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the Global Economy



In the third of a series of interviews with LAB affiliates, Dr Ali Kadri unpacks a complex and violent account of financialisation, militarisation and oil in the Middle East, and explains how human rights and sovereignty over natural resources of disempowered national working classes challenge economic orthodoxy.

What role do oil prices play in the global economy and why might it matter to human rights?

If one were to consider the sensationalised view of oil or the opinion that holds that oil is a uniquely suitable source of energy, then the case may be that the expansion of the world's population from around 2 billion in 1925 to 7 billion (currently) could not have been possible without the energy that oil had provided. However, that is a perspective that bestows upon oil, the commodity itself, a life of its own, when in fact our dependence on oil is ordained by a set of social relationships that necessitates the use of oil for profit making as opposed to alternative sources of energy that respect social and environmental concerns. When our way of reproducing society (maintaining the needs of society from one period to the next by social measures) shifts from being dictated by the profit criterion to the social value criterion (as in goals which are common to society as a whole), research into the employment of other sources of energy may lead to equal or maybe better sources of energy.

Nevertheless, oil and fuels represent the foremost traded commodity globally. Oil is also important because variants on the initial commodity make up the inputs of nearly all the manufactured commodities. But oil is a strategic commodity because countries that depend on oil imports for their energy and have no immediate sources to replace oil become extremely vulnerable on the security front, if and when oil shortages arise. Hence, for the hegemonic powers, especially the US, controlling the sources of oil in the Arab world by subjugating or subverting the governments of oil rich countries can become a source of immense power and/or a weapon of strategic value. For the US, the power emanating from hegemony over oil resources underwrites the issuance of the world reserve currency, the dollar, and many other imperial rents wrought as a result of its imperial status.

Oil is relevant to human rights because it provides the energy with which many rights-based essentials for sustaining life are produced. Food, shelter, water and health, etc. require energy and oil by-products as inputs. If the price of oil and fuels rises, then the price of these right-endowed services and commodities rises. Fuel prices could also rise as a consequence of subsidy removal. When the World Bank demands lifting subsidies on fuels, the cost of these essential services and commodities also rises. As such, many in the poorer strata will be deprived of their right to food and other basic needs for a decent life. Energy is necessary to grow food, and most of the energy comes from oil (irrigation, electricity, machine operation, etc.). These subsidy-lifting or austerity measures,

as happened in Egypt recently, dissipate the wealth of society and violate many human rights principles.

The already poor rural areas usually bear the brunt of these contractionary policies (fiscal austerity and subsidy removal). UNICEF, for instance, reported in 2009 that one in three Egyptian children suffers from malnutrition, hence, the annulment of subsidy further deprives needy children of food¹. Not only that, the policy of subsidy removal on essentials in poorer countries is also wasteful from the purely 'positive-science' point of resource allocation. Because the institutions that allocate resources are commandeered by the wealthier class, which stands to benefit from rent grab and national resource divestiture, the supposed welfare gains that would ensue from removing price distortions (subsidies) had they existed at all, would not be imparted to the poorer working strata. In any case, welfare gains cannot ensue from this policy because it is fiscally contractionary. Moreover, in an Arab de-industrialising and open capital and trade accounts context, the globally integrated ruling class, through the channels of finance uses every means possible to usurp the social product of the national economy. Foremost in these are the stance of the dollar-pegged exchange rate, which draw down the reserves of central banks to stabilise the national currency in the dollar, so that the wealth of the national ruling class may hold its stable dollar-value in the international markets. There are two clarifications to note here: a) the ruling classes' earnings are safer abroad when held in so-called 'risk free' assets like the dollar, so naturally, investors seek the safer broader international markets, and; b) when the central banks expend dollars to prop up the national exchange rate vis-à-vis the dollar (keeping it pegged to the dollar), the working class benefits as the price of imported dollar-priced wheat, for instance, becomes indirectly subsidised; however, the channelling of credit into speculation on national assets like real estate, which pushes its price up, allows the financially integrated ruling class to convert its rising gains from liquidating national assets at guaranteed dollar prices. In the end result, the subsidy provided to the richer class, as a result of the peg, ends up eroding national funds and forcing a removal of subsidy to the poorer working class.

