

## Cross Cultural Context of Contemporary Islamic Thought

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Received: April 4, 2022 | Revised: June 24, 2022 | Accepted: June 29, 2022 | Available Online: June 30, 2022

### ABSTRACT

Contemporary Islamic thought is differentiated by a style of thinking that tries to address the philosophical conflict through an approach of reformation. The following study is focused to understand the intellectual history of Islam in the modern era, with a cross-cultural context; based on the framework of critical analysis. Presently, the study of the connection between Islam and advanced scientific development is thought to be a part of Islamic modernity. Therefore, this study focuses on the approaches related to the cultural context of Islamic thought such as: traditionalism, modernism, fundamentalism, secularism, and Sufism. In addition, various strands came into being as an effect of different approaches to Islamic thought; theories related to the cultural context of Islamic thought emerged. Further, the study reflects upon the cultural dimensions of Islamic thought and the influence of different cultures on it.

**Keywords:** Cross Cultural Context, Fundamentalism, Islamic Thought, Modernism, Traditionalism.

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION TO ISLAMIC THOUGHT:

Islamic thought is an outcome of cultural development by contemporary thinkers of Islam who were engaged in revisiting Islamic doctrines. These thinkers explained how Islamic thought reformed over time and the various approaches that emerged from it.<sup>1</sup> The inherent feature of Islam is the belief that it is a comprehensive and complete code of life. Moreover, it is deeply interlinked with politics and society. The development of contemporary Islamic thought has different stages. Therefore, it is an extremely complex field that requires not only a high level of verbal experience and knowledge, but also demands a careful attention to the broader politics along with the study of the natural context of globalization. A common assumption in development theory is that, as a result of the secularization process, modernization weakens religious tradition.<sup>2</sup> The main issue here is the nature of religious traditions in the postmodern world. Fundamentally, new ideas and institutions may have been given traditional appearance by the established religions. However, these perspectives appear to rule out the possibility of Islamic-inspired anti-imperialism and the Islamic approach to social information. In addition, connection of the

1 "Islam - Islamic Thought, Britannica," accessed March 20, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Islam/Islamic-thought>.

2 Sharif al Mujahid, "Islam and Development: A Review Article," *Pakistan Institute of International Affairs* 35, no. 1 (2022): 148.

Islamic tradition with modern society's concepts and institutions is a common thread in all of these approaches. Therefore, the major theme is the response of Islam to modernization and development.

In the first part of the work approaches related to the relationship of culture and Islamic thought; further, the strands which have been emerged from the approaches related to Islamic thought have been discussed. In the second part of the work theories related to the cross-cultural context of Islamic thought, the cultural dimensions of Islamic thought and the influence of different cultures on Islamic thought have been discussed.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The development of contemporary Islamic thought has different stages. Therefore, it is an extremely complex field that requires not only a high level of verbal experience and knowledge but also demands careful attention to the broader politics along with the study of the natural context of globalization. A lot of literature is available on the topic, but it covers the varying aspects of the study. Therefore, through this research, the researcher tried to highlight the various aspects of the topic. To start with approaches related to the relationship between culture and Islamic thought has been discussed. Further, the strands which have emerged from the approaches related to Islamic thought have been discussed. Moreover, it also deals with the theories related to the cross-cultural context of Islamic thought, the cultural dimensions of Islamic thought, and the influence of different cultures on Islamic thought. Thus, it concerns many knowledgeable contemporary Muslim and Western scholars such as Talal Asad, Cheryl Benard, Bayram Aydın, Muhammad Khalid Masud, Mansoor Moaddel, Aziz Al-Azmeh, Azhar Ibrahim, and Muhammad Fraz; who have made efforts to discuss the issue and tried to give their suggestions on the topic.

Talal Asad presents an overview of the topic in “*Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*”<sup>1</sup> by explaining the conflict among people due to the concept of modernization. He also distinguished two kinds of conversations about 'religion': an emic discourse reflecting on patterns of thought, symbolic associations expressed through the perspective of a believer, and an etic 'scholarly' discourse involving historically oriented analysis of the relationships between ideas and society, while avoiding engaging emic truth claims about meta-empirical reality.

“*Civil Democratic Islam; Partners, Resources and Strategies*”<sup>2</sup> by Cheryl Benard, describes the four categories of Muslims through his research namely:

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1 Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford University Press, 2020).

2 Cheryl Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, National Security Research Division, 2003).

Fundamentalists, Traditionalists, Modernists, and Secularists. However, these approaches have been discussed in this research.

