Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr and Epistemic Decolonisation: *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī*, the Islamic Alternative in *Iqtiṣādunā* and the Struggle for Cultural Hegemony

PIETRO MENGHINI [1]

PhD Candidate, Global History and Governance, Scuola Superiore Meridionale, University of Naples "Federico II", Italy

ABSTRACT: Original Paper

The Lebanese scholar Chibli Mallat, analysing Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr's work, affirms that the Iraqi intellectual proposed a completely new comprehensive theory of the Islamic State, focusing on constitutionalism and economics. Following Mallat's intuition, this paper will focus on the second aspect of al-Ṣadr's work. It will deal with the use of thematic Qur'anic exegesis (*al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*) in al-Ṣadr's main work on economics, *Iqtiṣādunā*. The article will argue that al-Ṣadr's use of this kind of exegesis is determined by his will to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Islamic vision of economics as a central part of a new Islamic society. Furthermore, the paper will argue that in al-Ṣadr's work, this new conception of Islamic society is also voted to propose a valid alternative to capitalism and Marxism, both as economic systems and conceptions of society, fighting Western cultural influences and Epistemic colonisation. Henceforth, the article will frame al-Ṣadr's effort to build a comprehensive critique of Western Epistemic colonisation within the concept of Cultural Hegemony and Counter-hegemony as defined by Asef Bayat and Antonio Gramsci and analyse his endeavours within this framework. To highlight these points, the presentation will provide an overview of the use of *al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī* in a short selection of passages from *Iqtiṣādunā*, drawing on the methodological framework provided by Gramsci, Bayat, and other scholars.

KEYWORDS: Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, Epistemic Decolonisation, *al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*.

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1 . Corresponding Author. E–mail Adress: pietro.menghini@unina.it

1. Introduction: the thought of al-Ṣadr and the context of his works

Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (1935-1980) is probably one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the 20th century, according to the Lebanese scholar Chibli Mallat (1993, 7). His vast production and collection of works had a strong influence over prominent thinkers and political leaders, such as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, to quote probably the most important, and the whole circle of Muslim intellectuals gathered in Iraq during the 60s and the 70s, labelled by Mallat as the Shi'i International of Najaf (Mallat, 1993, 7, 19 & 45). Al-Ṣadr's influence extends beyond intellectual production to political activism, taking part in the foundation of the party al-Daʿwah al-Islāmiyyah in Iraq (Aziz, 1993, 207-222; Rizvi, 2010, 1299-1313; Shanahan, 2004, 943-954; Yamao, 2008, 247-248).

His intellectual and political activities can be inserted in the long and broad current defined as Islamic Reformism. This current can be traced back as far as the end of the 18th century and the early 19th, spanning up to the second half of the 20th and even the beginning of the 21st. Islamic Reformism is often strictly linked to the response to European Colonialism and Imperialism as one of its main driving factors (Pink, a2017, 479-493). Although European Colonialism and Imperialism certainly had an impact on the development of Islamic Reformism, we find it reductive to shrink this intellectual and social phenomenon only to response to external input.

Bāqir al-Ṣadr's work certainly answers to European Colonialism and Imperialism, and the influence of Western ideologies. It also continues an independent development of Islamic philosophy and thought. In the paper, we will observe how his discourse dialogues both with Western ideologies and with the longer discursive tradition of Islam, loosely recalling the definition given by Talal Asad of Islam as a discursive tradition, making it reductive to look at al-Ṣadr's work only as a response to colonialism.[1]

Nevertheless, the environment in which Bāqir al-Ṣadr elaborated his work and continued his political activities was one marked by the

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1. Talal Asad has famously described Islam as a "discursive tradition" that connects Muslims across the globe and through the times while at the same time allowing for a multitude of context‑specific practices and discourses (Pink, 2017, 490). In this sense, we can look for references and continuities between al‑Ṣadr's work and previous Muslim thinkers, looking at the context‑specific discourse of the Iraqi thinker in the broader picture, both geographically and temporally.

consequences of the British colonial occupation of Iraq, under the form of a League of Nations Mandate of type A from 1914–1932 and indirect influence up to 1958. Among these consequences, at least according to al-Ṣadr's vision, was the widespread rise of Left-wing Western-inspired political movements, in particular after ʿAbd al-Karīm Qāsim's 1958 Revolution.[2] The growth in popularity of the Left-wing political movements, particularly among dispossessed and oppressed masses, university students, and the middle-class, brought al-Ṣadr and other young clerics to conclude that the quietism practised by clerics in Iraq was not an option anymore (Abdul-Jabar, 2003, 78-98). Consequently, in 1957-58, they decided to create al-Daʿwah party to counter Left-wing movements and bring back Islam as a relevant element in the political life of Iraq. This situation was not confined just to Iraq but was widespread among the countries of the Islamic World.

In her article on the shift of the economic focus of the Tunisian party Ennahda from social and economic justice to neo-liberalism, Ben Salem highlights how Islamist parties in their history have put stress on social and economic justice to compete with socialist and Left-wing ideologies and political movements (Ben Salem, 2020, 695-718).

