

ISLAM, WESTERNIZATION AND THE ROOTS OF MODERNISM IN MUSLIM LAND

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Abubakar Muhammad Kolo

abubakarmuhammadkolo99@gmail.com

Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Mohammed Goni College of Legal, Islamic and Education Studies, Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria

Tambari Abbas Bashar

tabbas.bashar@gmail.com

Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *This paper Islam, westernization and the roots of modernism in Muslim land is aim at providing the need insight and the causes of the negative effects of the western modernism among Muslims. The paper discussed the western and Islamic modernization and how both of the civilization contributed to the progress of humanity and how the western modernization has negatively affected the Muslim Ummah around the world. It was discovered that Muslim elites has contributed to the infiltration of the western world into Muslim land either due their quest for power in their various countries. It is also revealed that imitators of the western life styles by Muslims most especially those who have traveled to study in either Europe and America only returned to imitate and spread such tendencies in their societies. It was discovered that Islam follows the wind of change once it is not against the true teachings of Islam and moral values as of Islam. The researchers employed desk review method as a mode of data and information for this research where major literary work was utilised. The paper concluded that, Islam accepted any change that comes it way in as far as it does not go social, economic, political and moral system of Islam as taught in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).*

Keywords: *Westernization, Modernism, Effect, Islam, Muslim land*



A. Introduction

Islam is a universal religion compatible to any generation and location and has provided all the dynamic processes needed to practice both spiritual and mundane affairs for the/maintenance of peace, progress and development. Penetration of foreign cultures into the fold of Islam, moral decadence, dependency syndrome, disunity, acquisitiveness as well as carefree attitude to Islamic teachings, embellishments and of course ignorance paved way for all kinds of challenges, subjugation and calamities befallen on the Muslim people in the past and still remain epidemic and canker that upset and weaken the entire Muslim world.

The Western incursions in the modern age have taken the form of military invasion, political domination and the imposition of western legal order and educational institution. In Such an unprecedented historical experience, modernists aspired to prove that Islam was not contrary to modernity and progress and tried to furnish a theoretical basis on which change and authenticity would meet.¹

Despite the popularity of the modernization framework, it has received a fair amount of criticism, two of which require reiteration. A major flaw in the modernization framework is the claim that modern Western values and practices are the basis for modernizing traditional societies and assisting them to become self-sustaining. As Ali Mazrui pointed out, that modernization is a product of Western philosophy and hence could not escape a Western cultural bias. Traditional societies were characterized as exotic or different and also as reflecting lower stages of evolutionary advancement. The traditional societies must look to the Western model of modernity and pattern their society like the West in order to progress and become modern. This idea of development in the image of the West was frequently taken by American social scientists and decision makers to justify their intervention in the politics of developing areas. To be sure, modernization has given the poor an entitlement to progress but it has been used as an instrument for sometimes brutal forms of intervention.²

Essentially, the concept of modernity here is defined with transformation of time and social changes, driven by advancement in knowledge, human dynamism and the idea of progress. Evidently, change is a natural phenomenon that can be identified in different periods involving different civilizations, as time changes, so does human understanding of other things and ways of doing things based on their experiences. So, modernity is a dynamic phenomenon

¹ T.A. Khan, *Modernism in Islam*, Islamabad, International Islamic University, Islamabad, n.d.

² A.A. Mazrui, *From Social Darwinism to Current Theories of Modernization: A Tradition of Analysis*, *World Politics*, 21, 1968, 69-83.

that impacts personal and intimate lives of people from social, political, economic and religious institutions resulting from its time and space distinction.³

The topic of modernity has been raised and continues to attract interest in different parts of the Muslim and Western world, thus modernity as one of the most pervasive global phenomena, that affect humans all over the world is what draw the attention of this research to explore the impact of modernity on Muslims. Though modernity affects social, cultural and religious institutions there are still certain values that are consistent with the Islamic faith which many Muslims are willing to retain even in the face of modernity. Islam had become a significant factor that could not be detached from the social, political and educational life of the people and till today, Islam continues to play an important role in the structure the Muslim *Ummah*. Over the past few decades however, there have been indications of social changes among the people in the context of modernity and its challenges. In this regard, there should be a clarity to the question of relationship between Islam and modernity, whether Islam has been part of the social changes either by contributing, challenging or adapting to modern changes.⁴

