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# Adopting Islamic Ethics to Resolve Problems of International Political Economy Driven by Libidinal Factors in a Consumerist Society

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## Abstract

### Key words:

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*This article argues that study of international political economy (IPE) is not rational as assumed or expected, but it driven by Libidinal Economy in the process of symbolic exchange in consumerist society. Libidinal economy means to desire and compulsively pursue more and more surplus value or never-ending capital accumulation. The study adopted a qualitative research design with a meta-theoretical approach to interpret the problems related to the philosophical assumptions of the study of IPE in the discipline of International Relations. The main objective of this research was to examine the compulsive mentality of the libidinal economy and to see how animated commodities drain the subject into deeper addiction (Hancock, 2017). This argument was constructed by focusing on Lyotard's, and Bennett's concept of libidinal economy and Baudrillard's concept of consumerist society. In this regard, the study of IPE should address more social dimension in ethical moral sentiments so that it can tackle the consequences of global capitalism such as a widening gap between the rich and the poor, climate change/global warming, pollution, and environmental destruction as whole. Further, this study believed that addressing Islamic ethics as the moral sentiment was one of ways to tackle the problem in the study of IPE in World Politics, preoccupied by libidinal economy and ontological nihilistic symbolic exchange of commodities in consumerist society. Islamic ethics provides sufficient rule for human beings in dealing with the nature. The study found that Islamic ethics was very much basic to maintain the balance life between human beings and the nature. This can lead to sustain the life cycle of the world. The study recommends that the libidinal IPE should be balanced with Islamic ethics especially in the spiritual sense. Islamic Ethics has the potential to preserve and maintain the harmony of human mentality and their natural relations.*

## Introduction

Globalization is built upon a capitalistic system as well as a liberal world order (Ikenberry, 2011). In regard to this argument, (Germain, 1996) argues that our life is shaped by the system of capitalism. All commodities, culture, knowledge, and sciences are products of the capitalistic system and liberal world order. It has existed and developed into progressive capitalism since the early modern civilization, European enlightenment, and Industrial revolution, colonialization, post-colonial era, and the triumph of liberal democracy (Ishay, 2004). In short, the reality of the world order is ideologically and politically shaped under the rule of Western civilization. (Eijking, 2021) also argues that the beginning of capitalism was also the beginning of the colonialization era where the western countries colonized the rest in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. At that time, the Dutch state-corporation (VOC) and English state-corporation (EEC) were very powerful in expanding and exploiting their colonies.

The European system of capitalism is also a historical process of colonialization of European imperialism which involves Western philosophy and the expansion of European structure and institution, with an international structure of core and periphery relations in global political economy (Noonan, 2019). The reality of states and market relations has been expanded from the Europe to the world. However, this expansion of European system of capitalism in fact cannot be understood only in the political - economic dimension in the term of states and market, but also in cultural dimension in the term of the lifestyle of society. This cultural dimension is not solely understood by rational choice approach or rationality. We argue that the cultural dimension in expansion of European system of capitalism, constructed by economic desire (Lenger, 2017; Pinheiro, 2021).

International Political Economy (IPE) was coined around 1970s in America, when the economic rational choice was no longer relevant or compatible as the foundation principle of IPE. The rationale of IPE was in fact, based on human desire. In other words, the belief on rationality in the logic IPE was problematic because the foundation of IPE was indeed based on libidinal economy, gaining more and more capital to achieve economic growth that never ends (Lenger, 2017; Pinheiro, 2021) called it “growth delusion” because the study of IPE today is really all about acts of greediness, rooted from libidinal economy, in order to achieve the delusion of economic growth.

Moreover, the study of IPE has not solved the problem of the widening gap between the rich and the poor (Pieterse, 2002) As an alternative solution, the Islamic ethics emerged as one of the solutions to tackle the problem of the IPE. Islamic ethics provided a set of ethical consideration that was inherently existed in the nature of human beings to act proportionally and wisely among themselves and to nature. The Islamic ethics promoted the notion of human beings as the guardians of earth (*khalifatul fil ardh*) mentioned in Al-Qur’an, Surah Al-Baqarah:30. This verse praises that human beings is a supreme (*adiluhung*) creature, more dignified, enjoys higher position, embodied with reason, emotion, lust/desire, spirituality, and feeling more than others (such as plants, animals, jinn, angels, and others). It is in the hands of human beings whether the world will be destroyed or preserved and sustained.