Henceforth, Bāqir al-Ṣadr also created a political movement to confront the growing competition between Left-wing and socialist political movements. Nevertheless, the Iraqi thinker was also involved in the intellectual elaboration aiming at countering the ideologies of these Left-wing movements.

This opposition to Left-wing political movements was only the immediate manifestation of Western Influence, according to al-Ṣadr (1971, xxiii). The formally ex-colonial environment of Iraq during the 1950s and early 1960s reminded al-Ṣadr and other Muslim thinkers that the influence of Western Imperialism could manifest itself in different forms. For this reason, al-Ṣadr hoped to create a comprehensive theory of the Islamic State and to counter, through the reconstruction of an Islamic Method, Western Influence, as stated by Mallat (1993, 7-14). It is not a case that al-Ṣadr in *Iqtiṣādunā* elaborates a critique of both capitalism and Marxism, expressing in such a way its consciousness of the broader context of Epistemic Colonisation and Decolonisation, not focusing only on the contingent problems and treats.

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2. The rising popularity of left–wing movements among lower strata of the population in Iraq and students in Iraq after the 1958 Qāsim Revolution worried Muslim intellectuals, afraid they might lose influence and power in Iraqi society. In response to this situation, Bāqir al-Ṣadr and other younger clerics decided to abandon the quietist position.

Thus, to sum up, the ex-colonial environment of Iraq during the 1950s and the early 60s is the backdrop against which Bāqir al-Ṣadr elaborated his thought and his profound critique of Western thought. With the Revolution of 1958 in Iraq and the growth in strength of secular forces, close to socialism on one side and the other, the memory still fresh of direct British influence on the country from 1914 up to 1932, and then indirect effect up to 1958, in his whole work al-Ṣadr is striving to shake off Western Imperialism.

Furthermore, al-Ṣadr's work is also inscribed in an Islamic debate, which Hamid Mavani theorises as the shift in Shi'i *ijtihād* from Individual-oriented to Society-oriented. Mavani argues that Shi'i scholars focused on day-to-day problems at an individual level instead of a societal level, due to their political history as a minority rarely in power (2010, 24-40). Therefore, Mavani contends that we can outline a shift in this trend in the period preceding the Iranian revolution of 1979, moving towards a society-oriented exegesis. Whether Mavani's analysis is accurate or not, what is interesting, as we will see continuing with our study, is that his critique of Shi'i practices of interpretation is remarkably similar to that of Bāqir al-Ṣadr, as also highlighted by Mallat, who outlines the will of the Iraqi thinker to elaborate a comprehensive Islamic approach to different fields of societal life (Mallat, 1993, 7-14). In this sense, we can also look at al-Ṣadr's work in connection to an Islamic debate and philosophical development and not only as a response to European colonialism and imperialism.

Thus, framed within the context of Islamic reformism and European and British mperialism in Iraq and the growth of secular forces stemming from the Qāsim revolution of 1958, al-Ṣadr's work is deeply connected and aware of the diverse types of influence that European imperialism can employ, both in political, economic and cultural terms. At the same time, it is deeply aware of the need for change within the Shi'a interpretation practices. Keeping in mind this context and its influence on al-Ṣadr's work can help us understand his work and our analysis of it.

Al-Ṣadr expressed his project in his principal works, such as *Falsafatunā*, where he offered an epistemological critique of capitalism and the materialist school of thought (Aziz, 1991, 28-37; al-Ṣadr, 1980). In *Iqtiṣādunā*, the work we will analyse in this article, he continues this critique, moving it to the economic field. Finally, in works such as *Muqaddimah fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī lil-Qurʾan* and *al-Durūs fī al-ʿIlm al-Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, he develops a new Islamic methodology (Bhat, 2005, 55–59; Mallat, 1993, 152; Furqani, 2019, 63–71).

Notwithstanding the importance of these works and their influence on

other thinkers, the thought of Bāqir al-Ṣadr is still relatively understudied, with only one major published work by the aforementioned Chibli Mallat, *The Renewal of Islamic Law: Bāqir al-Ṣadr, Najaf and the Shi'i International*, and an unpublished PhD thesis on his *Islamic Political theory* by Talib Aziz (Mallat, 1993, 7; Aziz, 1991). Several articles have also been published by Mallat, Aziz, and Hanna Batatu on al-Ṣadr's political thought and activities, contributing to studying his involvement in politics and the growth of the Shi'a political movements in Iraq since the end of the 50s (Mallat, 2007, 699–729; Batatu, 1981, 578–594; Aziz, 1993; see also: Abdul-Jabar, 2003, 131–140; Euben and Zaman, 2021, 181-206; Yamao, 2008; Rizvi, 2010; Shanahan, 2004). Of course, more attention has been devoted to this thinker by scholarship in Arabic, as far as my knowledge goes. Significant works by Aḥmad ʿAbdallah Abū Zayd al-ʿĀmilī (2006), Muḥammad Ḥussaynī (1989), and Talib Aziz (2005) has been published on al-Ṣadr's thought.