B. Method

Methodological survey was utilized in conduct of this research. Basically, there are a variety of ways to collect data for literature survey-based research. However, the secondary data used for research is obtained through the secondary data methods. Finding and gathering of reference materials that are relevant to this research is the first of three processes the researchers adopted when putting this piece together. Secondly, desk review has been conducted, analysed and elaborated in order to fully understand the intersections of this essay. Thirdly, the researchers conclude the research giving a highlight and the outcome of the research for further study.

C. Result and Discussion

Islamic Modernism

Modernity is that which has created fundamental changes in behavior and belief about economics, politics, social organization, and intellectual discourse.”⁵ For the last three centuries, the notion of modernity has been a crucial component of various discourses, from

³ A. Zaidi, *Islam, Modernity and the Human Science*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

⁴ M. K. Masud, “Islamic Modernism”, in *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, edited by Muhammad Khalid Masud, et al, (pp. 237-260). Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2009.

⁵ Rippin, Andrew. *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2003.

politics and economy to religious issues, developed around intellectual milieu. Global modernity has a deep influence on Muslim community that, apart from the entrance of Greek Philosophy, coincided with Islam's Golden Age between the 8th and 12th centuries, to Islamic theology (*kalam*), Muslims have never experienced such a big challenge that produced a variety of responses from Muslim intellectuals in different parts of the world. It should be useful to look at political and sociological events which established grounds for the birth of Islamic modernism.

When Islam's expansion in Europe was stopped at the frontier of Vienna in 1648, and moreover Napoleon landed in Egypt at the end of the eighteenth-century, it was a strong indication of the impotence of the Islamic world in international politics and military matters. Some attempts were made in the areas of military and education by Muslim rulers and intellectuals to reclaim the past and close the gap between the West and Muslim World. For example, the Ottoman Sultan Salim III (r.1789-1807), introduced the *Nizam-i Cedid* (the New Organization) mainly in the military and administrative fields; it was followed by the *Tanzimat* of 1839-1876 which included economic, social and religious affairs.⁶ However, these efforts were not successful because they were superficial and not in a position to compete with the western counterparts. For example, instead of changing the classical curriculum in education, students were sent to the West or teachers were brought from there.

The West was full steam ahead with the French and Industrial revolutions so much so that Europeans had already begun to search markets for their industries and developing economies, and this situation led to colonialism around the world. Why did not Muslims catch the modernization train or why did they stay behind the developments of accumulative knowledge as a product of all humanity? Even in the pre-colonial era, European intervention had been felt amongst Muslim societies. By the eighteenth century, Muslims in different parts of the world managed to live as a community with their religious and social institutions by composing the Islamic civilization and having a number of different understandings as well as various implementations of Islam to social life. There was a representative of all Muslims: The Ottoman Empire. However, the empire had been experiencing splits and divisions in the military and social institutions, such as the Janissary institution. Not only the decline of the Ottoman Empire but also European intervention in diplomatic and commercial spheres had detrimental results for Islamic civilization.

⁶ Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Colonialism followed European intervention and as a result the majority of Muslim countries came under the direct influence of the West: The Dutch invaded Indonesia; the British established its rules in India and took the control of some parts of the Middle East and Africa; the French seized North Africa and western part of the Middle East; the Russians and Chinese absorbed inner Asia. The political and economic stagnation in the Islamic world and/or institutional inadequacy could be accepted as major reasons for why Muslims missed the modernization train. However, European colonization and its profound effect on Muslim societies disabled Muslims to engage with modern developments. Instead, they challenged colonization, independence, struggles among groups (religious or ideological) politically, economically, and so on. In fact, European colonialism has two stages: one is geographical imperialism; the other what is called “cultural imperialism,”⁷3 which becomes more important when the former has receded in the twentieth century. As Fazlur Rahman argued, the second kind of imperialism enters into Muslim lands via three channels:

1) Christian missionaries, 2) the modern thought of Europe, 3) and the study and criticism by Westerners of Islam and Islamic society itself. Of these three channels, the first was a professional attempt at descriptive criticism; while the last one was, intentionally or unintentionally, but in effect largely so.⁸

A similar challenge was seen in the history of Islam between the eighth and tenth centuries: Hellenistic thought entered into the lands of Islam, but Islam welcomed this different thought with no fear as the Islamic world was powerful politically. At the age of colonialism, the situation has proved that political power, undoubtedly, plays a pivotal role in meeting these kinds of intellectual, social, political, and cultural interactions. Western encroachment in the Muslim lands and its direct influence over the government rules as well as social institutions led to a challenge, ‘Islamic modernism’, which aimed to reform Islamic tradition and re-establish social institutions in order to meet the needs of modern society. What went wrong?

Why were Muslims defeated? And what had to be done? Muslim thinkers tried to answer these questions and sought effective solutions to existing problems. In the past, Muslims were triumphant, but the wheel began to roll toward the opposite direction. An important diagnosis to this stagnation comes from Fazlur Rahman, who put forward new methodologies in Islamic thinking:

⁷ Shepard, William. “The Diversity of Islamic Thought: Towards A Typology,” in Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M. Nafi (eds.), *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), pp.61-103.

⁸ Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Muslims have to face a situation of fundamental rethinking and reconstruction, their acute problem is precisely to determine how far to render the slate again and on what principles and by what methods, in order to create a new set of institutions.⁹

In a changing world with changing life conditions, the West managed to use the accumulative knowledge (i.e., positive sciences) developing it further; while the Islamic world had to borrow the products of the West and eventually became a consumer society dependent on the Western countries. “Fundamental rethinking and reconstruction” in the passage above are the keywords of Islamic modernism. The following quote briefly reflects the aims and objectives of that challenge: “Islamic modernism wants Islam to be the basis of political life as well as religious, but it perceives a need to reinterpret those structures in the light of contemporary needs, frequently with a clear and unapologetic adoption of Western notions.”¹⁰ In the past, a number of reform movements or attempts were made to update social institutions. These movements can be traced back into the post-Hellenistic age. For instance, al-Ghazali (d.505/1111) tried to systematize religious sciences in his well-known book *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, and Ibn Taymiyya (d.728/1328), who, with his reformist ideas, influenced pre-modern reform movements such as Wahhabism. In modernity, beginning from the early 19th century to date, the situation seems not so different from the past already discussed. What are the features of the modern age? What are the characteristics of Islamic modernism? And how and to what extent is Islamic Modernism distinguished from pre-modern reform movements?

Firstly, it can be said that previous attempts at reform were the result of internal reasons; however, in modern attempts they are more external than internal: The reign of stagnation in Islamic thought and art, the weakness of religious intelligentsia and institutions, the recession of scientific studies, and so on. In addition to these, the threat of European political domination over the Muslim lands made modern reformation necessary. Thus, the main challenge for activists is to re-form existing social institutions as well as establish new ones: “Islamic modernism pioneered the reformation of the educational institutions; agitation for liberalization and decolonization; and the establishment of a periodical press throughout the Islamic world.”¹¹

Secondly, modern values such as rationality, science, constitutionalism, and certain forms of human rights came to the fore with this modernism. Activists not only used Islamic discourse self-consciously, but also adopted above values as modern, at the same degree. This

⁹ Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

¹⁰ Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

¹¹ Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam 1840-1940: A Source Book*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

distinguishes Islamic modernism from previous reform movements in that they did not identify their values as modern.

Thirdly, the modernist Islamic faith includes controversies: Encompassing both mysticism and its abhorrence; strategic use of traditional scholarship and its rejection; return to a pristine early Islam and updating of early practices in keeping with historical change.¹²8 And finally, we will see later in this paper, modernists are distinguished from their successors in the twentieth-century: “secularists and revivalists,”⁹¹³ who respectively minimized the importance of Islam in the modern world, privileging nationalism, socialism, and who downplayed their modernity privileging authenticity and divine mandates although they advocated modern values. Rippin, Andrew. *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2003.