The research objective of this study was to assess the significance of cultural dimension (consumer society and Islamic ethics) in the study of IPE, both in relation to empirical events and the IPE theory, which occur simultaneously. This study also seeks to organize, and, to a limited degree, deepen existing knowledge about research on culture in IPE and to go beyond the role of the state in this context. The study claims that what happens in the ‘real world’ is not the main driver of developments in IPE theory, but both the real world and the theory are constructed constitutively. Several contributors to this debate have been referred to in

this article, including (Jean Baudrillard, 1981; Langley, 2000). They were selected because of their significant views.

This study will enrich the study of IPE, especially in the cultural dimension and theoretical foundations. This study has been structured thus: after the introduction, the qualitative method is explained as the research design of this study. It explains the use of interpretative and reflexive method to achieve the narrative of this research. Next, it provides libidinal economy theory as a theoretical framework and builds further theoretical development with cultural studies approach such as mentioned in (Jean Baudrillard, 1981; Langley, 2000) works. The third section presents the results and findings of the current study about IPE. This section shows how a consumer culture society has always existed, based on the principles of (Firat & Dholakia, 2017), (Gilpin & Gilpin, 1975), who attempted to integrate economics into politics. The fourth section uses theoretical framework of (Cooper & Burrell, 1988) work to support (Jean Baudrillard, 1981) theoretical assumption of the study of IPE, especially in the case of consumer society. Finally, the article concludes that the study of IPE should be enriched with Islamic Ethics because the claim of rationality is in fact shaped and boosted by libidinal economy.

## Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative research design with a meta-theoretical approach. The study is therefore a reflective interpretation to problematize the philosophical assumptions of the study of IPE in the discipline of International Relations. Owing to its theoretical nature, this study does not discuss any specific case study or empirical factor; however, some relevant case studies would be provided to further explain the theoretical assumptions and their justification. In short, this study is more of a discursive study of the very basic assumption of philosophical foundation of the study of IPE rather than an empirical study with grounded data. Moreover, the reason behind choosing a meta-theoretical approach or reflective interpretation was that this study focuses on questioning the epistemological and ontological assumptions of IPE. Furthermore, regarding ontological problem, it is believed that reality of the world is constructed by the capitalistic system. Finding objective justification or verification theories throughout the empirical case studies is impossible because the reality is ideological for supporting the global capitalism.

The reality in the post-World War II, during the rise of American hegemony among other nation-states, is very much ideological in sustaining the liberal Democracy of America as well as its capitalistic system. In other words, if we conduct this study based on case study solely, the result of the study will logically copy and paste the capitalistic system of reality and at the end justify it. We believe empirical case study method will repeat the narrative of the capitalistic system without any further critical interpretation. Therefore, it is important to view the reality based on reflexive interpretation by criticizing the very basic assumption of

philosophical foundations of the study of IPE. This work was validated by not finding corresponding truth but valuing throughout reflexive and coherence of discourse/a set of thought.

From the ontological point of view, the study of IPE is limited in the use values in international trade, international financial, economic growth, and economic development. Though it has been discussed related to climate change, environment, and poverty as the negative consequences, the purpose is still preoccupied by economic growth (materialistic and rational calculation) rooted in libido in addictive manner. This study of IPE is claimed to be comprehensive, rational, neutral, and objective. In fact, now it becomes 'the conventional study of IPE'. It is irrational study of supporting the ideology of the capitalistic system. In short, the study of IPE is contradictory from within because the objectivity, free-values, and sciences are in fact ideological, value based, and imperialistic. In the study of IPE, scholars are not critical nor reflexive to the subject matters from within. The scholars of IPE do not question the foundation of methodology, epistemology, ontology, and axiology and hence there is a lack of analysis on commodity fetishism and its relations with the ideology of advanced capitalism system.

## Theoretical Framework

This paper argues that the study of IPE is under libidinal economy, which is close to the principles of the Realists, the Liberalists, and the Marxists. The study of IPE challenges the idea of *homo oeconomicus*, coming from Adam Smith in his work, *The Wealth of Nations* (1937). *Homo oeconomicus* is predictable and rational in the term of economic dimension, where individual interest identifies with the collective market harmony. However, it is not so simple as it appears. (Markowska, 2018) quotes Simmel and Freud, stating that *homo oeconomicus* is driven by an economic calculation on two different points: Ego and Id. *Ego* is individual desires articulated on a conscious level. *Id* is a collective anonymous drive, articulated on an unconscious level. In Islamic term, *Id* is an individual desire based on lust expressed on emotions, feelings, sentiments including sexual desire; 'animal instinct'. Likewise, the most important point of the debate between Simmel and Freud was that Ego at the conscious level and Id at the unconscious level work together to sustain pleasure principle. When Ego and Id sustain pleasure principle, Id (*lust*) takes over Ego (reason), which the is defined as desire. In Freud's term, it is understood as libido. When libido rules economy, it is defined as libidinal economy.