Oil, however, is very crucial to human rights because it is a principal reason for war making. Oil violates the right to security of person and communal security, especially in the Arab World. As early as the 1970's, the late Saudi novelist, Abdul Rahman Munif, whose prose had beautifully captured the way oil had torn asunder the old social relationships of Arab society, disengaged women from village type agricultural production and left open the ideological space for Wahhabism to act as spiritual repository for parasitism, he had also laid down the equation that in the dialectic of oil, each drop of oil equals a drop of blood. Strategic oil interests justify the existence of brutal monarchies and despotic Arab regimes that serve as suzerains of American empire. Oil control feeds into the other two most relevant channels of the global economy: militarisation and financialisation. Together, the threesome, oil, weapons and the dollar, represent the tripod upon which the signal of the profit rate signals the death tolls from wars. It is not oil the commodity itself that has to change as a commodity or any alternative energy source that would replace oil as a commodity that would also have to change, it is the criterion that organises the relationships by which societies reproduce themselves by commodifying the basic goods that are required to sustain life that has to change. When man and nature are organised around more common social goals, other than profiteering by privatising water, air and vital medication, to name a few, one may possibly see the oil addiction getting kicked.

¹ <http://www.irinnews.org/report/86893/egypt-nearly-a-third-of-children-malnourished-report>

How would you define neo-liberalism? What effect has it had on the Arab world?

The neoliberal policy package depends primarily on the creation of an enabling environment for the private sector, freeing the goods and capital markets and advocating 'good governance'. If at some immense pain to the working class in the short term, price distortions are removed, capital-gains taxes that inhibit the wealthy from investing are removed, labour laws that make the market rigid (enabling labour stability on the job instead of being precarious) are removed, and financial regulations that impede the flows of capital are removed, then after a period of welfare retrenchment, the market spurs into action delivering much needed capital stock, rising productivity and rising wages, albeit, with any 'trickle-down' aftereffect in the long term. One ought to note in passing that despite the stark record of the trickle-down, it remains central to mainstream policies. When these conditions prevail, the neoliberal 'theory' says, development prevails. However, this is not much of a theory.

Social theory, narrowly defined, is a system of thought that explores the laws of transformation of society. What these supposed de-regulatory measures do is not to de-regulate, but to shift the power to regulate the flow of resources in society from the working class to the ruling class. As such, these are re-calibrations of the accounting parameters that allow value, signified in the money form, to wash back and forth within certain degrees between labour and capital; in the neoliberal case, it is capital that makes the bigger share. What is missing in this is the identity of the social forces that better their conditions time and again through the control of value or wealth creation and transfers in order to promote their expanding interests because they are caught in a game of competition. There simply is not a fuller conception of the 'who, why and how' that are rudimentary to theory. In fact, this neoliberal set up distorts reality and selectively abstracts from it notions that support its ideological thesis, which is that the private sector's wealth necessarily improves social welfare. But when the markets are freed in poorer, less secure, countries with weak production capacity and a ruling class whose interests are integrated in the safer international financial markets, the national resources, capital and labour, all flee the national market. It is not nationalist zeal or charitable inclinations that allocate resources; it is the profit rate. Wealth-making is not a matter of buying and selling alone, separate from power structures, wars of encroachment in the third world, austerity and union busting in the first world are part and parcel of profit making. The cheapening of resources (people and natural resources) as inputs by expropriation and violent means is never separate from capitalist history. Thus, to exclude violence, power and contradictions in general from the hypotheses of the mainstream is to exclude reality itself. At any historical moment, the competition for more profits implies short-changing labour (paying less and less in wages) and grabbing by expropriation the resources of less secure developing nations. The kernel of the profit-driven wealth making process lies in depriving labour of its rights and, therefore, the rights agenda is a labour agenda.

