problem was not so much its narrow definition of development as growth, but rather this monist ontological claim that there was one 'True Development'. It was this ontological position that closed off debate and resulted in the imposition of the neoclassical mould on the world. A look at the Malaysian model, which reproduces this monist ontological claim while broadening the definition of development towards inclusion of institutions, values and culture, confirms this. The combination of a broadened scope and lack of pluralism with regard to the definition of development has resulted not in an opening up of development strategies but rather in them becoming more encompassing and intrusive. Instead of only calling for certain macroeconomic policies on the basis of economic necessity, the Malaysian Model required institutional, social and even cultural design

as well, all in the name of development.<sup>40</sup> In the broader understanding of the development of the Malaysian model a complete overhaul of the Malay mind and culture was in order. The necessary *Melayu Baru* or New Malay, strong in religious and moral standards reflecting a reformulated, progressive Islam, and belonging to one *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian race), required a serious reconstruction of identity. The necessity of such processes was still hardly subject to debate—after all, development required it. As in the Washington Consensus, society was under the spell of the all-pervasive power of the Great Idea of Development. It was just the content of the idea that changed, not its status. The theoretical pluralism of the Malaysian model entailed a broadening rather than an opening up of the notion of development. It thereby reproduced the coercive nature of the Washington Consensus's conception of development, if not aggravating it.

### Discussion

In this paper we have discussed the notion of the Malaysian Model of development, as part of the more general Asian Model. We have argued that the ideas behind the Malaysian/Asian Model were an early example of the newly received view in development economics that context matters and that development policies should be about more than economics. More specifically, the Asian Model, and the Malaysian Model as a special case of it, were based upon the ideas that the different historical context of late-industrialisation required different models, the Asian cultural context required a different model and the Asian development model, in order to be successful, needed to focus on cultural, political and institutional change as well as on narrowly economic processes. We have labelled these three ideas pluralism based on history, pluralism based on culture and disciplinary pluralism, respectively.

The paper has shown that the first two pluralist principles are pluralist in a very limited way only. The argument that development strategies are dependent on historical and cultural circumstances replaces the one-solution-fits-all approach associated with the Washington Consensus by a one-blueprint-for-each-case approach. While seeing development in its historical and cultural contexts, the Washington Pluralism ignores the contestation and construction of those contexts. Debate about appropriate development strategies is still closed off, although now not by technocratic truths—as in the Washington consensus—but by historicism and essentialism. In the Asian Model this mistake led to acceptance of the idea that Asian development involved more hierarchical and collectivist governance structures and had little concern with individual rights, because these traits are 1) Asian culture and 2) fitting for late development. This idea supported increasing authoritarianism.

The argument for disciplinary pluralism is equally unsatisfactory. While maintaining that development is a universal objective with a given content rather than a contestable and subjective goal, disciplinary pluralism has not so much led to an opening of debates as to more encompassing and intrusive

blueprints. Within the Malaysian Model it has been argued that the reduction of political debate to the question of how one could deliver development fostered the monopolisation of power by Mahathir in the early 1990s. Opposition to policies or governance structures in this developmentalism was not really possible, because policies and governance were technical issues, not political. In this context disagreement was not about different subjective opinions, but about being objectively right or wrong in the face of what was necessary for development.

Similarly the decidedly broader scope of the new Washington Pluralism *vis-à-vis* the Washington Consensus can be argued to make it more intrusive and (thereby) oppressive, rather than less. The old Washington Consensus told us to get our macroeconomic house in order; the new Washington Pluralism tells us to change our institutions, governance structures, values, belief systems and way we live our lives as well. Indeed, the IMF's reaction to the Washington Consensus critique has been an 'augmented Washington Consensus', which consists of a list of prescriptions that is twice as long and goes much further than the original.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile the argument behind all these prescriptions is still the same: developmental necessity.

For these reasons it can be argued that, until its pluralism is taken to the level of the debate about what development is and ought to be itself, the new Washington Pluralism is not fundamentally different from the Washington Consensus, and suffers from the same weaknesses. Both saying that there is a unique universal set of rules and that there is a unique set of rules for each preconceived category making up the world denies people the possibility of thinking, acting and constructing their world in their own terms. A more fruitful approach would be to embrace diversity and foster genuinely open debate by not *a priori* setting which categories are allowed to talk: the Asian, the less developed. But first and foremost, such open debate would be about what development is, not just about how to achieve it.