(Bennett, 2010) explains further about libidinal economy by quoting Linda White Dove who gives therapeutic services to shopaholics via the Internet: "Money is love. Wherever you focus your energy, love multiplies. Many people love to buy things, they love to spend money. There is nothing bad about spending money. Remember that when you do, you are focusing love . . . [But] when you focus your love (obsessively) on buying things . . . not only your financial love energy gets depleted. . . but also your time love

energy. Time is love too, as it is a focusing on your life force, on your love and your very essence. So, when you are focusing on your love and your very life in this way, you choose to drain yourself ... The problem of compulsive, unloving spending is compounded when you add the factor of guilt. Once guilt is attached to money, money becomes a sign of shame (Bennett, 2010)

Regarding Dove's philosophy, Bennett eagerly would like to show the problem of libidinal economy. In the capitalistic system, there is 'compulsive spending' as a psycho-sexual problem that people, especially liberal society should be aware of. This is consistent with the modern economy or the neoclassical economy (neo-liberal) which asserts that *homo oeconomicus* is based on rational choice. Every individual chooses independently his or her own action to gain self-interest. In contrast, libidinal economy challenges this epistemological position which is delusional. In a way, *homo oeconomicus* could be shown eroticizing the economy, which is both irrational and psychologically problematic. Eroticizing the economy is historical trajectory that European society has experienced since the beginning of the capitalistic system including Marx, Freud, and others.

(Bennett, 2016b) goes further and explains that desire is believed as libidinal energy and denoted as a form of an economic resource for both the individual and the collective mechanism of potential work-power and spending-power. (Bennett, 2016b) argues that the view of desire is constructed by Freud; it hints at a kind of 'libidinal economy (the economics of the libido). The libidinal economy is understood as sex-money across several disciplines including IPE and other genres. Further, it seeks the process of fluctuating commercial economy and political prescriptions amalgamating with psychological 'saving', 'investing' or 'spending' of desire connected to economic development theory. (Bennett, 2016b)' also examines the tensions between the mode of production and the modes of 'consumer ethics', Keynesianism's doctrine of economic health through spending rather than saving, neoliberalism's doctrine in the deregulated market as the paradigm of a liberal society, and during the cold war, communism's replacement of a market economy with a command economy. His main argument is beyond Marx's dialectical historical materialism in which any understanding of 'the libidinal economy' must take account of history. His work clearly concludes that the business of making the economy (the capitalistic system in liberal order) becomes 'erotic' which is full of desire instead of rational.

Likewise, (Ikenberry, 2018) in his work, *Economie Libidinale* (1974) argues that there is only libidinal capital instead of the truth-value of political economy. (Bennett, 2010) assumes that Marx himself was unconsciously in love with the prostitute of capital, obsessed by the object he loved to hate, and unable to break off his pertinacious affair with it. As a result, Marx could not finish his volumes of *Capital* because of his love obsession to analyzing the perversions of the unspeakable prostitute of

capital. It can be concluded that the current study on IPE with Liberal, Marxist, and Realist approach, is under the spell of libidinal economy, driven by desire, emotion, obsession, mentality, seduction and psychology.

## Results and Discussion

- *Critique of the Study of IPE*

Around 1970s in America, (Dauvergne & Neville, 2010; Teppo & Matti, 2020) worked similar narratives for patterns of international (political) economic relations, especially explaining the role of Multinational Corporation (MNC) and the importance of developing hegemonic stability theory. Another political scientist, (Bennett, 2016a), undertook a similar task to integrate economics with politics (Jia, 2018). Waltz's agenda was to maintain the American hegemony during the Cold War era. In contrast to these works, (Cohen, 2008) developed Marxism and Radical perspective on imperialism maintaining power plays and emphasizing state dominance over international economy. (Cohen, 2008) recommended asymmetries relations between the rich and the poor countries. In these relations, there will be exploitation, dependence, and dominance. These relations are but facets of imperialism because the role of power politics among nations is very much determinant and legitimately powerful in international (political) economy. (Cohen, 2008) ideological position was consistent with reformation of capitalism instead of revolution.