The First of Modernism

When we talk about modernism we must talk about development, this is because development is the first stage of modernism. Development in human settings is a diverse phenomenon at the level of the individual; it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. Some of these are virtually moral categories and are difficult to evaluate—depending as they do on the age in which one lives, one’s class origins, and one’s personal code of what is right and what is wrong. However, what is indisputable is the achievement of any of those aspects of personal development is very much tied in with the state of the society as a whole. From earliest times, man found it convenient to come together in groups to hunt and for sake of survival.¹⁴

Therefore, the conceptual ideas of both development and modernism are in common. Thus, as development is defined as the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger, etc. or the process of producing or creating something new or more advanced.¹⁵ In this regard therefore, development relates to several factors like history, education, etc: So to say, historic development; economic development; processes and many more. Islam presents a comprehensive view of personal growth and collective development, and emphasizes human resource development through lifelong learning. The Islamic view of

¹² Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam 1840-1940: A Source Book*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

¹³ Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam 1840-1940: A Source Book*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

¹⁴ W. Rodney, *How Europe undeveloped Africa*, Panaf Publishing, Abuja, 2009, p. 1.

¹⁵ J. Turnbull (ed.), *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 319.

Development is therefore explained in domains.¹⁶ So far development is regarded as the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger.¹⁷

In the 14th century, the North Africa Muslim political sociologist, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), made a distinction between *badawah*,¹⁸ and *Hadarah*,¹⁹ He stressed the inevitable transition from *badawah* to *Hadarawa* with the consequent transformation of society and human habit. This distinction is maintained in contemporary social and political discourse with varying terms and concepts including tradition and modernity. A good deal of research in the area of modernization dealt with identifying qualities, traits and characteristics assumed to belong to modern societies.²⁰

The Advent of Modernism

The Western concept of modernism was developed during the renaissance and enlightenment (the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries C.E) and became widespread beyond the borders of the West during nineteenth twentieth centuries C.E.²¹

When we consider a far back of Islamic history we come to understand and relate, ideologically, the modernist movement spreading these days, to one sect in the past. This sect is called the Mutazilah, which is dated back to the third Islamic century. Although those people accepted the Qur'an and Sunnah they made *ta'weel* (their own interpretation of the Qur'an) and said '*aql* (Intelligence) takes priority over *naql* (guidance of the Prophet). These ideas developed from the national principles of Greek philosophers. However, this school died out. The modernist movement did not evolve from them, but they are very similar to them.²²

The modernist movement actually originated in Europe in Europe (middle-ages). At the time when the scientific method came about in Spain, it was seen that what the church was teaching was not true. This led to a slow revolt. The basic view of modernism (in all religions) is that: the religion should change according to the circumstances, and that it is not fixed. There is no such thing like absolute truth. The Jewish and Christian modernist response in Europe tried to explain how the religion was still relevant for the people. They made innovations to

¹⁶ B. Mutai, 'Peace, Security, Human Rights and Development; Pyla Mak Services Ltd. Kaduna, 2010, p. 138.

¹⁷ A.S. Hornby, 'Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English'm Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 319.

¹⁸ Desert Nomadic life of simplicity.

¹⁹ The life of sedentary urban civilization.

²⁰ A, Moten, 'Modernity, Tradition and Modernity in Tradition in Muslim Societies, *Intellectual Discourse*', *IJUM Press*, 2011, p. 1.

²¹ D.E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1965, p. 11.

²² A.A. Moghaddam and A. Abd Rahman, "Three of Concepts: Modernism Postmodernism and Globalization", *Elixir International Journal of Social Science*, Vol 43, 2012, p. 6643.

keep people interested in the religion (such as signing in church, introduced only in the 1990's). They tried to say the divine and the human is mixed in the Bible and that the parts are true must be the ones that not out of date. Also, the religion is improving over time and there is no total truth in the Bible. This is the time in history when many Muslims were looking at Europe.²³ Modernism is an interest group tends to reconcile Islamic faith with modern ideals such as democracy, rights nationalism, rationality, science, equality and progress-emerged in the middle of the 19 century as a response to European colonialism, which pitched the Muslim world into crisis.²⁴ This led to three choices for those Muslims: accepts the west; reject the west or mix the two (reform Islam) those who followed the third (the modernist) developed in, and focused on: Turkey – because it was under British influence; and Egypt – because Al-Azhar was the seat of Islamic knowledge: The people of this modernist movement judge Islam according to their 'aql²⁵ Some of their faults in regards to this are:

1. Use it for things which it can't comprehend;
2. Refer everything to it: accept what agrees with it, reject what does not;
3. Judge the revelation by it.

