Civilizational Action and Development of Modern Societies between Free Will, Determinism and Colonizability in Malek Bennabi's Approach to Civilization

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Abstract

Some communities are independently building their civilizational renaissance while others still in heinous dependency. Differently between being free to build the civilizational destiny in the human world or being prone and vulnerable to determinism that is the view that free will is an illusion, and the defeated party is likely to have colonizability towards the dominant one. Colonizability is a term coined by Malek Bennabi that psychologically means that one's behavior is governed by internal or external forces over which he has no control. Bennabi is also one of the few original philosophers who have succeeded in making appreciably systematic contributions to civilizational studies, and how societies are to have determined their destiny in the historical circle of civilization. The paper focuses more on Third World countries and communities where dependency, in general, makes an attractive feature of their political, economic, social and cultural existence and impact in world affairs.

Keywords: *Civilizational action and destiny, development, free will, determinism, dependency, colonizability.*

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1. Introduction

Concepts are crucial in defining ideas in all fields of study, particularly in the philosophical study. Gillies Deleuze, the French philosopher defines philosophy as the creation of notions and concepts (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). Francois Voltaire once said: "If you wish to converse with me, define your terms." Concepts are important as they play a key role in developing human knowledge and guiding human mind forwards.

There is a double-edged power in the way things are named or identified in world affairs. We simply can have control and power over things and events when we give them special names. Naming is an authority as Nietzsche argued. And as Søren Aabye Kierkegaard said: "Once you label me you negate me". Once societies are labeled with such negative ideological terms [1] they are consequently being negated in the civilizational process. For instance, the Third World term[2] that is no longer exists, still significantly exists in many Westerners and Third-Worldists' writings. It seems natural and has no impact on LDCs' societies when they are classified in the third stratum in the international system. Psychologically, it does affect deeply. It is a kind of racist classification whether it is considered or not. It is among the modern tools to keep such societies under dependency.

Throughout history, the study of civilization attracted many scholars and researchers. Therefore, the causes, rise, emergence, interactions, achievements, decline and fall of civilizations have been explored at length by prominent social scientists, historians, philosophers and all those concerned with civilization studies. Studying the main causes behind the falling and the rising of different civilizations was roughly the sharing point among these thinkers and scholars. One of these scholars is Malek Bennabi (1905–1973) who is considered as one of the most

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[1] Cold War that was ideologically managed between the Eastern and Western blocs, the world was divided into three categories: 1. the Capitalist NATO bloc 2. the Communist Soviet bloc 3. Countries of The Non-Aligned Movement. The last category called "Third World", the term coined on August 14, 1952 by Alfred Sauvy, in an article published in the French magazine L'Observateur, (French: Tiers Monde), referring to countries that were unaligned with either capitalist or communist camps during the Cold War.

[2] Although it is preferred not to use the term " Third World" as we mentioned that it no longer exists, the paper retains the use of the term to keep up with the general understanding of the readers...

significant intellectuals in modern Algerian and Islamic history. Born in Constantine, Algeria, he received French and Arabic educations. He was trained as an electrical engineer, but Bennabi's reputation arose from his religious and philosophical writings supporting *Islah* or Islamic reform (Naylor, 2006). Bennabi is the world's first philosopher and social scientist since Ibn Khaldun searched for universal laws and fundamental principles that govern human societies and civilizations and determine their destiny in history. Focused on dissolving the causes of Muslim decline and the success of Western civilization and culture (Benlahcene, 2013). He devoted his life toward raising and revitalizing not only an Algerian but also a wider Muslim social and historical consciousness (Naylor, 2006).

2. Bennabi's Approach to Civilization: Colonizability and Dependency vs Renaissance and Civilizational Action

2.1. Definition of Civilization

Generally, Bennabi's theory, that civilization is governed by internal-external and social-intellectual factors is explained in his *magnum opus* book *Shurūt al-Nahdzah* (The Conditions of the Renaissance), besides his book *Mīlād Mujtama* (Birth of Society).