IPE was very popular in American and British universities as it talked about state and market relations to gain wealth and power and maintain them. In contrast, in other countries, IPE was marginal or weak and left behind due to colonialism. There are three mainstream approaches of IPE: Liberalism, Realism, and Marxism (globalism). Compared to Liberal IPE and Realist IPE as mainstream perspective and very much American and British, Marxist IPE is limited, marginal and minor; however, it inspired many studies on de-colonialism (Cesaratto, 2013) and post colonialism (Mishra & Hodge, 1991).

IPE Marxism is not expansionist whereas Realist IPE and Liberal are. Cohen (2014) was highly skeptical to Marxist IPE because of its unconvincing nature and improbable conclusion. Realist IPE and Liberal IPE are more convincing because, as (Tooze, 1988) argued, Realist IPE's epistemology is rooted from positivism (science). (Wade, 2009), too, perceives Liberal IPE methodology rooted from 'normal science', in the form of statistical procedures and in mathematical models. In addition, Liberal IPE also resembled neoclassical economics. Neoclassical economics had built-in biases in favor of self-adjusting systems and American hegemony. Further, (Farrell & Finnemore, 2009) argue that one can deduce a close resemblance between 'liberalism' and 'rational choice'. In this regard, one can conceive that American Liberals and Realist IPE have become dominated by the rational choice approach.

In the bigger picture, the study of IPE is clearly maintaining the European system of Capitalism. The study of IPE was rooted from European classical political economy. Though the study of classical political economy has already existed since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the work of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill, a study of IPE has focused on the wealth of nations (nation-states), not political economy in international level. Compared to the classical political economy, therefore, a study of IPE is very much new. If we trace back further, the core of the intellectual and philosophical foundation of IPE is found based on the liberal Enlightenment that proliferated across Europe as a unified social science closely linked to the study of moral philosophy (Cohen, 2008).

As we already mentioned, the foundation of the study of IPE was established widely in America during 1970s, developed by (Katzenstein, Keohane, & Krasner, 1998; Russett, 1985) to maintain the American Hegemony and Western capitalist civilization. In order to sustain longer their hegemonic stance, they covered their agenda by what (Langley, 2000) subsumed about the study of IPE. (Langley, 2000) asserted that the study of IPE should be rational, objective, neutral, and multi-disciplinary, to include sociology, economy, history, business, and geography. As mentioned, rational choice is important theory and an epistemological basis in gaining knowledge of the reality of states and market relations. It is very much ideological because it is supporting American hegemony of Liberalism (Democracy) and in Harvey terms, it is American “New imperialism” (Harvey, 2007) and in Cohen’s term it is American “imperialism” (Cohen, 2008).

Many studies have supported the study of IPE, which have built up a school of thought which is rational, objective, neutral, empirical, and real. It has become a field of study to achieve wealth for nations (McGill et al., 2007). However, the pursuit of wealth defined in the Western discourse is, in fact, not for the wealth of all people in general, but only for one per cent of the elite capitalists. It is therefore often felt that the study of IPE is not rational yet ideological because structurally, it only pleases the desire of a few elite capitalists. It meets the desire of only a few people who are involved in materialism displayed through entertainment, movies, and digital world/internet. In this regard, rationality is questioned (Wæver, 1997) the objectivity and reality is also doubtful. In Indonesia the desire of a few people is called oligarchy (Waltz, 1997; Winters, 2013; Yusoff & Karim(2021). 2021) and in America it is called plutocracy (Lichterman, 2014). The IPE is not rational because the economy is supposed to create wealth for the whole society with only a very narrow gap between the poor and the rich. It serves only the obsession of a few people to please capitalistic accumulation; to please a few states and a few market players at international level; to raise concern about the economic growth of only a few developed northern states. The pursuit of economic growth is erotizing the economy driven by libido. It is obsession of those advanced nation-states that is problematic. In the world of capitalistic system, international relations and international political-economy, several nation-

states are not aware of 'compulsive spending' as a psycho-sexual problem. This problem is consumed not only nation-states, but also the world society today as what Korten metaphorically named this phenomenon as "the Siren song of the market" (Krasner, 1976).