However, *Ahl As-Sunnah wal Jama'a* believes that using the sound 'aql should lead one to the conclusion that the Qur'an and the Prophet are true and that their teaching should take precedence. Educational system must be guided by the divine text, to improve man's spiritually,²⁶ which is opposed to the views of the modernist, for them Islamic law must be carefully revised in order to be flexible and adaptable enough to incorporate modern political, economic, social and legal conditions. For example, in the South Asia, Sir Sayyid, tracing his intellectual heritage to Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehlvi (India, 1703-1762), an Islamic scholar and reformer who worked for the revival of Muslim rule and intellectual learning in South Asia, during a time of waning Muslim power), argued that the *Qur'anic* world view was entirely compatible with sciences and national thought. He categorically dismissed the beliefs that the "gates of *Ijthad*" were eternally sealed a millennium earlier and denounced the inhibiting force of *taqlid*. For him, *ijtihad* was not an exclusive right of a privileged few *Ulama*, but the right of all devout and enlightened believers to interpret the Qur'an in the context of

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ T. Ahmad Parray, 'Islamic Modernist and Reformist Thought: A Study of the Contribution of Sir Sayyid and Muhammad Iqbal', Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aligarh, (UP), India, 2011, p. 79.

²⁵ A.A. Moghaddam and A. Abd Rahman, "Three of Concepts: Modernism Postmodernism and Globalization", *Op. Cit.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

the prevailing environment. Through his writings and institution building, he struggled to meet the challenges of modernity by appropriating Western education and ideology.²⁷

By the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a large part of the Muslim world had begun to lose much of its cultural and political sovereignty to Christian occupiers from Europe. This came as a result of European trade missions during earlier centuries that had propagated Western technology and modernization. There was a large shifts of power due to the declining Ottoman Empire, which led to an essential subordination of Muslims because of Western technology and modernization. This subjugation by Christian empires led Muslims of the Middle East to question their own beliefs as well as their aspirations, making many wonder whether the success of western occupation was due to the inferiority of their own Islamic ideals. Out of these self-criticism came an assortment of responses, including adaptation of Western ideals, advocating for separation of religion and politics, complete rejection, and calls for armed struggled against Western powers.²⁸

Some of the imitators have even been declared to be outside the pale of Islam. In the first place, the traditionalist' rejection of modernization stemmed from the colonialists' insistence on using English as the official language in the colony, and prescribing Western dress code and cuisine. Even the nationalist, westernized elites were unhappy with the colonial imposition of their language on the natives. Hence, in the post-colonial era, the elites attempted to replace the imperial language with indigenous language. Thus, for instance, Arabic replaced French in North Africa and Urdu supplanted English in Pakistan. The initial traditionalist' hatred of the west gradually extended to everything including science and technology, industrialization, urbanization, and diverse occupational structures. Most of the efforts of the traditionalists have been spent in denouncing modernity which is characterized as an insidious form of worldliness denying God and the hereafter. They perceived secularism as atheistic, negative and alien and considered rationalism and individualism as threatening the faith of the Muslim. Hence, they denounced modernity, on the one hand, and took refuge within the confines of the mosque, on the other. They established religious institutions where they studied and taught religious texts using classical Arabic as the medium of instruction. They refused to rely upon a national and analytical approach (*ijtihad*) to seek solutions to problems confronting the Muslims on the basis

²⁷ T. Ahmad Parray, 'Islamic Modernist and Reformist Thought: A Study of the Contribution of Sir Sayyid and Muhammad Iqbal', *Op. Cit.*