Bennabi's definitions of civilization are various. Bennabi denotes that civilization is a social force that plays an important role in the development of the individual and society as well (Benlahcene, 2011). He certified that civilization produces its tools, stimulates social interactions, and activates social capacities and energies (In Arabic: Mukadirrat) to be united in confronting critical challenges and problems of society. He indicated the equilibrium between the moral and material aspects of human life. Since society justifies human activities and rationalizes its modus operandi in the history circle. for overlooking the main causes of the crisis and only focusing on symptoms (Benlahcene, 2013). In the post-al-Muwahhid era, the problem in Muslim culture has a deep-rooted. According to Bennabi, this historical process paved the way for colonizability. Colonization is not the main reason for the present situation in the Muslim world, but the vulnerability of Muslims to be colonized is one of the many secondary factors (Benlahcene, 2013). Civilization is a result of society's culture, to the extent that the cultural transformation guides the transformation of the civilization process. Bennabi believes that this cultural transformation leads to the creation of the necessary synthesis for civilization construction (Berghout, 2001). Furthermore, the mode of culture determines the direction of civilization and its destiny in history, Bennabi

defined civilization according to its structure and social essence: "...the human being learns how to live within a group and perceives...the essential importance of the network of social relations in organizing human life to perform its historical function and responsibilities" (Benlahcene, 2013). Bennabi's equation of civilization is clarified in the following formula: Civilization = Man + Soil + Time. Which structurally determines its essential elements. These crucial elements of any civilizational action or product indicate that the problem of civilization deconstructs into three categories: man, soil[3], and time. Besides these three ingredients, the role of the religious idea comes as a catalyst to organize and direct the three elements towards their civilizing process. Bennabi argues that all civilizations without exception have historically flourished amid religious ideas. According to Bennabi, the concept of orientation *tawjih* refers to harmony in the civilization movement, unity in objectives, and avoidance of conflict between efforts starting from the same sources and aiming at similar objectives. (Benlahcene, 2013). The quality of the relations formed in the world of persons determines the destiny of the society in the civilizational process. Bennabi gives extra importance to the world of ideas, by confirming the connected relationship between the worlds of ideas, persons and objects. Without the world of ideas, the other two worlds are of no value.

Every civilization passes across a certain cycle. Bennabi affirms that this cycle starts when the fundamental elements of civilization synthesize within the structure of the religious idea (Catalyst), and civilization reaches its end when those fundamental elements are no longer in dynamic interaction. The rising and falling of civilizations are measured by the role played by these civilizations in guiding humanity in history. Every civilization fails to play its role positively it will fall and at the same time, another civilization begins afresh to formulate its cycle in history.

In the civilizing process, every society will follow an outlined pattern leading to a civilizational change. After completing the pre-civilized stage, a society moves to its second stage that called the civilized stage. In this stage, the society will experience three different phases: 1- soul (the spiritual), 2- reason (the rational), 3- and instinct (the instinctive).

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[3] We deliberately avoided using the term "material" in this equation and preferred the term "soil." The purpose of this choice is to avoid confusion in the word (material): in the sense of ethics, that means the opposite of the word "spirit". In science, it means a concept against the concept of "energy". In philosophy, we find an idea which is the opposite of the term "idealism" (Bennabi, 1986b, pp. 44 – 45)

The following pattern shows these two different stages: Taking the Islamic civilization, as an example.
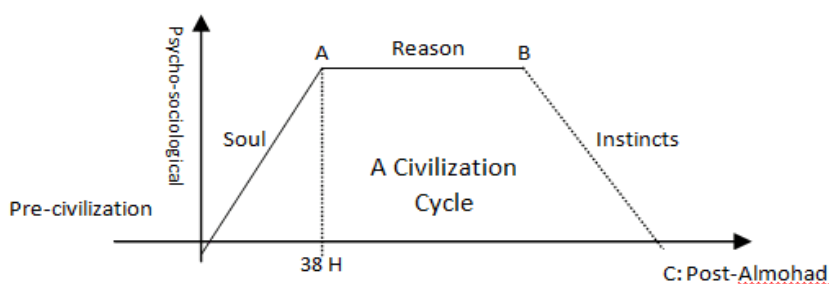