Bayram Aydın, in his work *“Modernity and the Fragmentation of the Muslim Community in Response: Mapping Modernist, Reformist, and Traditionalist Responses,”*<sup>1</sup> explains that Islamic modernism involves a dogmatic as well as a religious basis, but it must change according to the contemporary world with the clear notion and unregretful acceptance of the Western world.

In *“The Construction and Deconstruction of Secularism as an Ideology in Contemporary Muslim Thought,”*<sup>2</sup> the status of secularists has been discussed by Muhammad Khalid Masud. In his view, secularists in the present era managed to hold power and even gained popularity, but they still face a challenge that the western theorists and other policymakers project the Islamic world to be not accommodating for secularists.

In his work *“Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse”*<sup>3</sup> the author Mansoor Moaddel stressed that the Muslims must reconsider their way of life in accordance with the changing world and with the changing life circumstances, just as the West managed to practice acquisitive information.

In *“Islam and Modernities”*<sup>4</sup> the author, Aziz Al-Azmeh, explains the strands that have emerged from the approaches related to Islamic thought. It further highlights its importance in contemporary Muslim cultures.

Azhar Ibrahim, in *“Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Critical Perspective,”*<sup>5</sup> describes that how the approaches and strands related to Islamic thought can assist in the intellectual growth of Muslim communities and serve to lessen the current conflict. Furthermore, there is a need to highlight these strands to solve the issues faced by Muslims in their societies.

Muhammad Fraz, in his work *“Classification of Contemporary Islamic Movements: Analysis of Western Viewpoint,”*<sup>6</sup> highlights the instigating issue of the present era, extremism. He thinks that it is critical to better understand Islam and Islamists (or

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1 Bayram Aydın, “Modernity and the Fragmentation of the Muslim Community in Response: Mapping Modernist, Reformist, and Traditionalist Responses,” *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 55, no. 1 (2014): 71–100.

2 Muhammad Khalid Masud, “The Construction and Deconstruction of Secularism as an Ideology in Contemporary Muslim Thought,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 33, no. 3 (2005): 363–83.

3 Mansoor Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

4 Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (Verso, 1993).

5 Azhar Ibrahim, “Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Critical Perspective,” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 23, no. 3 (2012): 279–294.

6 Muhammad Fraz, “Classification of Contemporary Islamic Movements: Analysis of Western View Point,” 2012.

Islamic groups) to isolate extremism while encouraging and supporting moderates and those who believe in mutual coexistence and advancement.

In the presence of the above material, the research aims to address and analyze the data pertinent to contemporary Islamic thought, and also identify and explain the topic in a broader sense.

### **3. APPROACHES TO CULTURAL CONTEXT IN ISLAMIC THOUGHT:**

While examining the present state of Islamic thought Cheryl Benard has divided it into different categories in his work named, “Civil Democratic Islam; Partners, Resources and Strategies”.<sup>1</sup>

#### **3.1 TRADITIONALISM:**

Traditionalism refers to Ummah’s “traditional” thought to be self-supporting and being accessible with very slight or no modification. This recommends that Ummah’s contemporary thought can be molded, organized and that its cultural structure can be established on this source.<sup>2</sup> They are more moderate, close to the average, and have a settling effect. They are willing to engage in interfaith dialogue and often go out of their way to do so. They rarely promote violence; however, some sympathize with fundamentalists who have chosen a route to the point of sheltering, allocating resources, and supporting them in their activities.<sup>3</sup> They want a conservative civilization in which there would be no innovation and transformation.<sup>4</sup>

#### **3.2 MODERNISM:**

This approach, which embodies contemporary western thought (e.g., its conceptions of existence, life, and humanity) is global, and without it no modern philosophy or civilization can be built. This similarity demonstrates that western ideas must be assumed in Toto, and that any negative consequences are the price to be paid for beginning a modern culture and civilization.<sup>5</sup> They want the Islamic sphere to become a part of universal modernism and to bring Islam according to the modern age of reformation.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Cheryl Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, National Security Research Division, 2003), 25.

2 Shaykh Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2005), 9.

3 Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam*, 29.

4 Colin Dueck, “The New Traditionalists” (American Enterprise Institute, 2020), 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24616>.

5 Al-Alwani, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 10.

6 Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (Routledge, 2014), 178.