²⁸ A. Moten, 'Modernity, Tradition and Modernity in Tradition in Muslim Societies Intellectual Discourse', *Op. Cit.*, 3.

of evidence (*dalil*) found in the canonical sources of Islam arguing that the door of *ijtihad* was closed.²⁹

However, one of the major responses to western modernization and occupation of the Muslim world was Islamic modernism which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present.³⁰ It includes material objects, beliefs, images, practices and institutions. It is the idea that has been and is being handed down or transmitted. It is something which was created, performed or believed in the past, or which is believed to have existed or to have been performed in the past.³¹

Modernity by the Muslims: The Imitators

In contrast, the term modern refers to the era that began politically with the French Revolution and economically with the British Industrial Revolution. This has led many social scientists to identify modernity with the West and to refer to modernization as Westernization.³² Despite the popularity of the modernization framework, it has received a fair amount of criticism, two of which require reiteration.

Some Muslims view modernism as the basis for modernizing traditional societies and assisting them to become self-sustaining. Therefore, the modernization thesis is a product of western philosophy and hence could not escape a western cultural bias.³³ The Islamic modernists of course did not view themselves as agents of change and adaptation of Islam to the requirements of modern time. They presented themselves as sincere Muslims striving to revive the spirit of original Islam unblemished by centuries of “non-Islamic” elements. For them, Islam was the right ideological framework and guideline for the life of Muslims at any time. Unlike the co-Modernists who perused classical Islamic terms like *Islaah* (reform), *tajdid* (reconstruction), or *ihyaa* (revival). These terms were used to return to Qur’an and sunna (Islamic tradition), and reinterpret them.³⁴

The traditional societies must look to the Western model of modernity and pattern their society like the West in order to progress and become modern. This idea of development in the image of the west was frequently taken by American social scientists and policy-makers to

²⁹ *Ibid*, 6.

³⁰ J.L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 126-127.

³¹ A. Moten, *Modernity, tradition and Modernity in Tradition in Muslim Societies Intellectual Discourse*, *Op. Cit*, p. 11.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ A. Moten, *Modernity, tradition and Modernity in Tradition in Muslim Societies Intellectual Discourse*, *Op. Cit*, p. 43.

³⁴ J. Kondrys, ‘Islamic Modernism: A Legitimate Part of a Historical Tradition of Islamic Thought’, *West Bohemian Historical Review* VII, 2017, p. 51.

justify their intervention in the politics of developing areas. To be sure, modernization has given the poor an entitlement to progress but it has been used as an instrument for sometimes brutal forms of intervention.³⁵

The Muslim world especially the Middle East has been encountering with modernity since the 19th century. Muslim encounter with the west as the source of modernity has its roots, among others, in colonial enterprise, in Muslim students' immigration to the West for the acquisition of modern knowledge, in wider and more effective means of communication, and faster and better means of transportation. The westernized Muslim political elites' eager to develop their backward countries adopted what Abu Sulayman calls "the imitative foreign solution" by which, he meant attempt at solving problems besetting the country as a result of the following cultural (secular and materialist) experience of the contemporary West.³⁶ Ironically, it was the existence of Westerners in the Middle East that triggered the will to change in the region. The Western.

Presence in the Middle East started for economic reasons as a consequence of industrialization and the need for natural resources, and led to Western cultural and political domination in the region.³⁷ Therefore, exploring modernity and its intellectual trends in the middle East is a very appropriate endeavor, as 'Middle East Itself is a modern' term which has only become common since the early twentieth century.³⁸

The fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1922 and its partitioning into turkey and the new Arab countries was a key moment in the evolution of the region known as the Middle East. The emergence of new nation-state and their encounter with the modern West led to other influential political and culture events, which in turn contributed to the experience of modernity and modernism.³⁹ These experiences differ from country to country; however, we can give a brief account of modernity and modernism in this region by breaking it down into the Arab-speaking world, including Egypt, Iraq, Bilad Al-Sham (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine) and Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya) on one hand; and Iran and Turkey on the other.⁴⁰

³⁵ M.K. Hassan, *The Muslim Intelligentsia's Aspiration for an Islamic University*. In S.A. Idid (Ed.), *IJUM at 25: The Path Travelled and the Way Forward*, Kuala Lumpur. International Islamic University, Malaysia, 2009, pp. 9-35.