Diagram representing Islamic Civilization

Figure 1: Islamic Civilization Cycle

Based on the pattern, it could be seen that the social relationships network reaches its ideal phase while its religious idea continues to broaden. At this phase, society's soul is high. civilization can now deal effectively with new challenges, problems, and necessities, by creating new standards and social measures. With the development of society, the spiritual phase starts to decrease in front of the rising material problems, growth, and expansion of civilization, shifting civilization from the first phase to the second (rational). The second phase is a phase where reason rules and takes control over all activities while civilization continues to progress and expand in history. Therefore, civilization sets up its historical presence firmly. During this rational phase, the social relationships network is well-advanced but faces certain defects. These defects are a result of getting slightly away from the spiritual phase. Psychologically, individuals are no longer have full control over their vital energy while performing their social functions. Parts of society's forces and energies have fallen into inactivity and others have declined. When rational forces of the individual start to lose control over his activities, civilization faces anew context where instinctive forces dominate the spiritual and rational ones.

2.2. Building a Social Relationships Network

According to Malik Bennabi, before building any civilizational process, people first need to establish a strong relationship inside their societies (Bennabi,

1986a) as the first step towards civilization. Every society must engage in the civilizational change to have historically existed. Bennabi said: "Any change that occurs in the physical characteristics or occurs in the cultural direction of a peculiar humanitarian community is a direct result of its historical function. Each group does not evolve and does not have a change within the limits of time, it is thus graduated from the dialectical definition of the word (community)" (Bennabi, 1986a, p 16). This means to give a logical definition to the subject of the birth of society, we should link it to the factor of time, a link that determines the psychological and social significance of this factor. And from this point, society becomes a community that always changes its social characteristics by producing the means of change, and with determining the goal that the society looks for it from behind this change" (Bennabi, 1986a, p17). Society is a system and a humane organization that is organized according to a special system. This system is based on three elements:

1. A continuous movement characterized by the human totality

2. Producing the causes of this movement permanently

3. Determining the direction and objectives of this movement (Bennabi, 1986a, p17)

In any case, every society has an end. It is driven either towards civilizational rising or towards civilizational collapse. When there is no movement, the human community loses its history: it becomes with no goal (Bennabi, 1986a, p18). The stagnant societies and communities live in a pre-civilization period. Thus, they need a dynamic activity to be civilizationally shifted from one phase to another. The more they produce reasons for their movement, the sooner they are in a civilizational shift. Bennabi states that "Any humanistic community has a portion of inactivity. Where this stagnation comes on the side of individuals in different formats: sometimes in the form of laziness, lack of energy or lack of will ..." (Bennabi, 1986a, p 20).

Bennabi (1986a, p. 28) confirms that every society needs a network of social relationships that is necessary to perform a social action. Because this network of relationships is the result of the circumstances and conditions where the historical movement occurs itself. This movement can be interpreted as the result of a certain conflict or dialectics according to Hegel or it is a response to a challenge according to Toynbee's theory. Toynbee coined his theory by ascertaining that civilizations come to birth in environments that are unusually

difficult and not unusually easy. This leads to asking whether or not this is an instance of some social law which may be expressed in the following formula: 'the greater the challenge, the greater the stimulus' (Toynbee, 1934).

It is known that the first action of society in the way of changing is conditioned by the completion of this relationship network. We can, therefore, conclude that the network of relationships is the first historical work of society at the time of its birth (Bennabi, 1986a, p 28). When the network of social relationships is torn apart, the world of objects, the world of persons, and the world of ideas get confused. The world of ideas presents a perception and original patterns to society to formulate its civilizational process and forms a prototype all persons in society can follow, distinguishing the culture. To take any constructive role in history the world of ideas comes to play this role. The world of objects provides tools, natural resources, instruments and all material needs needed for drawing the civilizational process (Benlahcene, 2013). According to Malek Bennabi, no historical activity can exist among these three worlds without the social relationships network that reverberates the nature of the cultural dynamism of the society.