### 3.3 FUNDAMENTALISM:

This approach rejects the autonomous standards and contemporary western culture. They want to implement their extreme views of Islamic law and morality. They prefer revolution and up-to-date technology to attain the desired objectives.<sup>1</sup> Fundamentalists are completely contradictory from traditionalists in many ways, but especially in their ideological emphasis on the state.<sup>2</sup> Fundamentalists do not merely agree with historical Islamic traditions. More importantly, they broaden on them applying some of the stricter regulations more rigorously than the original Islamic community ever did. In addition, they use an arbitrary selection that allows them to ignore or dismiss more egalitarian, progressive, and tolerant portions of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Furthermore, they construct their own rules.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.4 SECULARISM:

This approach is ambiguous as it is premised on the separation of church and state. Some ideologies like aggressive nationalism, anti-Americanism, and authoritarian structures with individually quasi-democratic symbols have been some of the indicators of Islamic secularism. Secularists think that religion should be kept distinct from politics and the state, and that the major task is to prevent infractions in both directions.<sup>4</sup> Although, they managed to hold power and even gained popularity in present era, they still face a challenge that western theorists and other policymakers project Islamic world to be not accommodating for secularists.<sup>5</sup> While explaining secularism, Talal Asad focused on the point that what people do with ideas in the name of innovation.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.5 SUFISM:

This approach can be added to modernization as it signifies an exposed and logical clarification of Islam. Sufism influences school programs, standards, and cultural values and requires that it should be strongly stimulated in countries that have a Sufi tradition, such as Afghanistan or Irāq, through its poetry, music, and philosophy, as it has a significant role outside of religious relationships.<sup>7</sup> Sufism is often regarded as the spiritual inspiration underlying most pre-modern Islamic verse, the vernacular of much common Islamic devotion, the principal social

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1 Al-Alwani, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, x.

2 David Zeidan, "The Islamic Fundamentalist View of Life As A Perennial Battle" 5, no. 4 (2001): 27.

3 Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam*, 4.

4 Benard, 5.

5 Muhammad Khalid Masud, "The Construction and Deconstruction of Secularism as an Ideology in Contemporary Muslim Thought," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 33, no. 3 (2005): 372.

6 Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford University Press, 2020), 194.

7 Cheryl Benard, "Finding Partners for the Promotion of Democratic Islam," 2022, 46.

forum available to women's religious involvement, and a key influence in the conversion of people towards Islam in Africa and Asia.<sup>1</sup>

Muslims must reconsider their way of life<sup>2</sup> in accordance with the changing world and with the changing life circumstances, just as the West managed to practice acquisitive information. The Islamic world was to use Western knowledge, however they eventually transformed into a society dependent on Western countries.<sup>3</sup> Islamic modernism involves a dogmatic as well as a religious basis, but it must change according to the contemporary world with the clear notion and unregretful acceptance of the Western world.<sup>4</sup> On the normative level even a cursory glance reveals that Islamic political development and Western political development share some common characteristics, but there also exist many conflicts in these systems. The problem is complicated by the fact that there is a variety of normative positions on each side owing to the richness of the respective traditions.<sup>5</sup> Differences are easier to see than similarities, especially when fundamentalist Islamic doctrines are compared against the uncompromising secular western position. There is often a heated and unproductive encounter, that may lead to immoral exchange of accusation, with western modernists asserting that Islam is anti-democratic. Furthermore, western modernists claim that it fosters the autocracy of a role, undermines women's rights, and discourages the notion that so-called "modern" practices are immoral and unjust. They claim that the secular political system is devoid of principles and is subject to the exploitation of limited, frequently contaminated private interests. On the contrary, women in western society are subject to its demeaning and degrading consequences rather than enjoying security and protection. Furthermore, Science and technology are used by the West for exploitative, hazardous, and even amusing ends. Some of the hostility between these extremes is due to idea modernists hold, that the model of pluralist system is legitimized by popular representation under a rule of man-made laws with an extensive degree of individual freedom. However, Modernists does not see any of these ideals comprehended in Muslim societies. They do not examine it as closely as they should. No matter how liberal or materially successful either may be, no matter how tolerant each becomes of the other, there are no grounds for expecting a trend toward a universal condition of political development on the normative level. In

1 Jamal J. Elias, "Sufism," *Iranian Studies* 31, no. 3/4 (1998): 595.

2 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (University of Chicago Press, 1979), 212.

3 Mansoor Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse* (University of Chicago Press, 2005), 84.

4 Bayram Aydın, "Modernity and the Fragmentation of the Muslim Community in Response: Mapping Modernist, Reformist, and Traditionalist Responses," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 55, no. 1 (2014): 73–83.