Upon a closer look, these free policies are not really free. Because the minute the money market is freed and the national currency comes to depend on foreign dollar savings to remain stable, it becomes chained to the lenders. This vulnerability to external financial markets and loss of credibility further erode the capacity of national governments to issue their own debt instruments (bonds) in order to finance their own economic expansion. They literally become nations without national currencies. Furthermore, to keep the outside balance of payment steady (to have enough dollars to pay for their debts and imports), national governments resort to fiscal austerity, spending less on health and education, in order to pay off the foreign held debts or to keep enough in reserves to pay for imports. After opening up, imports from abroad tend to be cheaper (mass

produced); subsequently, with openness the import bill also rises (roughly for the Arab world imports rose from around 20% of GDP to nearly 50% of GDP between 1970 and 2010). So, the national governments themselves get locked into a vicious cycle from which their moneys are only valuable if measured against the dollar and their governments are only reliable if they collect enough of the national currency to stabilise the exchange rate with the dollar. This is anything but freedom. The contraction in fiscal and monetary policies at home demobilise resources, people and physical capital (by demobilise, I mean to disengage from production because development is best defined as the mobilisation of real resources, as in putting people to productive work). To make matters worse, the freedom to move people, money and resources abroad ensures that both capital and people leave their countries year after year. Certainly, the backlog of tremendous pools of idle labour and forced refugees keeps up the ideological downward pressure on wages. Throughout this process of usurpation, one sees no measures taken by governments to arrest the drainage. This implies that the ruling class in control of national resources is benefiting from the way neoliberal policies are channelling resources. It also means that the neoliberal policy package itself is not an unbiased interface between agent and policy framework; it is a premeditated framework that serves as the conveyor belt for the vested interests of the ruling classes and their international alliances, albeit to the detriment of the national economy.

This takes us to the next level of exploration into neoliberalism. How do societies come to emit a ruling class whose commitment to its international counterparts is more solid than its commitment to its own working class at home? The answer to this varies according to particular histories and/or the material basis upon which a ruling class reproduces itself (does it earn from its own national industry or from abroad); but as of 1990 and the rise in financialisation, the historical momentum has been one where international finance pushes the reproduction of capital outside its national boundaries. Against the overriding historical forces that are bringing about financialisation, the case I make is that the Arab world lost wars to Israel and the United States, and in the global retreat in internationalist socialist ideology, Arab society had restructured, and its own ruling class underwent a *volte-face* into a fully comprador class as it had to adjust to the terms of defeat, which had de-industrialised it and stripped the state of its sovereignty. One ought to note in passing that the Arab bourgeoisie was at ease with the defeat, because the defeat itself had removed the populist state regulation of the sixties and seventies that inhibited its growth. That sovereignty of which I speak is not an abstract ideal, but a real state of working class security and working class power within the state. Therefore, neoliberalism in an African or Arab context (generally defeated security exposed working classes in the periphery) is the tribute transfer channel to empire. No relatively cohesive social entity represented in a state would tolerate recurrent surplus drain under neoliberalism unless it was in a condition of surrender. Military defeats imposed wealth-draining policies by restructuring national classes to consent to the imperialist terms of capitulation.

In terms of the Arab world, despite the immediate post-independence aggression of imperialism against leading Arab countries, state-led development with regulated markets, capital and trade accounts, had demonstrated a better welfare and developmental model than the neoliberal one. When the populist state-led development model collapsed, the rates of poverty, hunger and repression rose under neoliberalism. The market that neoliberalism aimed to free was non-existent not only in the Arab world, but anywhere. No society is free of contradictions and the uncertainties of history cannot be lodged into a probabilistic cum equilibrium framework. The principal Arab market was state-guided and industry protected - financed mainly by internal government borrowing. As it became private sector-led, its industry was exposed to superior competition and its financing depended more and more on borrowing from foreign sources. The economy mutated from

an even-distribution, public sector–led economy to a highly uneven economy led by the private sector and a *privately owned 'public' sector*.