Bennabi focuses more on the importance of man in the civilizational equation Man+Soil+Time = Civilization, besides the presence of religious ideas (catalyst). Bennabi considered man the central force in any civilizing process and without man, the other two elements are meaningless (Benlahcene, 2013). Therefore, Bennabi gives a considerable significance to the necessity of building a strong social relationships network, and calls frequently to changing the spiritual and psychological conditions to get the way towards a dynamic change with full free will, depending on the following Quranic verse:

"Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Surah al-Ra'd, verse 11).

2.3. Colonialism Coefficient and Colonizability

"Colonialism is not merely casual, but an inevitable consequence of our decline" (Bennabi, 1986b, p 9). Colonialism is a systematic i.e., individuals themselves are the one who paves the way to it. According to Bennabi, individual (Per capita) as a primary factor of civilization has two values:

(1)   is a raw (ore) and natural, (2) is industrial, social

The first value exists in everyone, in its biological composition, and is its innate readiness to use its genius, sole and time. The second value is acquired by the social center, (the role of social relationships network) which is the means and ways that the individual finds within his social framework to promote his character and develop and refine his talents. The function of the social body is formed at this time in this promotion or development. (Bennabi, 1986b, p145) Here the colonialism coefficient enters to make all under its control. The colonialism coefficient intervenes to create a model of life, thought and movement. After the moral and material control takes place, this individual will accept the borders that colonialism paints for him and thinks within them, and he will not get out and draw his character according to its borders.

Colonizability is a deep-internal submission to colonialism, and this submission is that the colonizer persuades the colonized individuals that it is superior to them and, they are unable to manage their lives, and without it they still under its colonial tutelage. They feel their inferiority in everything. Nowadays this issue is likely linked to the dependency coefficient particularly in the development issues, as we are living in a post-colonial era where hard power no longer works alone without the influence of soft power that deals with the world of ideas more than the world of objects.

Mental and psychological qualities have been established because of the circumstances of the historical process. History decides that the society that does not perform its mission in any role in the historical series should only be subject to humiliation (Bennabi, 1986b). These historical circumstances (cumulative inferiority that increased due to successive events) causing a deficit in the act of resistance or what we call it "civilizational action", that in turn leads to having a sense of inferiority complex towards the superior civilization, consequently, to be colonizable.
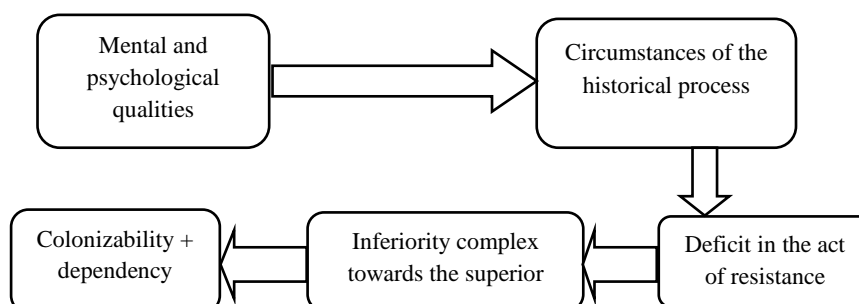
Figure 2: Process of Psychological Quality and Being Colonizable/Dependent

According to Bennabi, knowing the true picture of the effects of colonization and the factors governing civilization could solve the problems of the Muslim world and launch a new Muslim renaissance.