5 Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, "Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach,," 1966, 308.

addition, different societies and cultures have different ideas.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the basic purpose is to find common grounds for development by re-emphasis on Islamic thought.<sup>2</sup>

#### **4. STRANDS EMERGED FROM DIFFERENT APPROACHES OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT:**

The approaches described above may also be defined in form of strands<sup>3</sup> that can be found in contemporary Muslim cultures. These can assist in the intellectual growth of Muslim communities and serve to lessen the current conflict.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, there is a need to highlight these strands to solve the issues faced by Muslim's in their societies.

Neo-traditionalism and scripturalism, as already discussed above traditionalists are known as true interpreters of Islam and they mainly focus on political fluctuations that take place in societies.<sup>5</sup> They want to maintain their control over the clarification and negotiation about the Islamic faith as they face encounters from modernists. They give importance to previous practices and norms as indicative of moral features. In addition, insight of traditionalist's modernization can only affect human faith destructively. It focuses on the civilization, where the main concern should be on remembrance of Allāh and spending life according to His commandments.<sup>6</sup>

Neo-modernist reformism is opposite to traditionalists as they focus on reformation. The reformists were focused on bridging Western understanding with the best traditions of Islam. They give importance to the modern culture as per the need of society to reform, as they mainly focus on western perspectives. The neo-modernists brought a new phase in Muslim civilization to address their problems and apply reformation just for the basic need of society.<sup>7</sup>

Socio-political and cultural Islamism speaks about 'authenticity' in Muslim civilization, and they focus on history as something authentic and prefer to follow it.

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1 "Culture and Society | Boundless Sociology," accessed March 20, 2022,

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-sociology/chapter/culture-and-society/>.

2 Erwin Isak Jakob Rosenthal, *Islam in the Modern National State* (Cambridge University Press, 1965), 69–72.

3 Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (Verso, 1993), 51.

4 Azhar Ibrahim, "Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Critical Perspective," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 23, no. 3 (2012): 283–90.

5 Martin Nguyen, "Modern Scripturalism and Emergent Theological Trajectories: Moving Beyond the Qur'an as Text," *Fairfield University*, n.d., 4.

6 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Reflections on Man and the Future of Civilization," *Islamic Studies* 32, no. 3 (1993): 255–56.

7 "The Spirit of Islam: A History of the Evolution and Ideals of Islam: Ali, Syed Ameer: 9781616403423: Amazon.Com: Books," accessed March 20, 2022, <https://www.amazon.com/Spirit-Islam-History-Evolution-Ideals/dp/161640342X>.

In addition, they have no problem with modernity unless it has an Islamic aspect to it. However, Western ideas are considered as a curse in Islam and are not accepted by the religion. Further, they are unconcerned with prevalent practices and concepts in their society that are Islamic. The emphasis is on devotion to the essentials of Islam inclined towards literalist. Resultantly, Islamic discourse is deteriorating in the community.<sup>1</sup>

Liberal humanism encourages rationality, cosmopolitanism, and pluralism, which are not new in Islamic intellectual tradition. This was highly regarded among philosophers in classical Islam, and even in Sufism.<sup>2</sup> As neo-modernists, they continue to fight against some monotheistic views and work hard to rectify fundamentalists' beliefs. Therefore, it is difficult to reintroduce the Islamic teachings of humanistic concern that existed in Islamic history from the seventh through the twelfth century.<sup>3</sup>

Sufi spiritualism has gained popularity in the present decade, as Sufism is the modest form of Islam in which they promote exclusivism. The Sufi movement has parochialism in it, so they are in favor of reformists for its ritualized excesses.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in contemporary times Sufism has gained acceptance and they attract people of urban areas, because they find divine relief in a world of suspicion as they have spiritual and speculative practice in Islam. In addition, people search for spirituality because of their social crisis and isolation. Hence, they found peace in practicing Sufism. Further, in comparison to revivalists this devotion seems to be an easy way of Islam.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. THEORIES:

There is a lot of literature on all areas of political Islamism in the Middle East,<sup>6</sup> but it is rare to come across any coherent ideas aimed at defining the Islamic resurgence as a whole. According to studies, the resurgence is a result of comparative need, specifically oppressive state practices, and social injustice.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the overall

1 Fazlur Rahman, "Islamization of Knowledge: A Response," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 5, no. 1 (1988): 3–11.

2 Julia Ashtiany, review of *Review of Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*, by Joel L. Kraemer, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 52, no. 1 (1989): 131.

3 Mohammed Arkoun, "From Islamic Humanism to the Ideology of Liberation," *Humanism Toward the Third Millennium. Elders, F.(Ed.)*, 1993, 13–22.