The attention of scholars has also been devoted to Bāqir al-Ṣadr's work on economics, but without one major work on the topic. Scholars such as Nasir Nabi Bhat (2005), Rodney Wilson (1998, 46-59), Nejatullah Siddiqi (1981), Mohamed Aslam Haneef (1995), Syed Nawab Haider Naqvi (1994), Talib Aziz (b1993), and Hafas Furqani (2019) have worked on the economic thought of Bāqir al-Ṣadr. They focused on various aspects of his work and the innovative solutions he provides for an Islamic economic doctrine.

What has not been highlighted in these works on Bāqir al-Ṣadr's *Iqtiṣādunā*, and what we will try to argue in this article, is the anti-imperialist aspects of al-Ṣadr's work and the focus that he puts in it on the fight against Epistemic Colonisation as a central moment to overcome economic dependency. Furthermore, none of the aforementioned authors has stressed the importance of *al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī* in the construction of al-Ṣadr's new Islamic method and, consequently his Economic doctrine.

Henceforth, the study will argue for the significant role of the fight against Epistemic Colonisation, of which we will give a definition continuing with the article, in building al-Ṣadr's critique of Western Economic domination of the Islamic world in *Iqtiṣādunā*. In doing this, we will highlight how the economic dimension of subordination is deeply connected in Sadr's work to a broader kind of subordination that we can define as cultural subordination, subsumed in Epistemic Colonisation.

Furthermore, the study will argue for the use of *al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī* as a tool to fight Epistemic colonisation and thus economic subordination. To better understand and outline al-Ṣadr's thought dynamics, we will analyse *Iqtiṣādunā* within the framework of the construction of counter-hegemony

and Epistemic Decolonisation. We will argue that such a framework allows us to understand the scope of al-Ṣadr's critique in Iqtiṣādunā fully, not just limited to an economic critique *stricto sensu*, but a more comprehensive critique of general European domination of Islamic countries.

By exploring Bāqir al-Ṣadr's thought, although limiting this analysis only to a few of his works, we hope to explore its epistemological potential. By drawing on Omnia El Shakry's call for analysing Arab Intellectuals as producers of epistemologies and not only as producers of primary sources, we wish to study al-Ṣadr's work providing a reconstruction of its main points, making it functional as an epistemology to investigate relationships of hegemony and counter-hegemony (El Shakry, 2021).

The paper will be structured in five parts. Following this brief introduction to the context of al-Ṣadr's work, the article will present its theoretical framework. In the third section, we will present al-Ṣadr's theory on the Economic subordination of the *Ummah*. In the fourth, the role of *al-tafsīr al-mawḍū ʿī* in building an alternative will be presented, and it will be analysed within the theoretical framework. Finally, I will conclude the work, outlining some partial results and paths for future research development.

2. *The theoretical framework of Cultural hegemony and Epistemic Decolonisation*

As we highlighted in the introduction, al-Ṣadr was preoccupied with countering the ideologies of such Left-wing movements and the influences and the supremacy of what he identified as Western ideologies in general. In this paper, we will frame this effort in two ways; the first one will explore how this can be read as constructing an alternative Cultural Hegemony to that proposed through European Colonialism and Imperialism. The second frame we will suggest is the struggle for an Epistemic Decolonisation as the contextual frame in which the construction of Cultural Hegemony can be inserted. As understood by Asef Bayat in his work *Making Islam Democratic* (2007, 18-19), the construction of Cultural Hegemony draws on the Gramscian theory of Cultural Hegemony. Gramsci (2018, 70), in his work *Quaderni del Carcere*, defines Cultural Hegemony as:

La supremazia di un gruppo sociale si manifesta in due modi, come dominio e come direzione intellettuale e morale. Un gruppo sociale è dominante dei gruppi avversari che tende a liquidare o a sottomettere anche con la forza armata, ed è dirigente dei gruppi affini e alleati. Un gruppo sociale può e anzi deve essere dirigente già prima di conquistare il potere governativo (è questa una delle condizioni principali per la stessa conquista

del potere); dopo, quando esercita il potere ed anche se lo tiene fortemente in pugno, diventa dominante ma deve continuare ad essere anche dirigente.[3]

Thus, Gramsci explains how a social group, to reach political power, must first reach intellectual and moral domination, imposing its vision of the world and *cultural hegemony*, in Gramsci's terms (1977, 2346). Cultural Hegemony means the capacity of a social group to shape mentalities, symbols, lifestyle, language, theoretical elaboration and epistemologies of other social groups. This hegemony consolidates political supremacy, making it near-impossible even to think and elaborate on rebellion and subversion of the social group in power. Asef Bayat, drawing on this theory, explores the idea that social movements must build an alternative to the current cultural hegemony existing in their society before reaching political power. Bayat explores how social movements focus on creating alternative value systems and institutions before attempting to conquer political power (2007, 19). This attempt can be defined as constructing a counter-hegemony opposing the existing one. In the context we are exploring, according to al-Ṣadr's preoccupation, the current hegemony is that of Western Imperialist powers. Henceforth, al-Ṣadr's work moves within this theoretical universe, trying to elaborate a counter-hegemony to oppose Wester Imperialist hegemony. By attempting to build comprehensive theories on economy and philosophy, as Mallat states, al-Ṣadr understands the necessity of defying Western Cultural hegemony to rebel against it and gain independence.