The neoliberal obfuscation peaked in the years just prior to the Arab uprisings, as the World Bank spewed out a litany of literature ludicrously recommending good governance to Arab rulers. Advising absolute despots to govern in 'good' ways was no error of ignorance or naïveté of idealism; it was measured. Entreating 'good governance' from bad governors was how a phantasm was transmuted into a reality by the power of free market ideology. If the success of any development policy hinges on an a priori set of 'good' governance rules, then who could have possibly entertained the thought that those Arab ruling classes, which had clasped state and economy, had filled prisons with prisoners of conscience, and had allied themselves to international financial capital would even remotely govern in 'good' ways. The World Bank was colluding with Arab despots. No one could possibly be that ill-informed.

In your work you've argued that the Arab state is at the 'behest' of foreign powers as regards resources. Please explain.

Development in a class-divided society depends on the ruling class' vested interest in capacity building. I also propose that, necessarily but not exclusively, the ruling class tendency to expand its wealth by its mode of integration with the global economy outweighs its nationalist or pan-Arab zeal. After the fact, the cant of Arab or pan-Arab nationalism has been the sentimental veneer behind which anti-integrationist policies have been implemented. In a word, the Arab ruling classes, as is the case of other ruling classes, place the concerns with which they accumulate first on their agenda. What has occurred in the Arab world under relentless imperialist assault is the gradual disengagement of national industrial capital (de-industrialisation), after which only commerce bereft of industrial production remained and the merchant mode of accumulation became the dominant mode around which society was organised. So the class in charge no longer reproduces itself (creates the economic and social conditions for its betterment) from production in the national economy, but principally from grabbing national assets and divesting. To use the language of political economy, value usurpation policies (such as neoliberalism), uneven development, the blocking of the homogenisation of labour (dividing labour) and value grab by imperialist conquest (wars of aggression) are some of the inherent capitalist processes that have underpinned the resurrection of Arab merchant capital at this historical moment. But out of all these reasons cum symptoms of defeat, Arab losses in wars entail the dismantling of their industry, which could have been central to their security structure. Simply put, the US and Israel will not win a war against Arab states and still allow them to rebuild an industrially-based defence structure. The repercussions of Arab defeats are not limited in scope; they also weaken the security cum sovereignty (working class security) of many Middle Eastern and African states. Thus, the case can be generalised, in the sense that the security-exposed states of Africa and the Arab world fall on the 'grab' side of capital accumulation (encroachment wars and dispossession mark their historical processes), and dividedness becomes the defining feature of their historical subjects—that is, the alliance of their comprador classes and international financial classes that shape their histories. In a nutshell, the imperial centres benefit more in terms of value transfers from their state of corrosion as opposed to what they would from their state of development.

When state collapse meets socialist ideological retreat, capital, the alliance of the Arab comprador and international financial classes, which are united in the way they appropriate through finance and the dollar form, infuses and employs identity based divides, principally the sectarian divide to further their interests by devalorisation of assets (getting national resources at cheaper prices or by