4 Muhammad Naguib al Attas, *Some Aspects of Sūfism: As Understood and Practised among the Malays* (Ta'dib International Sdn Bhd, 2020), 40.

5 Abdul Hadi Palazzi, "The Islamists Have It Wrong," *Middle East Quarterly*, 2001, 3–11.

6 Are Knudsen, *Political Islam in the Middle East* (Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2003), 2.

7 Hans Haferkamp and Neil J. Smelser, "Social Change and Modernity," *University of California Press*, 1992, 19.

difficulty with these conventions is that they may enlighten the reinforcement in some Middle Eastern countries but not in others. Therefore, in this section, theories are provided under a variety of broad categories, such as macro-sociological theories aimed at understanding the mechanisms of Islamic civilizations (dynastic theory). Whereas the other theories are concerned with examining social procedures. They locate the Islamic renaissance in the political and social context in which it was needed, rather than in religion (crisis theory, cultural duality theory, state culture theory, and resurgence theory). Islam's established scripts and ideas, as well as spiritual worship, are being renewed. Moreover, Islam is viewed as a common dialogue shaped by local sociopolitical realities (discursive theory). Furthermore, Muslim activists are united by their collective faith in Islam and opposition to secular dogmas, resulting in a powerful socio-dogmatic force (textual theory).<sup>1</sup>

### **5.1 DYNASTIC THEORY:**

The first theory of the grounds of the Islamic state and the stiffness between political and religious leadership (caliphate) was established by the medieval historian Ibn Khaldun (1333–1406). In his work, he developed a sociological account of the recurring growth and collapse of urban societies. Moreover, he argued that lack of social solidarity leads to gradual destruction of the society. Social solidarity was a significant piece of nomadic societies, and this empowered them to overcome and defeat urban civilization and develop a fresh dynasty on its ruins. Furthermore, he debated that the only mode to form a permanent state was to find an eternal alternative to social solidarity, which was not based on social solidarity but the religious power of the Shariah.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Khaldun's work is in favor of the differentiation between religious and secular leadership.<sup>3</sup>

### **5.2 CIVILIZATIONAL THEORY:**

The notion of a civilizational clash has been an influential metaphor in which to understand the Islamic resurgence and the Islamic Middle East as a predacious civilization intimidating the West.<sup>4</sup> This concept was also raised in the work of Samuel Huntington,<sup>5</sup> he suggests that clash between civilizations will be

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1 Mazen Hashem, "Contemporary Islamic Activism: The Shades of Praxis," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 1 (2006): 23.

2 Mansoor Moaddel, "The Study of Islamic Culture and Politics: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 359–86.

3 Josef Van Ess, "Political Ideas in Early Islamic Religious Thought," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 2 (2001): 151–64.

4 Akbar Ahmed, "Ibn Khaldun's Understanding of Civilizations and the Dilemmas of Islam and the West Today," *The Middle East Journal*, 2002, 20–45.

5 Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilization," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–49.

disastrous to world's peace.<sup>1</sup> Huntington's opinion has been demystified both on normative<sup>2</sup> and pragmatic ground.<sup>3</sup> In work of Salla, he maintains that 'essentialists'<sup>4</sup> give importance to the textual analysis of Islam, which they consider as a permanent and unchallengeable perception into the core of Islam and the Muslim world. Furthermore, they uphold that Islam is a monolithic danger to the West.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is important to discover means of nullifying this danger, particularly for the US, and this opinion is upheld by the western thinkers.<sup>6</sup> However, many scholars opposed to this view and state that the diversity of Islamic movements is being shaped through conditional aspects as 'contingents.' Western thinkers like John Esposito, Edward Said, and James Piscatori have supported a thoughtful approach, which states that Islam can play a great role in social development and Islam's diversity is more generous and more independent than it is often known.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.3 CRISIS THEORY:

Crisis theory ensures that the Islamic revival is a reaction to several forms of financial, political, and cultural crisis.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, this approach includes a various number of variables but does not tell how they can be interrelated. The idea can be interrogated on pragmatic grounds such as neither the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (the 1920s, 1930s), the growing Islamic activism in Irān in the 1960s, nor radical Islamism in Algeria, Jordan, and Syria in the 1960s and 1970s were times which were categorized by the thoughtful economic crisis. All these examples show that Islamic revival cannot be described as a widespread response to economic decline and the failure of modernization. Thus, the majority of the followers and leaders of the Islamic movements belonged to the middle class, declining the notion that fundamentalism was a result of general restlessness.<sup>9</sup>

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1 Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order," *New York: Simon & Schuster*, 1996, 30.