The argument by (Jean Baudrillard, 1981; J. Baudrillard, 1998) that the study of IPE is not rational is based on two reasons: *First*, the idea of fetishism which Baudrillard borrowed from Marx and Freud. The word "fetishism" describes a process whereby an object is granted with magical properties. People who use the term are exposed in turn for using non-reflectively a "magical thinking". Fetishism animates a product of commodities with symbols and meanings. "The fetishism of commodities presents a universe in which things have come alive" (Genosko, 1994). Commodity fetishism is one of the meta-narratives that is being teased apart here, whereby the shift from concrete production and exchange is replaced by abstracted labor relations and subsequent alienation.

The system of fetishism creates its own meaning that magically impoverishes and ultimately prevents meaningful social communication, since the sign formation of social objects reduces the accessibility of things for mediating social relations. In fact, the system of signs assigns social objects. The life of human social relations is constructed by the system of signs and its meanings that are embedded in commodities. Social real life is determined by the creation of signs and its imaginations that is produced by corporations, factories, and the body of capitalism and of course followed by "magical thinking". For example, such individuals have different status and image that drive Honda, Lexus, BMW, and Toyota; or that wear Nike, Reebok, and others. These cars and shoes have their own "magical thinking" or system of signs to people who use them in social relations. It is not the other way round. Using Chinese or European or Japanese product has a significant role and status in the society. Signs and its meaning are expressed as fetishism in commodities that make much matter in social relations.

Jean Baudrillard (1981) and J. Baudrillard (1998) therefore contributes a significant critique to IPE through the Marxist concept because he begins to consider fetishism as a sign of social value; the fetish object (a commodity) is taken to exist for the owner's social status. Here the fetish is no longer an unreal object because social values are reflected through material culture which are imaginary (Dant, 1996).

It can be concluded fetishism commodity is an attractive product that is made by the system of advanced capitalism. This product is not only a material object but proposed to be a function to someone, full of imagination, fantasy, pleasure, and so on. It signifies a sign of not the *exchange of use-values*, but the *exchange of sign-values*. People use, wear, or do something because of the sign-values of the commodities. This sign has meanings that is constructed though advertisement in television, internet, social media, and like. It is nihilistic according to (Jean Baudrillard, 1981; J.

Baudrillard, 1998), but it is very much meaningful for the consumerist society. It causes addiction because it exploits the libido of consumerist society. The process of symbolic exchange to consume fetish commodities is always controlled and dictated by corporations to accumulate capital by targeting the libido of consumerist society. It is the system of libidinal economy circulation through symbolic exchange to maintain the only system of the global capitalism. For this reason, global capitalism has always survived.

The reason why (Jean Baudrillard, 1981; J. Baudrillard, 1998)semiotic fetishism is different from that of Marx's or Freud's, or (Jean Baudrillard, 1981; J. Baudrillard, 1998)ends his thesis in sign play, not in materialism and sexual/libido. He believes there is no real sexuality and reality as such, except the exchange of signs. The simulated seductive sexuality is not grounded yet shaped by the fetishization of the body through makeup and beautification. It is only a sign or simulacrum that is essential. The meaning of subject is exchanges and transformed by sign objects into a fetishized object (Dant, 1996). However, (Devlen, James, & Özdamar, 2005)argues, Baudrillard does not believe in the existence of a universal "anthropological subsistence level". In short, while (Germain, 1996) views of political economy are rooted essentially from libido or desire similar to Freud's, Baudrillard ends essentially in sign play and symbolic exchange. However, Lyotard's and Baudrillard's theories are very much important to understand the consumerist society because they both signify the libido and the symbolic exchange as the foundation of IPE.

The second point in Baudrillard's critique is the idea of ideology. The system of capitalism or advanced capitalism becomes the ideology. People in the world cannot escape from this system. This system becomes the iron cage of modern people; they breathe air and drink water produced by the capitalistic system. There are no other alternatives to change the capitalistic system. People like 'zombie' praise this system since they cannot live without it. At this point of view, people are alienated from their social relations, especially labor. Labor creates products as a tool and further acts as exchange values of signs where they cannot consume them. All people who produce and advertise the capitalists' products are laborers who are part of a system of signs. The system of signs is for its own purposes. The system of signs is like dogma, myth, and supernatural. It is not rational, but it is attractive, appealing, and seduces modern people with its fantasy. People become a slave of the sign of capitalistic commodities where they are more alive with all those signs and meanings.

The desire of human beings is controlled by the system of signs in the ideology of the system of the advanced capitalism. The inherent desire of human beings is taken over by the epistemology of rationality and the ontology of symbolic exchange. This shapes the reality of social relations. The desire of human beings is applied and installed in the system of signs and its fantasy in the fetishism commodities. There are food and drink

fetishism, tourist fetishism, clothes fetishism, phone sell fetishism, automobile fetishism, footwear fetishism, bag fetishism, and so on.