Malek Bennabi (1986b) mentioned one Hadith that explains clearly the relationship existed between the colonialism coefficient as an external factor of the civilizational crisis and colonizability as the internal factor of this crisis. The Prophet said: The people will soon summon one another to attack you as people when eating invite others to share their dish. Someone asked: Will that be because of our small numbers at that time? He replied: No, you will be numerous at that time: but you will be scum and rubbish like that carried down by a torrent, and Allah will take the fear of you from the breasts of your enemy and last enervation into your hearts. Someone asked: What is Wahn (enervation). The Prophet replied: Love of the world and dislike of death.[4]

This Hadith was a prediction to evoke the image of the Muslim world after the rupture of its social network when it is no longer a society, but rather a people gathering with no objective. This Hadith also describes in its content the colonizer world and the colonizable one, in which the Islamic world is subjected to a living experience.

The network of social relationships depends on culture. Culture is the environment that shapes the individual entity within society, by refining the individual and collective capabilities, the intellectual and material capacities. Because culture contains the moral factor, the aesthetic taste and the basic elements that include language, religion, literature, arts, customs, traditions, and sciences as well as the social, political, economic and intellectual systems. This culture must be directed to allow the members of the society to prove their civilizational presence among many other civilizational experiences in the movement of the historical circle that does not pay attention to the peoples who are staying in deep sleep as Malek Bennabi states (Bennabi, 1986b). Societies, which do not invest in their capabilities and possibilities and do not have a free and self-initiative will to move, are subject to the determinism of the historical movement and will be dragged against their will in a civilizational maze to find

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[4] Reference: Sunan Abi Dawud 4297, In-book reference: Book 39, Hadith 7, English translation: Book 38, Hadith 4284.

themselves subordinate and dependent on the superior in the civilizational equation. Societies enter a phase where they have no power or control over their existence and, cannot determine their civilizational destiny because they are incapable of creating a civilizational action.

Underdeveloped societies lack a network of social relationships and remain lacking confidence in themselves, whether they feel or not, they remain under the avoirdupois of colonizability and dependency. Colonialism coefficient is an external politico-economic impact on Third World societies, while colonizability is the internal psychological impact. So, being between the hammer of colonizability and the anvil of colonialism/ dependency is the real case most Third World communities live in.

One of the prominent theories that addressed the main causes led third world countries to be underdeveloped is the Dependency Theory. This theory that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, argues that most third world countries are underdeveloped because the international system prevents them from being developed (Bradshaw & Huang, 1991). Besides other causes such as the prevalence of dictatorships and political oppression that increased the level of social repression in third world countries. According to the dependency theory, these oppressive regimes (center of the periphery) receive support from developed countries (center of the center) to stay in power and this reciprocally serves the interests of developed countries in the first place. Thus, dictatorships remain one of the factors that increase the level of social repression which, in turn, increases the extent of colonizability, that is a psychological condition felt by underdeveloped societies (the periphery of the periphery) with a kind of inferiority-complex towards the developed societies (the periphery of the center), which enjoy political and economic stability. And this stability contributes to enhance the network of social relationships and provide a harmonious atmosphere to boost the effectiveness of ideas that are subject to this network of social relationships. We cannot imagine a congruent work of persons, ideas, and objects without these necessary relationships. As the closer, the relationship is, the work is effective and influential (Bennabi, 1986a, p38).

Ibn Khaldun once stated: "Throughout history, many nations have suffered a physical defeat, but that has never marked the end of a nation. But when a nation has become a victim of a psychological defeat, then that marks the end of that nation" (Khaldun, 1969). The human soul believes that perfection is in those who overcome it, as Ibn Khaldun argued. And the stronger the superior is, the more the

weakest one will follow him without the slightest intellectual resistance, and this failure of resistance is a symptom of colonizability.