## Notes

Helpful comments by Manuel Branco and Esther-Mirjam Sent are gratefully acknowledged.

- 1 D Rodrik, 'Goodbye Washington Consensus, hello Washington confusion?', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 44 (4), 2006, pp 2, 6.
- 2 J Williamson (ed), *Latin American Adjustment: How Much has Happened?*, Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1990.
- 3 World Bank, *Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reform*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005, p xiii.
- 4 Rodrik, 'Goodbye Washington Consensus, hello Washington confusion?', p 3.
- 5 A Bebbington 'Development is more than just growth', *Development Outreach*, Summer 2000, World Bank.
- 6 Rodrik, 'Goodbye Washington Consensus, hello Washington confusion?.'
- 7 The World Bank report, *The East Asian Miracle*, moved away from the Washington Consensus towards a more open approach as early as 1993.
- 8 Malaysia as a nation is a product of British colonialism, which, besides a heritage of particular government structures, had brought an influx of foreign immigrants. At independence the Malaysian population consisted of indigenous Malay, making up around half the population, and Chinese and Indian immigrants.
- 9 Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Singapore: Times Books, 1970.
- 10 Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Challenge*, Subang Jaya, Selangor: Pelanduk Publications, ch 4.

- 11 See, for example, R Wade, *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990; AH Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989; and World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- 12 Mahathir bin Mohamad, speech at the 1981 Malaysia Press Awards Presentation Ceremony, Kuala Lumpur, 28 November 1982.
- 13 This association of Eastern, Asian Values with Islam became more widespread in the 1990s, Osman Bakar even going as far as claiming that 'a Muslim does not go against the teachings of his or her religion if he makes the claim that Confucius was a prophet of Islam ... The *Analects* is, in fact, basically a source of moral and ethical teachings for the organisation of society, which is what the Shari'ah is all about'. Bakar 'Confucian Analects in the light of Islam', *Pemikir*, 1, 1995, pp 98–99.
- 14 The Islamisation campaign consisted of the promotion of the role of Islam in public life, coupled with efforts to increase control over Islam's interpretation. The creation of the Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad in 1982 was an example of the first aspect. To increase Mahathir's control over Islamic interpretation, the religious division of the Prime Minister's Department was reorganised in 1980 to become an important arm of Islamic administration, monitoring Islamic cults and movements, publications, etc. Also a new International Islamic University opened its doors in 1983, which made it possible to keep students of Islam inside the country and better monitor what they were taught. In 1981 the government acquired the power to proscribe organisations deemed to challenge Islamic doctrine, the determination of which was left to the government; allowed civil authorities to prosecute persons considered religious offenders; and took over the right to interpret Islamic precepts, tenets and Shari'ah law from the traditional rulers. The government used this increased control 'to change the attitude of the Malays in line with requirements of Islam in this modern age'. Mahathir bin Mohamad, 33rd UMNO General Assembly speech, Kuala Lumpur, September 1982. In so doing it was disseminating what has been called a 'highly Protestantized form of Islam'. See J Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition*, London: Zed Books, 2001, p 85; and R Lee & S Ackerman, *Sacred Tensions: Modernity and Religious Transformation in Malaysia*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996, pp 36–47.
- 15 In response to which columnist Sheryll Stothard remarked that, in her eyes, the only thing Asians had in common was rice. See S Stothard, 'Rice & Asian Values', *The Sun* (Malaysia), 27 January 1996.
- 16 R Dore & DH Whittaker, *Social Evolution, Economic Development, and Culture*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001.
- 17 M Hill, *Asian Values as Reverse Orientalism*, NUS Department of Sociology Working Paper 150, Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2000.
- 18 Fared Zakaria, 'Culture is destiny: a conversation with Lee Kuan Yew', *Foreign Affairs*, 73 (2), 1994, pp 109–126.
- 19 The argument here was that a 'little bit' of authoritarianism resulted in much higher growth and reduction of poverty, so that there was some trade-off between liberal, individual freedoms on the one hand and the collective interest on the other. The West had gone too far in the former direction; Asian societies were more concerned with the community. According to Mahathir, for example, "'basic rights" and "freedom from oppression" are themselves a form of oppression—the oppression of the majority by the minority or the individual', so that an 'Asian democracy', based upon consensus and the interest of the community was preferable. Mahathir, *The Challenge*, p 102. See also Mahathir, speech delivered at the JUST International Conference on 'Rethinking Human Rights', Kuala Lumpur, 6 December 1994; and Mahathir, speech delivered at the Nihon Keizai Shimbun International Conference on the Future of Asia, Tokyo, 19 May 1995.
- 20 Mahathir bin Mohamad, speech to the Malaysian Business Council, 28 February 1991.
- 21 Hilley, *Malaysia*, p 131.
- 22 For example, J Fallows, *Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System*, New York: Pantheon, 1994.
- 23 Khoo Boo Teik, 'Nationalism, capitalism, and "Asian Values"', in F Loh Kok Wah & Khoo Boo Teik (eds), *Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices*, Richmond, UK: Curzon, p 70; and Hill, *Asian Values as Reverse Orientalism*, p 26.
- 24 Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant*; Wade, *Governing the Market*; and World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle*.
- 25 See J Toye, *Dilemmas of Development: Reflections on the Counter-revolution in Development Economics*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.
- 26 P Evans, *Dependent Development*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979; and W Bello & S Rosenfield, *Dragons in Distress*, San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1990.
- 27 Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant*; Wade, *Governing the Market*; S Schlosstein, *Asia's New Little Dragons: The Dynamic Emergence of Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia*, Chicago, IL: Contemporary Books, 1991; JD Aberbach, D Dollar & KD Sokoloff (eds), *The Role of the State in Taiwan's Development*,