- *Baudrillard View: What is Consumerism?*

Jean Baudrillard, in his work *La Société de Consommation* (1970), English version, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (1988) argues that the idea of Marxism of capitalism is obsolete. The system of capitalism no longer focuses on production but consumption. The mode of production has shifted to the mode of consumption. This idea is derived from how people today are desirably eager to consume more and more. People are trapped in the imperium of signs by consuming fetishism commodities. This imperium of signs and fetishism commodities determines the modern culture to maintain the advanced capitalism system. For example, internet shapes fetishist commodities more massively and productively. Internet shapes virtual reality with full of imagination and fantasy to process easy symbolic exchange. People's life and culture are decided by this virtual reality that displays fetishism commodities to be consumed. The fetishist commodities in which full of signs is eroticizing the international economy sponsored by states relations in international trade. The virtual world such as social media (Instagram, Facebook, Tweeter, Tik Tok, and so on), News, YouTube, and so on are a new world of aesthetic hallucination of reality. The virtual world is the consequence of advanced capitalism of technology and information. The virtual world is also a system of signs creating hallucination of resemblance of itself.

The virtual world or the 'flat world', using (Farrell & Finnemore, 2009), distorts the real (social) world. The real (social) world is consumed by the virtual world. The real world today is created by the virtual world of image and imagination. What exists in the real world today is simulation because the boundary between the virtual and the real has disappeared. The real world has eroded the deep meaning of the real life of human existence. It is impossible for us to escape from this simulation and the loss of boundaries between the real and the virtual. For example, internet displays commodities with full of signs/symbols and meaning to consumerist society to be exchanged with other signs. A person displays animating commodities with her/his beautiful body to seduce the consumerist society and the consumer. Press and click are digital social media parts of symbolic exchange and have become a part of free labor driven libidinal economy. Our body consciously is not a tool to support the capitalistic system through social interaction in digital world. There are many playing symbols and meaning/fantasy in the dimension of status, admiration, beauty, strong, and many other meanings to be displayed, advertised, or sold to consumers who like one of those character/personification of signs/symbols.

People buy expensive brands such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Rolex, Dior, Balenciaga, Hermes, Armani, Prada etc. that signify status and pride to praise their humanity; where in fact, it is a process of

dehumanization. People eat at McDonald's, KFC, Burger King, A&W and drink Coca Cola to feel good and meaningful or even stronger like most Americans. All those commodities are animated to create images of a modern and a strong man. People's preference to use Mac vs. Windows is because they are animated by those images. Baudrillard explains this phenomenon as a play of signifiers in the system of signs. The imperium of signs is the reflection of the dead of reality. Under the imperium of signs, the consumers feel free to buy, where in fact is fake reality. They think they free to choose to buy, to have independency, in fact they are under spell of imperium of signs created by the system of global capitalism.

Research Anisimova' findings ([Anisimova, 2013](#)) confirms Baudrillard's consumeristic society concept, a corporate marketing brand that should investigate and conduct research to understand the expectation of the consumers to commodities in order to satisfy consumers. The company should play in three components of consumer value: functional, emotional, and symbolic for consumer satisfaction. In addition, the consumer satisfaction can be achieved through the values of corporate associations. In short, the consumers buy illusions, fantasies, and images by a way of the system of signs and addicted.

In another work, *America* (1986), Baudrillard provides a case study of consumerist society and its simulation in America. He argues "America is a desert; Los Angeles is described as inhabited fragment of the desert; California is described as the world center of the simulacrum and the inauthentic; Californian culture itself is a desert." ([Ritzer, 1997](#)) interprets Baudrillard's argument as a "desertification of signs and men and seeks the finished form of the future catastrophe". It is not only land degradation into drylands, but also a deeper catastrophe, like an empty life of human beings being nihilistic. In the context of Baudrillard critical assessment of the American life and culture, there is no authenticity for human beings. The American culture and life are full of signs and the exchange of signs dries the humanity and human dignity. The consumerism in America is high in the context of how most Americans live existentially counting on animating commodities to make life more alive in pursuit of happiness. Their life is very much depending on the materialism of commodities that is animated and created happiness based on libidinal economy. It is like people requiring sculpture and its meaning as a media to submit to God to please his/her desire to the transcendental or seeking existential of life. People require sculpture (materialism) to be animated for the sake of their seeking-desire-meaning to the existence and the reason (desire) to life.