The most dangerous kind of colonialism is the one that is based on soft-power tools, at the time hard power colonialism revealed its failure historically. Military colonialism had been called "the stupid student" by the Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap after the defeat and the pulling out of the French army from Vietnam and then replaced by American forces. Differentiating between colonial hard power in terms of using military force that was applied in a long time of colonialism history, and colonial soft power in terms of employing cultural war shows how significantly different they are. It is worth mentioning to the story of colonialism that came out from the door and returned from the window. Bennabi pointed out to the new kind of colonialism that just started to work in countries which took their independence after being militarily colonized, He gave an example about Algeria that was under the French colonialism. Bennabi said, "Indeed, the least we were at risk in 1962 was watching colonialism coming out from the door to come back from the window" (Bennabi, 1995).
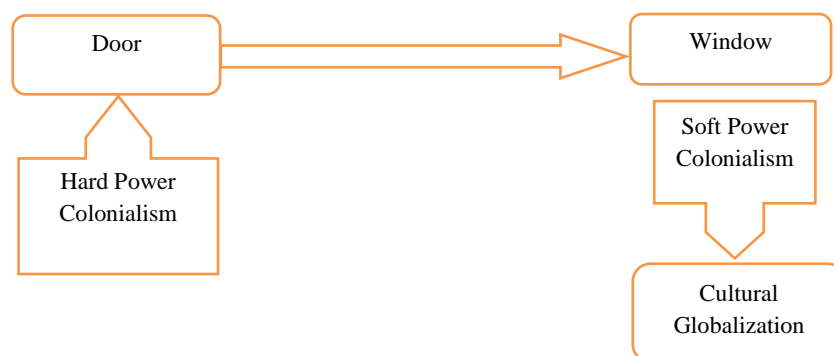

Figure 3: Between Hard and Soft Powers Colonialism

The failure of creating the civilizational action depending on own capabilities is psychologically explained with a question to be imposed: How do these colonizable societies reach such a persuasion edge to accept almost all ideas and objects come from the superior in a globalized world? And, how failed society is not failed, but it chooses to be failed? such a society is a civilization project in crisis.

Anthropology was the first social science to address the study of human civilization and culture. Civilization, in the anthropological tradition, is the highest state of culture and the broadest cultural identity. Even anthropology as an academic field of study was supported by colonial forces for a long time to justify Western colonialism and colonial tutelage to other peoples across the globe. And to reveal that it is a message of the white man to others (Eurocentrism). To give colonialism an academic form (For instance see: The environmental determinism[5] by Frederick Ratzel) to be an obligation for the Western civilization to guide other societies towards adopting the western style of civilization. In a time of post-colonialism and decolonization that is a time of uncertainty as Frederick Cooper (2015) argued, the world is no longer politically possible to be divided between advanced and primitive entities. Therefore, Third World countries particularly African countries are no longer the exclusive domain of anthropologists. Moreover, anthropologists must rethink of the way that distinguishes their domain of research (Cooper, 2015).

Being failed in responding to the challenges that threaten civilizational destiny and, staying with no self-resistance is a kind of suicide, as Arnold Toynbee states" Civilizations die from suicide, not by murder". No civilization is forced to be dead unless it is vulnerable and tended to be colonizable.

Political, economic and ideological procedures are necessary besides a social vigilance for Third World societies to get rid of colonizability and to minimize the dependency pressure, particularly the cultural dependency. In a post-colonialism epoch, Third World societies left their windows open to soft colonialism after closing their doors in front of hard colonialism. The worsening thing is when opening other windows, especially on the ideological front, which remains protected when the society builds a strong social relationship network. But the time this network gets weak, the ideological front or what we call it "the network of common ideas" which makes the members of the society live in cohesion. It is the network that causes them to gather and think about the survival and destiny of their society. The ideological défense and the network of common ideas are of the significant importance to keep the society exists and resists, in other words, making a balance between challenge and response in Toynbee's terms. One of the challenge aspects of societies is the penetrating of deadly ideas that are all foreign ideas to the host civilization.

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[5] It is the study of how the physical environment predisposes societies and states towards particular development trajectories.