The condition defined by Gramsci as cultural hegemony is to be seen in this context as the effort by Imperialist powers to dominate their colonies not only politically and economically but also at a deeper level, intellectually and morally, as the key to conquering power. This situation can be defined as Epistemic Colonisation. The relationship of power and the possible shift in it defined by the concepts of cultural hegemony and counter-hegemony is thus also explorable within the more precise concepts of Epistemic Colonisation. These concepts explain how Bāqir al-Ṣadr analyses the power relationship described by Gramsci and Bayat in his works. Precisely as in the relationship between Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony, Epistemic Colonisation finds its opponents in Epistemic Decolonisation.

The first of these two concepts, Epistemic Decolonisation, is strictly

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3. The supremacy of a social group is expressed in two ways: as domination and as a moral and intellectual guidance. A social group dominates adversaries, tending to eliminate or submit them, even recurring to violence, and it is also the guide of allies and similar groups. A social group can and must guide before it conquers power to govern (and guiding is one of the main conditions to conquer power). Afterwards, when the social group has conquered power, it must continue to guide its allies and similar groups even if it holds it firmly (Translated by the author). The concept of Cultural Hegemony is reconnected to the moral and intellectual direction (Vacca, 2010).

connected with the second, defined by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in his book *Decolonising the Mind* (1986). Defined as the fight against the imposition, in a Colonial/Imperialist context, of ways of thinking, theorising, interpreting the world, and building methodologies, Epistemic Decolonisation includes concepts such as intellectual and Economic Extraversion that we are going to outline (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, 16-45). The article argues that integrating and studying the economic thought of Bāqir al-Ṣadr in the framework of Epistemic Decolonisation can provide us with a much more nuanced and yet understudied approach to Bāqir al-Ṣadr's economic thought. Therefore, instead of exploring and explaining it only in terms of what he proposed as a new Islamic economic system, we will highlight the more general objective of his efforts and the relationship of it with the contingent historical condition. Furthermore, this approach can help us successfully highlight the connections present in al-Ṣadr's work between Epistemic Colonisation and Economic Subordination, as al-Ṣadr explains in the introduction of *Iqtiṣādunā*.

In this framework, the concepts of Epistemic colonisation, Intellectual Extraversion, and Economic Extraversion will help us frame al-Ṣadr's theories. In particular, the notion of Epistemic Colonisation is defined by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986, 3) as:

> […] annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities, and themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement, and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves, for instance, with other peoples' languages rather than their own. It makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those forces that would stop their own springs of life.

Thus, according to the author, the most critical step in colonisation is controlling the culture, which means the way he produces knowledge, the way one defines himself, and, finally, the control of the mental universe of the colonised leads to a deeper kind of control.[4] With this kind of Epistemic

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4. The real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth: what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed; to control, in other words, the entire realm of the language of real life. Colonialism imposed its control on the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most critical area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Cultural control and literary, scholarly practice, irrespective of any individual interpretation and handling of the practice. For colonialism involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or. The deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the

Colonisation, the culture, philosophy, the tradition of the coloniser is systematically undervalued and discredited. Thus, Ngugi defines discrediting and destroying ways of thinking and producing knowledge and methodologies as Epistemic Colonisation. Furthermore, Ngugi builds a connection between this kind of colonisation and political and economic subordination (Ngugi, 1986, 30).[5] He states that without Epistemic Colonisation, colonial economic or political control can not be complete, reconnecting with Gramsci's idea of the importance of Cultural Hegemony as the first step in political domination.

The entanglement of knowledge, politics, and economics in colonial or imperial contexts is also noticed by Samir Amin (1931-2018), who theorised the idea of Economic Extraversion in his work. It explores the concept of an economy totally subordinated to the whims of a colonial or imperial power, which imposes the idea of *underdevelopment* on the colonised people, to justify intervention in the name of development and civilisation. After the colonisation, the colonial power uses this idea to describe the reality created by the same intervention (Amin, 2009). Furthermore, applying the concept of economic extraversion to Epistemic Colonisation, Paulin Houtondji (2009) defines cultural extraversion as the dependence in terms of culture, knowledge, and epistemology on the European powers.

Henceforth, Epistemic Decolonisation is deployed to fight against the imposition of colonial Epistemologies and the destruction of others. These theories, set within the broader frame of hegemony and counter-hegemony, help us read in the work of Bāqir al-Ṣadr the deep relationships of power supporting Colonial and Imperialist rule. Against these relationships of power, more profound and less evident than political or economic subordination but still deeply connected with them, Bāqir al-Ṣadr developed his work and thought.