2 Michael E. Salla, "Political Islam and the West: A New Cold War or Convergence?," *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1997): 729–42.

3 Jonathan Fox, "Two Civilizations and Ethnic Conflict: Islam and the West," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 4 (2001): 459–72.

4 Such as Huntington, Daniel Pipes and Bernard Lewis

5 Knudsen, *Political Islam in the Middle East*, 10–11.

6 Maria Do Ceu Pinto, "Some US Concerns Regarding Islamist and Middle Eastern Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 3 (1999): 72–96.

7 Salla, "Political Islam and the West," 732.

8 Moaddel, "The Study of Islamic Culture and Politics," 371.

9 Valentine M Moghadam, "Rhetorics and Rights of Identity in Islamist Movements," *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993): 243.

#### 5.4 CULTURAL DUALITY THEORY:

This theory suggests a rigidity between the power of state and religious leadership and overcomes the deficiencies of crisis theory.<sup>1</sup> When the state wants to bind the power of the religious clergy and eliminate their rights, this results in the opposite reaction of political conflict. Furthermore, this theory pursues to enlighten the Irānian uprising (1977–79) due to the Shi'ite clergy who are independent in their decisions and who can challenge the writ of the state for wrong decisions. This theory shows rigidity between religion and regime, but it fails to clarify the application of political conflict articulated over revivalist Islamic movements.<sup>2</sup>

#### 5.5 STATE CULTURE THEORY:

This theory helps to clarify the Islamic revival, but the difference in this theory is that it adopts a different approach to modify the state strategies, religious discourse, efforts by the state to conquer the spiritual sphere, or to change the stability in authority.<sup>3</sup> On another side it intends to clarify the conflict between secularism and Islam. Furthermore, it also explains the non-philosophical nature of the rule used for the development of Islamic resistance in Jordan.<sup>4</sup> This movement for Islam in Jordan has been a power in autonomous development.<sup>5</sup> Despite the accomplishment of illustrative social equality in Jordan, women could not get the same status in other Arab countries.<sup>6</sup>

#### 5.6 RESURGENCE THEORY:

This theory takes into consideration both the aspects of crisis and state culture theory. However, it states that Islamic resurgence was in response to the collapse of modernization in the countries of the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, this concept is relevant to the case of Palestinians. Furthermore, Milton Edwards clarifies that it is better to link it with a chain of events after 1967, which was the result of the outcome of characters essential in the Palestinian predicament itself that aided as a substance for political Islam.

1 Moaddel, "The Study of Islamic Culture and Politics," 372.

2 S. V. R. Nasr, "Democracy and Islamic Revivalism," *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (1995): 264.

3 Noorhadi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad. Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia* (ISIM, Leiden / University of Utrecht, 2005), 31.

4 Robert W. Hefner, "Jordanian Exceptionalism: A Comparative Analysis of State-Religion Relationships in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Syria by Mansoor Moaddel," *American Journal of Sociology* 109, no. 3 (November 2003): 788.

5 Glenn E. Robinson, "Can Islamists Be Democrats? The Case of Jordan," *The Middle East Journal*, 1997, 373–87.

6 Fadia Faqir, "Engendering Democracy and Islam in the Arab World," *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (1997): 165–74.

7 Malika Zeghal, "Beverly Milton-Edwards, Islamic Politics in Palestine," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, I.B. Tauris publishers, no. 116 (2001): 136.

### 5.7 DISCURSIVE THEORY:

This theory intends to explain two practices that outline Muslim politics. The first is the objectification, which clarifies that Islam is no longer practiced but is being questioned by its adherents.<sup>1</sup> The second is the fragmentation, which implies that Ulama (clergy) are not just tested by a range of experts who are equally interested in gaining intellectual dominance of Islam.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, this approach was accepted because of the certainty that Islam was about human beings and not about spiritual doctrine.<sup>3</sup> However, Anthropologists focused on issues like tribalism,<sup>4</sup> feudalism<sup>5</sup> and honor rather than aiming to target Islam and its believers in the Middle East.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Anthropological accounts are certified by the significance of correct conduct rather than correct beliefs in Islam.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.8 TEXTUAL THEORY:

This theory focuses on finding an answer to the political Islamic growth and finding a solution through the Qur'ān and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). In addition, this approach not only considers the Islamic text in isolation but compares it with cultural tradition as well as other fictitious genres that can be found in the Arab world.<sup>8</sup>

## 6. CULTURAL DIMENSION OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT:

Islamic thought is influenced by different cultures, such as they are interlinked and depended on each other which has been discussed as following in detail:

- The influence of Arab culture on Islamic thought
- The influence of Western culture on Islamic thought
- The influence of Asian culture on Islamic thought
- The influence of African culture on Islamic thought

### 6.1 THE INFLUENCE OF ARAB CULTURE ON ISLAMIC THOUGHT:

A substantial sagacity of Arab individuality had developed in the nineteenth century as part of a fictitious revival in cities like Beirut and Damascus, often inspired by the works of Christian Arabs who sought a clearer national identity

1 James Piscatori, "The Turmoil Within: The Struggle for the Future of the Islamic World" (JSTOR, 2002), 149.

2 Dale F. Eickelman, "The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach," *Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall*, 2002, 2.

3 S. Fernando, *Mental Health Worldwide: Culture, Globalization and Development* (Springer, 2014), 29.

4 Bryan S. Turner, "Orientalism Postmodernism and Globalism," *Routledge*, 1994, 138.

5 Sevar Baban, "Roger Owen -State, Power and Politics in the Middle East," *Routledge*, n.d., 37.

6 Hastings Donnan, *Interpreting Islam* (Sage, 2002), 122.

7 Charles Lindholm, "Anthropologists on Islam," *Interpreting Islam*, 2002, 110–29.

8 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, vol. 5019 (Basic books, 1973), 87–129.

not defined solely by religion. However, it was not until the early twentieth century that Arab autonomist thoughts began to be clearly articulated.<sup>1</sup> The pioneer areas in that origination were modern Syria, Lebanon, Irāq, and Palestine in the Fertile Crescent. In addition, Arabic literary revival was also a part of the emergence of Egyptian nationalism, but a sense of belonging to a larger Arab world has opposed to inclusivity in the Islamic community that gradually developed in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> However, the Arab east was vigorously interacting in the intellectual domain, and there was a great exchange of ideas among scholars in Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Baghdad, and other centers. In this area, where Muslims were and are the dominant majority, the great issue were those of liberation and modernization. The special circumstance of the Lebanese and the Palestinians are in some way part of this experience and in other ways need to be viewed as a known dominant majority community. Further, there were a variety of options open to the Islamic community of the Arab East and local conditions shaped the choices and development within the framework of the continuing style of Islamic experience. Therefore, the dominant style was adaptation-ism, which took many forms, but the other styles played significant roles as well.<sup>3</sup>

## 6.2 THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN CULTURE ON ISLAMIC THOUGHT:

Islamic philosophy and faith developed during the 7th to 10th centuries and its great works were completed and had their influence in the West during the 11th to 13th centuries, paving the way for Revival which was influential in the creation of today's western civilization. Furthermore, in the perspective of contemporary Islamic renewal, this fact is established that the decline of Islamic dominance around the European colonial growth provoked two key schools of thought within Islam that continue to have significance today. The traditionalist school believed that the cause for the decline of Islam could be traced to 'moral negligence and departure from the true path of Islam.' As a result, their response was just for an Islamic revival. Others, known as reformers, felt that the decline was due to 'a long-lasting failure to modernize their societies and institutions.' Thus, the path of the reformers presents the question of whether it is possible to modernize without Westernizing. Therefore, this is a struggle over values 'how to protect a society's cultural tradition and traditional practices in an age of globalization and how to develop a creative concurrence between modernization

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1 James Reason, "Achieving a Safe Culture: Theory and Practice," *Work & Stress* 12, no. 3 (July 1998): 293.

2 David Lamb, "The Arabs Journey Beyond," *New York: Random House* 26 (1987): 24.

3 Abbas J. Ali, "Management Theory in a Transitional Society: The Arab's Experience," *International Studies of Management & Organization* 20, no. 3 (1990): 18.

and traditionalism without Westernization.<sup>1</sup> Although, an enormous discussion over the definition, perspective and classification of Islamic movements has been condensed by Western scholars, yet it looks evident that they are having comprehension in their thoughts. Positive or moderate Western philosophers dislike attributing coercion with the Muslims, while others take a stance that leads to the demand for the abolition of these movements through force.<sup>2</sup> Today, more than ever, it is critical to better understand Islam and Islamists (or Islamic groups) to isolate extremism while encouraging and supporting moderates and those who believe in positive coexistence and advancements.<sup>3</sup>