To conclude, it is proven that the study of IPE is driven by libidinal economy. which is never-ending and fantasizing fetishist commodities through symbolic exchange of shapes in a consumerist society. It represents a world of damaging, imbalanced, and disharmonic relationship. The consumerist pattern of society should be stopped to stop the uncertainty and further discontent by addressing Islamic ethics

as one of alternative ways to save our planet from the destructive forces of global capitalism.

- *Islamic Ethics as the Moral Sentiments in IPE*

The abovementioned critique has proven that the study of IPE lacks self-critical axiology and focuses not on rational choice, but on eroticizing international economy through the ontological symbolic exchange defended by states relations (international relations) to seek the delusion of economic growth. More substantially, in the study of IPE and in the subject matter, we are not discussing human beings as *homo economicus*, but human beings, meaning a human being as a social creature, as a part of creatures in the world, as the guardians of the world (nature), and as spiritual creature. In a more philosophical way, to fulfil the essential life and authenticity, human beings should manage their consumeristic patterns of life as consumerism corrupts human beings. It is premised in this study that to manage consumerism, IPE should install Islamic ethics as moral sentiments. Moral sentiments are popular in the western world as ethical values that fulfil social life with deeper life existence. The study of IPE should not only focus on economic development, climate change, preservation of the nature, but also on real social interactions and ethical considerations. People's life become meaningful not because of commodities but through interactions with other human beings and ethical considerations to God's creation of this beautiful universe.

The current study attempts to premise that global capitalism can be reformed by addressing Islamic ethics. The essence of human beings in the world should be to live a simple life, a life full of sharing, caring, and staying away from greediness (*tabdziir*) (Al-Qur'an, Al-Isra': 26). Consumerism is a culture of modern people that will destroy themselves and the nature, as indicated by global warming, uncontrolled plastic waste, and climate change, and pandemic. Consumerism in Islamic ethics is based on desire or libido called *nafs* (Lyotard, 1974), not based on their needs or consideration of sharing with other people and the nature and spiritual motivation.

Historically, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH has warned his followers about consumerism phenomenon through his hadith: "we should balance our life related to wealth. In the day of judgment, we will be questioned on the property we have" (Usman, Ismail, Soroni, & Wazir, 2015). In the teachings of Islam, there are two questions about property: how we gain it and what goal we use it for. This formula is called *zuhud*. *Zuhud* (or asceticism) is a stage or *maqam* in the teachings of Sufi, where a person learns to handle his worldly desire to acquire a position and use property correctly. The person does not see the property as a *ghoyah* (the ultimate goal of life) but he uses the property as an intermediary (*wasilah*) to achieve the ultimate goal of life, attaining God's happiness or eternal life (heaven). Life on earth is only temporary and meant to harvest for the afterlife (heaven).

The main goal of Islam is to remain faithful to God, as the perfect creature among other creatures, and to share wealth with others and to guard nature. The wealth is a distraction in our life that we need to be always aware of and knowledgeable to go to the right path, the clear path of God as the ultimate truth.

The Qur'an (Taubah: 111) states, "*Allah has indeed purchased from the believers their lives and wealth in exchange for Paradise.*" With regard to this verse, God (Allah) provides wealth on the earth as a capital to seize the ultimate goal of life, i.e. attain the afterlife. It is important to know and experience *zuhud* that the prophet Muhammad refers to as *I'tidal*, meaning the totality in worship and the totality in seeking wealth. It says, "*Work for this world as if you were to live forever, and work for your hereafter as if you were to die tomorrow*" This Hadith reminds us to always be aware and remember which one is the temporal world and which one is the eternal life. By practicing and performing *zuhud* every day in daily life, humans should be able to control the trap of consumerism.