3. al-Ṣadr's fight on Epistemic Colonisation

As we highlighted in the introduction, *Iqtiṣādunā* is the focus of this study. The book is structured in three parts. The first two deal with the critiques of Marxism and capitalism, while the third focuses on providing an Islamic alternative. Before these three parts, Sadr delivers an introduction dense with concepts, which sets the stage for the rest of the book.

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conscious elevation of the coloniser's language.

5. Economic and political control of a people can never be complete without cultural control. Economic and political control can never be complete or adequate without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others.

In this introduction, al-Ṣadr describes how the Islamic countries came to perceive themselves as backwards and underdeveloped (*bilād faqīrah aw mutakhalifah iqtiṣādiyyian*). That happened as European countries, after ideally dividing the world between rich and developing countries, found in this division a justification to interfere in the affairs of countries defined as poor and underdeveloped with the excuse of helping them grow.[6] However, this development was an excuse to exploit resources in the so-called developing countries and expand the power and domination of European Powers, according to al-Ṣadr.[7] This exploitation led to actual underdevelopment. Such a situation was coupled with the previous idea of underdevelopment spread by European countries, as they needed a justification to meddle in the affairs of other countries.

Henceforth, al-Ṣadr articulates this subordination (*tabaʿiyyah*) process to European countries in three phases. The first is political subordination (*al-tabaʿiyyah al-siyāsiyyah*) which implies the direct rule of European countries over the so-called backwards nations.[8] The second phase of subordination is economical (*al-tabaʿiyyah al-iqtiṣādiyyiah*) and prosecutes political subordination even if countries have independent governments. In the second stage, as in the first, but differently, the European economy is free to exploit the Islamic countries and monopolise their resources.[9] The third and most crucial phase is methodological subordination (*al-tabaʿiyyah fī al-minhaj*). The backwards countries can not frame their problems and find solutions or fight for independence outside the European understanding of their problems. Henceforth, they can not eliminate European domination

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6 . They [the European countries] had divided the world into economically advanced countries and economically poor or backward countries, based on their economic level and productivity potential. The countries of the Islamic world were all in the latter category, which, according to European logic, had to acknowledge the leadership of the advanced countries and give them free scope to infuse their spirit in them and map out the road to advancement (al‒Ṣadr, 1971, 8‒9).

7. […] to exploit their chief resources, to fill their vacuum with foreign capitalism and monopolise several economic conveniences on the pretext of training the natives of the various countries to shoulder the burden of the economic development of their countries (al‒Ṣadr, 1971, 10).

8. The first is political subordination, which found visual expression in the economically advanced European Nations exercising direct rule over the backward nations (al‒Ṣadr, 1971, 10).

9. The second is Economic subordination, which went hand in hand with the rise of politically independent governments in the backward countries. This subordination found expression in the European economy being given full scope to play on the scene of these countries in diverse ways: to exploit their chief resources, fill their vacuum with foreign capitalism and monopolise several economic conveniences on the pretext of training the natives of the various countries to shoulder the burden of the economic development of their countries (al‒Ṣadr, 1971, 10).

in political and economic fields.[10] These three phases can intertwine, but the stage that most countries in the *Ummah* are living in right now, experiencing as a *colonial reality* (*al-wāqʿa al-istiʿmārī*), is the second stage of economic subordination (al-Ṣadr, 1971, 14).

For this reason, al-Ṣadr focuses so much on economics in his general work. However, he knows this subordination relates to a more profound one, expressed by the third phase of subordination, the methodological subordination. In describing the idea of a need in the first place for liberation in terms of methodology before economic and political independence, we understand how this line of reasoning corresponds precisely to the fight against Epistemic Colonisation, as it also contains a struggle to rebuild methodologies not influenced by Imperialist cultural influence. This struggle is the one outlined as part of our theoretical framework. Exactly like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, al-Ṣadr states that there cannot be economic liberation if, in the first place, there is no Epistemic decolonisation and subsequent liberation. The Iraqi thinker defines his attempt at Epistemic Decolonisation and his fight against cultural imperialism as the attempt to build a new Islamic methodology (*al-minhaj al-Islāmī*) (al-Ṣadr, 1971, 16). Furthermore, in describing the economic subordination of the Islamic countries, al-Ṣadr explains how the economy in Islamic countries is extroverted, following Samir Amin's definition, toward the development of European countries and under their monopoly in terms of resources.

The second is Economic subordination, which went hand in hand with the rise of politically independent governments in the backward countries. This subordination found expression in the European economies being given full scope to play on the scene of these countries in diverse ways: to exploit their chief resources, fill their vacuum with foreign capitalism and monopolise several economic conveniences on the pretext of training the natives of the various countries to shoulder the burden of the economic development of their countries (al-Ṣadr, 1971, 11).