During and before the war of liberation against the French colonialism to Algeria, Malek Bennabi was one of the most vivid opponents of the liberation way of the country. In the 1940s and 1950s, as he was a militant by his pen, he affirmed the importance of the intellectual struggle against colonialism. Bennabi was with the dissemination of socio-political awareness among the then members of the Algerian society. He confirmed again and more again that any lack in the world of ideas would lead the society to extend the probability of falling in the trap of colonizability. Any deficiency in the level of social awareness will make society members thinking of the collective mind of dependency after getting independence. The destruction of the intellectual complex is worse than the physical destruction of the country because the negative impact of the intellectual destruction will be longer and stronger in influence on society's survival. Bennabi calls for an overall liberation movement of land and thought together, and the renunciation of one of the two means that society members remain colonizable until after getting independence (Bennabi, 1981). Undoubtedly, this is a negative and minus independence when the land is free, and the mind is colonizable. And how colonizable societies remain in politico-economic and intellectual voluntary dependency. The exit of the colonizer from the door with the force of the weapon is insufficient. Because it comes back from the window with a new kind of colonialism taking a cultural and intellectual form under the banner of globalization. This colonialism which is dangerous than the last one and is the most serious challenge that needs quick response and positive reaction. Where thought only confronts a similar thought and culture encounters only a similar culture with a free will.

Existentialism philosophy in general and particularly the Sartrean doctrine argues and confirms that man is condemned to be free (Sartre, 2007). The same idea argued by Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali that man is obliged to choose, it is inevitable for him to be free to do that. According to Sartre, even when a man refuses to choose he has consequently chosen not to choose and therefore, he is responsible for the results of what he has chosen and of what he has not (Sartre, 2001, 2007).

Civilization and progress are among the selective issues of all societies. Consequently, the dependency is a choice, and non-dependency is also a choice. People who are psychologically exhausted and remain rigid without choosing the path of progress and reliance on self-potentials have chosen not to choose and thus plunged themselves into the trap of colonizability, which is an internal feeling of defeat or what is called defeatism. For that reason, colonizable societies become

vulnerable to the colonialism coefficient. Therefore, colonialism is not merely a casual but inevitable result of the degeneration of the colonizable societies, as Malek Bennabi (1986b) has argued. Colonizable societies have not been obliged to be susceptible to colonialism and dependency, but they voluntarily succumb to it. In reality, they are condemned to choose and determine their destiny freely. Bennabi goes on to say that in order not to be colonized, we must get rid of colonizability. We cannot escape the possibility of colonizability except through self-belief and self-reliance on the available capabilities to create a civilizational action that can only be achieved by the power of movement and endeavoring. Bennabi said, "If a man moves, the society and history move accordingly" (Bennabi, 1986b). The greatest miracles in history are always linked to driving ideas and creating a momentum for the society. This momentum needs a real dynamic elite to carry the mission towards society by believing in freedom and its capabilities. Freedom is a heavy burden on peoples who have not been held to bear the responsibilities of their independence by their elites (Bennabi, 1986b). To get rid of colonizability, we should get rid of the impossible psyche and the indulgence mentality. And to bear in mind that nothing is impossible when free will is ignited.

3. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the question of defining and diagnosing the real causes behind the falling and the rising of civilizations, still under study. We arrive at this stage to conclude as it is argued in this article that almost Third World societies and particularly the Muslim World are in nefarious dependency, because of their inferiority complex towards superior entities in terms of politico-economic and socio-cultural aspects. The complex of inferiority is formed by time according to lack of social efficacy and lack of ideas, as Malek Bennabi has argued. In a matter of fact, Third World communities have their own decision to create their civilizational action and to determine their civilizational destiny by a full free will, either to be amongst independent and developed politico-social entities or to keep staying dependent on the superior developed ones. A dependency that is nurtured by a psychological case based on inferiority complex and defeatism called colonizability.

In deed, Societies, which do not invest in their capabilities and possibilities and do not have a free and self-initiative will to move, are subject to the determinism of the historical movement and will be dragged against their will in a civilizational maze to find themselves subordinate and dependent on the superior

in the civilizational equation. Societies enter a phase where they have no power or control over their existence and, cannot determine their civilizational destiny because they are incapable of creating a civilizational action, Civilization is a result of society's culture.

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