The concept of *Homo economicus* or consumerism in a capitalistic system is eroding the human capacity to be a perfect creature in this world. A perfect creature means to be a creature that can control his own will, his own body, and all materialistic entities. To be a perfect creature is to be a complex person, not only be defined as a tool to run the materialistic world of the system of capitalism. We need to go beyond the materialistic system with *zuhud* exercise. When human being works in the frame of a capitalistic system, with the *zuhud* concept, a human being can manage between his spirituality and materialistic matters and always remember God by not distracted and consumed by materialism and consumerism. He always glorifies Allah by being good to others. This argument is justified by the Qur'an as masterpiece in (al-Qur'an, at-Tiin : 4): *Indeed, We created humans in the best form.* In another verse, the Quran says, "*God commanded to all angels to bow down to him (the Man) as a form of respect admiration to the first man named Adam and continuously to his sons. Indeed, we have dignified the children of Adam, carried them on land and sea, granted them good and lawful provisions, and privileged them far above many of Our creatures.* (al-Qur'an, al-Isra' : 70)

In Islamic terms, there are three principles that govern a man's relationship with his workers: the provision of wages, mutual respect, and protection. These are described in detail and clearly in the following hadith: *Your slaves employed are your brothers and Allah has put them under your command. So, whoever has a brother under his command, should feed him of that which he eats and dress him of that which he wears. Do not ask them (slaves) to do things beyond their capacity (power) and if you do so, then help them (Hadith, Narrated in Sahih Bukhari).*

This suggests that in Islamic ethics, it is required for us to treat other human beings equally, propositionally, and kindly. It is required based on the capacity and human being. It requires empathy and

sympathy to achieve these social relations for the society to survive. It is not allowed in Islamic ethics to be selfish, exploiting human beings and the nature as we are all the dignified son of Adam. Human beings respectfully are sent to the earth to preserve, sustain, and guard each other as well as the nature. At this level, human beings are the most honorable creature on earth.

## Conclusion

This study has attempted to fill a research gap in the domain of IPE and its methodology/epistemology, ontology, and axiology. The foundation of IPE is contradicted from within: it is claimed more as rational than irrational; it is claimed objective with free values, yet it is subjectively ideological in maintaining the American hegemony, and globally, it only serves a few elite capitalist countries. Its goal is to obtain wealth of nations yet end with exploitation, dependence, inequality in international society. In short, the study of IPE is very much ideological, supportive to the system of global capitalism which only benefits a few elite capitalists by creatively expanding from materialistic exchange to symbolic exchange and rational choice political economy approach to libidinal political economy approach. The study of IPE is preoccupied on the international political economy of symbolic exchange and fetishist commodities driven by libidinal economy, endorsed by nation-states relations in international relations in the matters of economic growth, competitions among states, state and market relations, international trade. Consumerism and fetishism commodities are missing parts in the study of IPE. The study of IPE only focuses on materialistic matter without knowing further that in fact this study already goes to never-ending economic growth of nations and nihilistic pursuing happiness.

Islamic ethics in the Western world is popular with the moral sentiments in an important way of life to fulfil the half face of humanity in the capitalistic world. Islamic ethics dignifies human beings as the perfect creatures of the world. The perfect creature in Islam is becoming *zuhud*, not pleasing materialistic commodities through symbolic exchange motivated by libidinal economy. Exercising and experiencing *zuhud* every day and all day are the modality of being perfect human beings. Exercising and experiencing *zuhud* can be found in the social dimension in the act of sharing and caring to other human beings, including its application in the nation-states relations to care for each other and build strong solidarity among states (Öztürk & Sözeri, 2018) The act of *Zuhud* will protect us from uncontrollable desire and the act of corrupting the self to further doing self-destruction, expressed in greediness manner and will implicate harm to others. In addition, we are honorably chosen by God as *khalifatul fil ard* or the ones who guard and sustain the earth.

A big challenge to Islamic ethics is that not all people believe in God (Allah) and eternal life. Therefore, the moral sentiments concept is important to be addressed. The moral sentiments have common ground with Islamic ethics.

The output of moral sentiments is very much Islamic because it comes from inherently the natural product of human beings as social creatures. It contains virtues and ethical norms. Hence, the moral sentiments become a way to tackle the problem of the lack of IPE study, consumerism, and fetishism. It shows people how to balance between the desire of materialism and spiritual motivation. It is imperative for people to act morally with “benevolent emotions (Anisimova, 2013). It shows human beings to be prudent, in pursuit of justice for society. According to (Smith, 1937), morality is a matter of fact about the human species’ history, but this historical fact does not mean that there is no metaphysics of morals significance to his theory. In this regard, the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exercises and experiences *zuhud* in historical fact of morals and shows how to become a perfect human being. His teachings are not based on normative morals, but based on his experience of *zuhud*, a fact of his prudence, expressed to and witnessed by all human beings in the world. In short, the study of IPE should be incorporated with the Islamic ethics or in the Western world so receptive and believer in Adam Smith’s (1937) moral sentiments and human compassion.

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