Consequently, he also identifies Intellectual extraversion, as defined by Houtondji, as linked to economic extraversion and its cause. By analysing Sadr's work within the framework of Epistemic Decolonisation, we could define the fight against *methodological subordination* as part of a fight against imperialism in general. At the same time, concepts of economic and

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10. The third is subordination in the method practiced by the Islamic world's people in numerous experiments. They tried to gain political independence and eliminate the European economy's domination through these experiments. They began to think of reliance on their own power to develop their economy and overcome their backwardness. However, they could only understand the nature of the problem shown by their economic backwardness within the framework of the European understanding of it (al-Ṣadr, 1971, 10–11).

intellectual extraversion can help us analyse the connection made by al-Ṣadr between the economic and the methodological or epistemological levels of subordination.

Al-Ṣadr focuses on building an Islamic Economic System, and he does that by trying to use an Islamic method. By focusing on these two aspects, he understands that without an Epistemic Decolonisation, economic liberation is impossible. At the same time, he realises how Islamic countries are under the economic domination of Western powers at the moment he writes. Furthermore, by connecting economic and methodological subordination, al-Ṣadr shows a deep consciousness of the process of knowledge production, linking the spread of certain ideologies and thought to the material condition of the production of knowledge. Paulin Houtondji (2009, 225) has described this connection:

Intellectual extraversion henceforth seemed to me a result, indeed a particular feature of economic extraversion. Of course, the former could not be reduced to the latter. More than ever, the temptation of economism had to be resisted, and the specificity of scholarly activity regarding producing and exchanging material goods was acknowledged. Nonetheless, I found an approach that situated knowledge production in the general context of production tout court and examined North/South relations in the field of science and technology on this basis both illuminating and heuristically fruitful.

Houtondji explains how situating knowledge production within the discourse of economic production is a fruitful intuition, which we also find in al-Ṣadr's work. In this context, al-Ṣadr's introduction to *Iqtiṣādunā* and his intuition that without liberation in method, there is no economic and political liberation are broader intuition on how relationships of power work in a society. This intuition makes his work not just a treatise on the Islamic Economy but also an exploration of broader concepts such as hegemony and counter-hegemony. Al-Ṣadr deals with these issues but does not theorise them. However, using the Epistemic Decolonisation framework, we can theorise and highlight these concepts in al-Ṣadr's thought.

Francois Burgat and William Dowel, in their study on Islamism in Egypt and North Africa, explain how the construction of an independent Islamic discourse is to be considered the third phase of decolonisation, focusing on cultural and discursive liberation after the political and economic one (Bayat, 2007, 18; Burgat and Dowel, 1993).

This consideration perfectly fits Al-Ṣadr's works and our framework for its analysis, highlighting how the work of the Iraqi thinker responds to this phase of decolonisation, trying to liberate discourse and culture to complete

the economic and political decolonisation. The method that al-Ṣadr is trying to develop or rediscover, as he thinks that principles of Islamic economics are already present in the Qur'an and the Sunna (al-Ṣadr, 1971, 16), is the *Islamic method* (*Minhaj*) and the economic doctrine in Islam (*naẓariyyah al-iqtiṣādiyyah al-islāmiyyah*).[11] To develop or rediscover this Islamic method and thus fight against Epistemic Colonisation, al-Ṣadr uses various tools to draw on the Qur'an and the Sunna, one of the most important is the Thematic Qur'anic exegesis (*al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*).

4. The Thematic exegesis in the Work of al-Ṣadr

As already highlighted by some studies, the thematic exegesis (*al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*) is one of the innovative genres in contemporary Qur'anic exegesis (Pink, b2017, 1-14). This exegesis combines the analysis of different verses from the Qur'an, focusing on a specific theme. Like the traditional types of *Tafāsīr*, this one also provides elucidation, explanation, interpretation, context, or commentary for a clear understanding of God's word. The difference is the focus on a specific subject and the wide use of rational reasoning and interpretation (*Ijtihād*).

Al-Ṣadr uses this kind of exegesis to produce a coherent and comprehensive account of the Qur'anic perspective on Economics while also providing a critique of Capitalism and Socialism.[12] Moreover, the thematic exegesis allows al-Ṣadr to offer a complete picture of the Islamic doctrine (*naẓariyyah*) on Economics, which was needed according to the Iraqi thinkers to counter Western influences (al-Ṣadr, 1989, 14). As we have examined in the previous section of the article, the Iraqi thinker argues that Economic and Political Liberation from Imperialist Powers is not possible without liberation in the method. Through *al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*, he proposes to find in the Qur'an itself a new Islamic Method to solve the economic and political problems, focusing in this book on the first ones.

There is a need to study the concepts of the Qur'an and Islam. This need has become more pressing with the emergence of new views and ideas resulting from the interaction between the Islamic world and the West, with their vast, variegated cultural experience in different fields. As a result of this interaction, a Muslim finds himself confronted with numerous ideas related to various spheres of life. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the

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11. There is a whole debate about the stress that al-Ṣadr puts on the fact that he is working on a doctrine and not on the science of Islamic economics (Furqani, 2019, 2). al-Ṣadr also says that Islamic economics is a framework for society to work in (1971, xxiii–xxiv).