### **6.3 THE INFLUENCE OF ASIAN CULTURE ON ISLAMIC THOUGHT:**

In Asia, the Islamic resurgence is transforming the face of political Islam. The distinction is to be drawn between revivalists, who see religious reform as an end in itself, and political Islam, or Islamists, who see Islamic resurgence as a path to an objective of changing the state.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, significant distinction must be drawn between those who seek to achieve their goals through the political process and those who seek to achieve their goals through violence. The Islamic resurgence has a complicated relationship with Asia's level of prejudice. While Islam has been moderate in Southeast Asia, it is witnessing revivalist reform in some segments of society. The revival has been influenced in part by connections to the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Several South Asians who have returned from Islamic religious schools in the Middle East and Pakistan have brought with them a new, extreme, militant, Islamist, and extremist style of Islam that is more likely to be anti-American or anti-Western. The scope of the Islamic renaissance in Asia is debated, as well as the extent to which rising religious zeal would translate into radical stances or political power that may manifest itself in violent ways toward the West. Some believe that this event manifests itself more in terms of greater religiousness among individuals within a society rather than necessarily expressing itself politically.<sup>5</sup> Karen Armstrong, the author of 'Islam: A Short History,' feels that the war on terror should involve greater appreciation for Islam in the West since fear promotes radicalism.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the contrast between cultural or religious identity and

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1 Bruce Vaughn, "Islam in South and Southeast Asia," *Washington*, 2005, 8.

2 Bernard Ellis Lewis and Buntzie Ellis Churchill, *Islam: The Religion and the People* (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 156.

3 Muhammad Fraz, "Classification of Contemporary Islamic Movements: Analysis of Western View Point," 2012, 7.

4 Jillian Schwedler, "Islamic Identity," *SAIS Review (1989-2003)* 21, no. 2 (2001): 13.

5 Greg Fealy, "Understanding Political Islam in Southeast Asia," *Asia Society: A Summary*, 2003, 17.

6 "Understanding Islam," accessed March 22, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna3067495>.

political identity is crucial for some in this discussion. An Islamic revival shown through cultural or religious methods is not fundamentally a threat, even if some in the Islamic world would use it to further anti-American or anti-Western agenda.<sup>1</sup>

#### 6.4 THE INFLUENCE OF AFRICAN CULTURE ON ISLAMIC THOUGHT:

Islam is one of the main political and social forces in many parts of Africa, south as well as north of the Sahara. Although, the Muslim population in Africa is more widely distributed and irregular and although practically no state in this area regards itself as an Islamic State in the sense that states in North Africa and the Middle East do. In addition, Africa may still be looked upon as one of the major Islamic theatres of the world. Islam is indeed in terms of its distribution, an 'Afro-Asian religion' in the sense that the majority of Muslim nations and peoples are to be found either in Africa or Asia.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the Islamization of Africa has been a long, irregular and indeed difficult process that began around the seventh century of the Christian calendar with the Muslim conquest of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Islam entered Egypt in 640 AD and by the end of that century, had reached the Atlantic. It took centuries to associate its gains before it gradually turned to the south. Therefore, the process of Islamization in Africa continues to the present day.<sup>4</sup> Islam came to North Africa with the Arab conquest which began in the middle of the seventh century. Contrary to certain popular views, the conquest of North Africa was the work of decades, its true Islamization was the work of centuries. The latter might be said to have been irrevocably achieved only in the late Middle Ages, when the Sufi movement, enter the countryside in a way the urban-based custom had never done.<sup>5</sup>

## 7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article has analyzed various theories related to the contemporary understanding of Islam and Muslims that are discussed in various debates and discourses of contemporary Islamic thought. In addition, these theories are clarifying how different aspects of Islamic thought can be taken into contemporary scenarios.

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1 Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: Islam, the USA, and the Global War against Terror* (Orient Blackswan, 2005), 45.

2 Ali A. Mazrui, *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 94.

3 Indri Idris, *The Power of Identity The Information Age Economy, Society, and Culture Volume II* (Wiley Blackwell, 1997), 347.

4 William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13 (March 1987): 24.

5 Leon Carl Brown, "The Islamic Reformist Movement in North Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 2, no. 1 (1964): 56.

Further, these theories are also suggesting that some of the contemporary theories are based on co-existence, whereas other theories are still indicating radicalization, radical point of view, and radical understanding. Therefore, the study of Islamic thought must be continued, and it must be considered with contemporary realities. These contemporary realities can help Muslims in the process of resilience and that process of resilience will be helpful, not only to the contemporary revolution of Islamic civilization, but will also contribute to solving the problems that are faced by contemporary Muslim societies. Moreover, it describes that Islamic thought has been reformed with time in a cross-cultural context along with the cultural dimensions of Islamic thought, and the influence of different cultures on Islamic thought.