- New York: East Gate, 1994; and H Hughes *The Dangers of Export Pessimism*, San Francisco, ICS Press, 1992.
- 28 D Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p 6.
- 29 *Ibid*, p 7; and H Harootunian, 'Some thoughts on comparability and the space-time problem', *Boundary*, 32 (2), 2005, p 30.
- 30 K Marx, 'Preface to the first edition', in Marx, *Capital*, trans I Lipschits, Haarlem: De Haan, 1978, p xv.
- 31 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p 7. Emphasis in original.
- 32 For an early example, see AO Hirschman, 'Obstacles to development: a classification and a quasi-vanishing act', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 13 (4), 1965, pp 385–393.
- 33 Mahathir bin Mohamad, speech to the Malaysian Business Council, 28 February 1991.
- 34 Anwar Ibrahim, *The Asian Renaissance*, Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1996, pp 123–124. See also A Rahman Embong, 'The culture and practice of pluralism in post-independence Malaysia', *IKMAS Working Paper 18*, Bangi, Selangor: Institut Kajian Malaysia Dan Antarabangsa, 2000.
- 35 It should be noted that in Singapore, that other great advocate of the Asian Values thesis, the importance of Confucianism is of relatively recent origin as well. As late as the early 1980s a moral education programme in secondary schools instigated by the government was originally intended to focus on Bible studies, Buddhism, Hindu, Islamic and world religions studies. Confucianism was eventually only added as an afterthought. Even then teachers in Confucian ethics had to be imported, since there was no sufficient knowledge about the topic within Singapore itself. Also interest among the public was very limited: the majority of Chinese students opted for Buddhist studies. Hill, *Asian Values as Reverse Orientalism*, pp 19–20.
- 36 *Ibid*; Hillel, *Malaysia*; and R Maseland, 'Embedding economics: the constitution of development and reform in Malaysia and the Philippines', dissertation, Radboud University, Nijmegen, 2006.
- 37 Note, for example, Islamic scholar Osman Bakar's claim, as discussed in footnote 13.
- 38 F Loh Kok Wah, 'Developmentalism and the limits of democratic discourse', in Loh Kok Wah & Khoo Boo Teik, *Democracy in Malaysia*, pp 19–50.
- 39 In-Won Hwang, *Personalized Politics: The Malaysian State under Mahathir*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003, pp 210–213; and Hillel, *Malaysia*.
- 40 See, for example, Mahathir, *The Challenge*; and Muhammad Haji Muhd Taib, *The New Malay*, Petaling Jaya: Visage Communications, 1996.
- 41 A Singh, A Belaisch, C Collins, P De Masi, R Krieger, G Meredith & R Rennhack, 'Stabilization and reform in Latin America: a macroeconomic perspective on the experience since the early 1990s', *IMF Occasional Paper 238*, 2005.

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