12. Al-Ṣadr elaborates on the theme in his works (al-Ṣadr, 2015; al-Ṣadr, 2020).

Islamic viewpoint (*niẓāriyyāt al-Islām*) regarding them. Furthermore, the Islamic texts must be studied intensively and *made to speak* to discover the Islamic standpoint, affirmative or negative, regarding them. These viewpoints of Islam, when determined, would enable us to solve the problems in diverse fields of human existence that human intellectual experience has sought to address (al-Ṣadr, 1989, 29).

In supporting this kind of exegesis, al-Ṣadr criticises what he calls *Divisive exegesis* (*al-tafsīr al-tajzīʾī*). According to the Iraqi thinker, this divisive exegesis is close to the traditional forms of exegesis, studying one verse at a time. However, he criticises it for not being able to structure the knowledge it gathers and for focusing on single problems, incapable of providing a more comprehensive societal approach (al-Ṣadr, 1989, 14; 2015, 11; Nayed, 1992, 443-449; Namazi, 2010, 37-56). Al-Ṣadr's critique of Divisive exegesis also helps us position his work within the shift in contemporary Shi'a *Ijtihād* highlighted by Mavani (2010). As explained in the introduction, the shift marks a change from an individual-oriented exegesis to one focused on society's problems. Al-Ṣadr works precisely within this framework, trying to offer an answer to broad issues of society with his exegesis, such as rediscovering the Islamic methodology and creating a new Islamic Economic theory.

The result of the analytic method of *tafsīr* at its best is the vast collection of Qur'anic meanings taken into consideration separately. That is, we become aware of many ideas and teachings of the Qur'an, which are disconnected and piled up in such a motley manner that it is impossible for us to identify the link between them or to discover their pattern of arrangement. After going through this exercise, we cannot understand the view of the Qur'an regarding the different spheres of human activity (al-Ṣadr, 1989, 5).

On the other hand, as we said, the *al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī* can answer a specific question, approach a topic, and focus on one issue in response to a question of the exegete. According to al-Ṣadr, the scholar has a different approach to the text in this exegesis. He starts from a societal problem, gathering information and theories about that problem and structuring his ideas. Only afterwards, the scholar approaches the Qur'anic text with questions and deliberates on the information he gets from the text, not just listening (Nayed, 1992; al-Ṣadr, 2015, 20; Namazi, 2010, 15).

In contrast [to the Divisive exegesis], following the thematic method, the exegete does not start his activity from the Qur'anic text but from the reality of life. Instead, he focuses on a particular subject from among the various problems relating to the ideological, social, or cosmological aspects of life,

employing the accumulated results of human thought and experience concerning that subject, the questions raised, and the solutions suggested gaps present therein. After that, he turns to the Qur'anic text, though not in the role of a passive listener and a recorder (al-Ṣadr, 1989, 8). The exegete studies his topic by relating it, within the limits of his capacity, the imperfect intellectual experience of humankind as represented by various thinkers' correct and incorrect viewpoints, focusing the light shed by them on the problem at hand. Then set aside the results of his enquiry, he turns to the Qur'an, not as a mute listener but as one entering a dialogue. In an inquisitive and contemplative spirit, he questions the Qur'an, beginning with the Qur'anic texts concerning the subject of his study. His aim here is to discover the Qur'an's standpoint concerning the topic under research and arrive at a conclusion inspired by the text while comparing it with the ideas and viewpoints relating to the subject (al-Ṣadr, 1989, 9).

Al-Ṣadr describes the practice of entering a dialogue with the Qur'an as *Istinṭāq* (*to make the text speak*), referring to a tradition of the Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. This reference confirms a relationship with a tradition beyond the mere connection with reformism, setting al-Ṣadr within Islam's discursive tradition in continuity with the past. This continuity is evident even with al-Ṣadr's innovations and changes (Nayed, 1992, 3; al-Ṣadr, 2020, 20). The expression *Istinṭāq* used by ʿAlī, the son of the Qur'an, is the most splendid term describing the function of thematic *tafsīr* as a dialogue with the Qur'an, posing the problems of a particular subject to it to elicit Qur'anic replies to them (al-Ṣadr, 1989, 9). This kind of exegesis starts from a social problem real-life experience and then derives the solution from the Qur'anic text and not the opposite way. This way, exegesis does not become an operation secluded from reality and separated from human experience (Nayed, 1992, 3; al-Ṣadr, 2015, 22; 2020, 20). By drawing on all these elements, the possibility of facing society-oriented problems, the real-life experience point of view and the comprehensive approach, al-Ṣadr tries to provide the Islamic method he is attempting to find.