snatch). The debilitation of states is the medium by which the under-valorisation of national assets takes place. Capital devolves funds and sustains the ideology that uses the immiseration of all, their poverty which knows no sect, in a selective way, designating for instance, Sunnis or Shias as the victims and in as much as fanning the winds of civil wars dislocates people and assets. In the Arab world poverty criss-crosses the sects and is dependent at times upon levels of regional development. In certain distraught areas, all sects would be poorer than the well to do region and, hence, the underlying basis for poverty would be regional underdevelopment. However, from a classical political economy perspective, poverty of course has no sect; the poor are poor prior to and irrespective of their sect. There is a primacy of poverty over sect or identity in general. A specific identity may collide with a specific poverty condition or abjection. One may say the Sunnis, on average, are poorer in this country than the Shia or vice versa. A statistical observation would not explain why there is poverty first and why some of certain identities are inflicted with more of the poverty. Poverty is a symptom of exploitation, uneven development and the social arrangements particular to the distribution of the wage share within the working class. These distributional arrangements are the result of the struggle for power between capital and labour. How equal the wage rates between men and women, Shia or Sunni is a matter related to the power of organised labour over capital. The success of capital can be partly gauged by the lowering of the wage share altogether and the accentuation of working class differences between labour itself on the basis of identity. Purposefully, the language of sectarianism bestows upon oppression a sectarian identity, which flourishes in relation to the power of the ideology that draws the contours of the political process as a sectarian one. The presence of theocratic or semi theocratic states such as Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia contribute by their very state of being to othering, structural and differentiated racism. So, sowing divisions is an orchestrated process that pushes identity above class, causing the working class along with their state to implode. The petro dollar funds from the Gulf, which are anything but sovereign because none of the Gulf States are sovereign, have aided and abetted the divisions and the fissure lines of the Sunni/Shiite divide that now threatens to devour much of the Fertile Crescent. In so far as transfers of value from the Arab world are concerned, destroying states, cheapening resources and leaving working people without the state-political representation needed to renegotiate their integration into the global order, amount to colonialism without the occupation forces on national grounds.

The merchant-capital leading Arab class is fully fused with international financial capital because its concrete activities are in the finance-dollar sphere. Arab merchant capital emulates its international financial counterparts in many areas. Apart from buying abroad and selling at home as the share of imports rises, its principal endeavours at home are in the speculative areas of a FIRE economy (finance, investment and real estate). This class has little to lose from forfeiting its production base in the home economy. Its *raison d'être* is to tap into national resources (national assets and foreign exchange earnings) by speculation, devalorisation of national assets and the sale of imports to the national economy. This merchant class does not contribute in any significant way to the development of national working classes because it simply does not need to engage healthier more educated labour in production – industry is in decline. These merchant capital leading classes are either detached from the process of industry within the national economy or exhibit an ephemeral link to it. Like the classic comprador class, they are subordinate partners of (US-led) capital.

Nation-states, at the behest of their ruling classes, subjugate the working classes within them and pursue their vital interests, whether by wars or other nonviolent means. However, placing their own class interests above those of the nation state as the social contract comes undone, the merchant Arab classes in charge of development have disempowered national working classes, in particular, by

stripping them of their sovereignty over national resources - depriving the national working class of owning its resources in violation of the first common articles of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ((1966, entered into force 3 January 1976, General Assembly res A/RES/2200A (XXI), 993 UNTS 3) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, entered into force 23 March 1976, General Assembly res A/RES/2200A (XXI), 999 UNTS 171). The money earned from natural resources re-circulate abroad or do not buttress the living conditions of the working class.

Of all the means of dispossessing the working classes of their resources, war is the most powerful tool for disengaging and leaving up for grab Third World assets. Far worse than foreclosures that evict peasants from their property so that they join the non-owning, waged labour force, wars prevent whole populations from owning their natural resources. War is useful in resource grab, or the process by which developed formations garner the resources of the Third World under highly inequitable terms imposed, more often than not, by military superiority. In a strategic region targeted for imperialist control, the Arab ruling-class alliance with US-led capital promotes the reproduction of war because, apart from the oil hegemony factor, war for the sake of war, is all on its own, a principal tributary of global accumulation.

Is 'Arab socialism' viable? And if so, is it desirable?