In his book, *Iqtiṣādunā*, al-Ṣadr presents the exegesis method he uses to deduce from the Qur'anic text the methodology mentioned above and Islamic Economic doctrine. However, we believe that the reality of Islamic legislation in economics is neither produced extempore nor is born of views separated and isolated from each other. On the contrary, the Islamic reality in these fields is built upon a unified base and common balance of conceptions. It emerges from the theories and generalities of Islam in the affairs of economic life (al-Ṣadr, 1971, 47). However, al-Ṣadr does not mention the use of Thematic exegesis in *Iqtiṣādunā* directly. Nevertheless, his frequent stress over the need for a comprehensive vision of Islamic

economic doctrines and the need to understand specific issues, such as *riba'* or private property, in the general context of these theories, pushes us to consider the use he made of thematic exegesis in this work.

The thematic method strives, for instance, to arrive at the Qur'anic view about prophethood, the view of the Qur'an regarding economic theory, the laws that fashion the course of history, and its view concerning cosmology (al-Ṣadr, 1989, 10). Furthermore, in his lesson about thematic exegesis, al-Ṣadr explicitly draws a connection between this kind of exegesis, the possibility of exploring new doctrines of Islam, such as economics, and opposing these new doctrines, Western's cultural influence (al-Ṣadr, 1989, 14). From this last particular connection, we can see what role this kind of exegesis in the fight against Epistemic colonisation that al-Ṣadr has put up and its role in the fighting, in this specific case *Iqtiṣādunā*, against economic extraversion.

Thus, the thematic *tafsīr* is the new method meant to free the Islamic countries from subordination in the methodology of the Western powers. This liberation also makes liberation on the Economic and political levels possible. The struggle for a new methodology thus must be seen as the attempt to create a counter-hegemony as the first step to reaching political power.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have analysed how the concepts presented by al-Ṣadr in his work *Iqtiṣādunā* can be read through the lens of Epistemic Decolonization, setting this theory within the framework of Gramscian Cultural Hegemony.

Using such theories, we analysed and defined al-Ṣadr's ideas in the introduction to *Iqtiṣādunā* while highlighting their Anti-Imperialist potential. In highlighting the need for a new method to be used against Western method domination, as Part of a general struggle for Epistemic Decolonisation, we also pointed out that one of the tools al-Ṣadr uses to rediscover or discover this method is *al-tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*. Subsequently, we analysed the use and the conception that al-Ṣadr has of this kind of *tafsīr*. Finally, we outlined its significant role in building a comprehensive method against Epistemic Colonisation and, in this case, in rediscovering or discovering the Islamic Economic Doctrine in the general contest of the Islamic reformist movement and, more specifically, within the shift highlighted by Mavani of Shi'a exegesis from individual-oriented issues to societal-oriented ones.

Although the critique and opposition to the influences of Western ideologies is nothing new to the works of Muslim intellectuals, al-Ṣadr's work is particularly relevant. Indeed, his work presents a deep understanding of the power relationships shaping the spread of ideologies and the creation of hegemonies, connecting these dynamics to the material conditions of knowledge production.

This exploration of al-Ṣadr's thought through the lens of Gramscian theories and the framework of Epistemic Decolonisation allows us to highlight the importance of al-Ṣadr's work not only in terms of Islamic Political Thought but also within the development of social sciences. As recently argued by El Shakry, there is a need to rediscover Arab intellectuals and their works as original theories and not just as an *afterthought*, as she defines the mainstream view on their works. She calls for the rediscovery of the potential of creating epistemologies in the works of these intellectuals. In particular, El Shakry focuses on the lack of research in social sciences proposing a different methodology and framework from those stemming from the European intellectual history tradition. In this sense, El Shakry criticises the lack of epistemologies based on non-Western, in this case on Arab, intellectuals, whose work is often seen only as an *afterthought*, as she defines it, or as an *object of study*. El Shakry, drawing on the work of Hosam Aboul-Ela, draws a difference between theorists and intellectuals, epistemologies and exemplars (Aboul-Ela, 2018, 143–162). The difference between the two figures is that one produces epistemologies and theoretical models for modern social theory, and the other only objects of study and exemplars of Arabic thought. El Shakry (2021, 550-553), following this definition, calls for the reintegration of Arab intellectuals within the first category. El Shakry also draws on the work of Fadi Bardawil, which questions the distinction between a theorist and an indigenous intellectual, raising similar problems to those analysed by El Shakry and Aboul-Ela, and calling for the exploration of the work of indigenous intellectuals in the same way of that of theorists (Bardawil, 2018, 163–80).

In this sense, our analysis of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr's wishes to highlight its main points, highlighting the similarities with the work of Gramsci, for instance, often used as a source of epistemologies for modern social theory, and calling for the possibility of using al-Ṣadr's work similarly. Therefore, the work of al-Ṣadr must be read as an expression of Islamic philosophy and a work of philosophy *tout court*. It must be considered among the works reflecting on issues of hegemony and counter-hegemony within the context of colonisation and imperialism, opening the way to the construction of epistemologies based on this work and to be used in modern social sciences, following El Shakry's critique.

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