One must critically analyse 'Arab socialism' within its historical context. In times of immediate post-independence autonomy (the 1960s to the late 1970s), state dirigisme, high public investment rates and more egalitarian redistribution characterised all Arab states. A particular set of Arab states followed the path of 'Arab socialism'—that is, nationalised industry, and finance and implemented agrarian reform as in Egypt, Iraq, Algeria, Libya and Syria—which resulted in significant welfare gains. However, half-hearted Arab socialist egalitarian processes, initiated from the top down, excluded the working class from participating actively in defending their gains and authoritarian labour-process regimentation remained in place. Two principal military defeats in wars with Israel (June 1967 and October 1973), several open and implicit aggressions against Arab countries, and the 1979 Camp David Accords by which Egypt joined the US constellation, gravely weakened Arab and African national and joint security. In due course and under neoliberalism, many of the passed-down working-class benefits were lost to the old ruling classes or their reconstituted variants. One ought to clarify: the discourse faulting import substitution policies is misplaced. Policies do not go wrong. They serve interests. It is not the policies that stopped delivering development, but it is the class in charge, which as the state faltered, shifted its allegiance away from the national working class towards foreign capital. At the latter stages of neoliberalism, the Arab ruling class intensified coercion in the labour process and began gradually to reverse the socialisation of assets (privatised assets). Since the 1980's, labour faced the daunting task of combating a local ruling class backed by the military powers of US-led imperialism. The Arab merchant classes have continued to funnel resources away from the national economy despite the social retrogression at home. In a way, arresting the flow of resources from the national economy at cheap prices or by snatch should have been their policy choice in order to reverse the damage. However, their historical end was no longer determined by their own national underpinnings, but by the tendencies of international finance that requires them to self-destruct along with their states. The policy choice to stem value outflow at cheap prices or by snatch will depend on the class nature of the state. So, if a labour component becomes significant within the state, working people would want their resources to work for them and to reproduce their living standards in better shape or form time and time again. This means that in accounting terms, the capital and trade accounts have to be regulated, much like they were under

Arab socialism. In dynamic terms, however, a massive redistribution redressing the concentration of wealth that the Arab merchant classes undertook when they hijacked the state is necessary. Historical comparisons, like all comparisons, are lame. The past cannot be re-enacted. Account taken of the development in technology akin to the progress of time, one may say that the 1960's and 1970's exhibited higher growth rates, aspects of egalitarianism but were no ages of popular democracy. However, the neoliberal age was an age of lower growth rates, rising poverty, inequality and repression to boot. As to whether there will be redistribution or not depends on the construction of a social programme, which is itself contingent on the power and civil liberties afforded to the working class and the peasantry as of the Arab spring. The hype from the left quarters that the post Arab spring masses now know that they are capable of toppling regimes and that if the course reform flounders, the revolution will peer its head again, may not hold as the dismay from the lack of revolutionary programmes instils a state of defeatism.

The LAB has as its objectives to provide a hub for creative work across disciplines and from theory to practice on issues central to concerns around justice under conditions of globalisation. How might the LAB's mandate help inform your research?

The LAB helps anchor all studies of development in the necessity to observe human rights as part of the broader picture to which societies must aspire in their day to day existence. The observance of human rights is not a luxury, but rather, an obligation that states must adhere to. Analysis and policies cannot depart from the compass of human rights, which in developmental terms means strict observance for the basic survival needs of the working population. The current mainstream approach, under the guise of neutrality, tends to omit power and class relations from their analysis and, as such, science becomes anything but neutral. Why? Because, as I mentioned earlier, it abstracts selectively from reality to show and support only the points that support its own vision. For instance, consider neoclassical economics. The idea that there is some unadulterated price mechanism that exists outside real social and power structures, which, if need be would clear all markets, creates new markets and clears them where there are transaction costs, and allocates resources efficiently, tends to omit the simple fact that such a price system cannot exist even hypothetically as an anchor point to which reality would gravitate by equilibrium forces. The only way the organised dimension of capital, the Keynesians of the world, averts severe crisis is by saving the market from itself and its supposed divine price system, or better yet, to foment war and re-engage resources anew. The delusion of the free market is yet more ludicrous, not because it begins with a subject who lives in an ideal world in which he produces, trades and consumes, but because it adds up all the actions of the subjects to emulate history. History is not sort of 'I do, she does and the sum of what we do' at different intervals, projected as slides on a wall. The majority have no political say whatsoever. Historical agency is not the adding up together of the psychological traits and inclinations of every individual. The abstract or isolated individual does not exist. The individual is a social relationship reflecting the many social relationships of the social order in which he or she resides, of which only the relationships organised to produce a political impact by means of organised political action count as agency. Political agency is that social relationship which mutates within the intermediated space provided by the power of the social class in the body politics. Only the minority ruling classes have choices and it is delusional for the majority of the working classes to perceive themselves as agents of history outside working class forms of resistance. Reality *is* a social and power structure framework and the idea of integrating working class rights as a repository for analysing structural frameworks would lead us to a fuller understanding of things.

The canon of orthodoxy may flirt with the idea of human rights, but it cannot integrate it within its hypotheses because it is neither un-ideological nor neutral as is professed. It would be straightforward to model mathematically an economy with disengaged persons or persons residing below subsistence as receiving state incomes to meet their basic needs or wages to engage in socially rewarding activity. That equality of condition should come first is a right. The mass of unemployed people are so because the market economy itself cannot provide full employment and, hence, society and the international community owe people who are forced into poverty a decent minimum subsistence. The solution to mathematical models that incorporate a hypothesis of needs-based rights to the unemployed and or people working at below poverty wages in their analysis would still be 'rigorous', since rigour itself is a convention and not an objective criterion. However, by overlooking needs-based rights, power and interrelated forms of social organisation, the discipline of economics overlooks the objective and impersonal forces of history. In any case it has to, because its constructed history is personal and subjective. It begins with an individual possessing a miraculous agency and ends with a history which is the sum of these subjective miraculous tastes and inclinations taken at successive intervals in chronological time. Nothing could go wrong when the world is conceived as such, every point is Pareto optimal and all resources are efficiently allocated within a given level of technology. Social disaster, unemployment and wars are ascribed to choice or cultural reasons. A few decades ago, they were attributed to race.

The question why the Canon of orthodoxy cannot be superseded in mainstream literature when addressing the ferment of social conditions, can be answered under the rubric of the subordination of science to power. But in social science generally, the continued departure of theory from its empirical referents and/or the overly empirical nature of addressing concrete social problems had sacrificed theory altogether because they (the mainstream) supposedly did not want to be "biased." The schism between the real and ideal is far worse in economics since their choice of assumptions, as in free competition and scarcity, has nothing to do with reality. Facts such as power, social classes and their corresponding impersonal forms of social organisations that make up the uncertainty of history are not included within mainstream paradigms. So there is no hypothesis for man/woman as a social relationship intermediated in the complex power structure in a way that may void individual political agency altogether, or in a way such that history happens against his or her wishes, which it does all the time in class society and all the more reason why social science exists. For reasons of structural and ideological bias, the mainstream incorporates the idea of rights in its frame of thought only as empirical ludicrousness or abstract nihilism, and as such it voids the idea of rights as a concrete possibility.

Removing class and power structures and needs-based working class rights from analysing social structures is a falsification of fact pretending to be theory. Some sort of ideological orientation is implicit in every empirical study, and even the most abstract theoretical concepts presumably have empirical referents. So by omitting working class rights and power and as the late Arthur K. Davis would have said, by deflecting scientific attention into harmless areas - such as abstruse theory or a surface view of social problems - that may or may not serve the dominant vested interests, but at least do not challenge them, mainstream social science is neither neutral nor non-ideological. By highlighting rights, the Lab may bring back into theory that part of reality which is assumed away by the mainstream. That is a very useful endeavour.

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Ali Kadri, LAB 'views, Laboratory for Advanced Research on the Global Economy Interview 3, Centre for the Study of Human Rights, LSE (July 2014).

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