³⁶ A.A. Abu Sulayman, *The crisis of the Muslim mind*, Herndon, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993.

³⁷ <https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/overview/accommodating-guest>, 18/8/2022.

³⁸ A. Moten, *Modernity, tradition and Modernity in Tradition in Muslim Societies Intellectual Discourse*, *Op. Cit*, p. 45.

³⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

1. Modernism in the Middle East correspond to three main intellectual currents in which a will to change was manifested among thinkers, activities, and artists. The first movements toward reform started in the nineteenth century and culminated with the introduction of constitutions and parliaments into the Persian,
2. Arab, and Ottoman Monarchies; the second currents of modernism were concerned with what can be called 'nativism'. This period saw Middle Eastern intellectuals looking for native sources of progress and success, as opposed to the first period, which was characterized by a fascination with the west.
3. In the third intellectual current a strong desire for development open the way for more moderate values, causing fundamental moves in the political sphere. In this period, academics try to examine their societies with the modern critical tools they have borrowed from western disciplines. While aesthetic modernism flourished in these three periods, the intellectual experience of modernity has faced problems, facing modernity at a time of decline, the rapid rhythm of the events in the last 100 years, and the colonial presence of the west have complicated the politically unstable Middle East, Making the transition into modernity a rough path.

The Impact of Modernity in the Muslims Land

The first period is characterized by constitutionalism, literary experimentation, and a call to transform traditional ways of thinking and living. The first attempts made by Middle Eastern thinkers activities, and artists to bring about change that were made in the mid to late nineteenth century. During this time, Arab, Ottoman, and Persian intellectuals began attending to the outside world, visiting Europe, translating Western literature, and learning about Western scientific and technological advancements. Many started to ask about the reasons behind the west's success and their own countries' underdevelopment. This is a period of constitutionalism when intellectuals in Egypt, Persia, and Ottoman Empire in Turkey, Captivated the Western values of democracy and enlightenment, tried to modernize their societies by promoting development, progress, and liberal values, Constitutionalism in Persia, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire was a turning-point leading to the diverse aspects of modernization in the following decades Liberal landowners and merchants, military commanders, European-educated intellectuals, journalists, literary figures, and proletarian activists all helped introduce constitutionalism into Middle Eastern monarchies, although later on they split into separate groups with their own goals and plants.⁴¹

⁴¹ <https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/overview/accommodating-guest>, 18/8/2022.

Meanwhile, the west was present in the Middle east through ambassadors, missionaries, travelers and, more prominently, European colonial project. Direct contact with Western modernity encouraged some Middle Eastern leaders to adopt socio-political structures. Middle Eastern intellectuals tried to revolutionize their own cultural, social, and political situation. Learning about the new sciences and reforming political structures became significant. During this period old Ottoman Empire experienced some structural and conceptual change through a series of reforms called *Tanzimaat* (1839) that led to the First Constitutional Era (1867). Influential in these changes were literary figures and intellectuals-most notably secret

Society called the Young Ottomans (established in 1865) who were familiar with European thought and saw the old concepts and structures both in politics and the arts as insufficient for the needs of the modern world. Around the same time. Persian intellectuals like Mirza Malkam Khan and Fathali Akhundzadeh became outspoken critics of monarchy. In Egypt, while scholars like Abd-al Rahman al-Jabarti and Rifa'a al-Tahtawi laid the intellectual foundations of the Arab renaissance, Mohammed Ali Pasha started a series of economic and cultural reforms partly due to his relationship with the west and partly under the influence of the landowners, politicians, and intellectuals who aimed at limiting his power. Ali and his successor wanted establish a modern state according to the European model and to do so, Egyptian military, bureaucracy, culture, society, and politics had to be modernized. In the early ninetieth century, Ali sent the first cohort Egyptian students to Europe, a decision almost simultaneously taken in Iran.⁴²

D. Conclusion

Modernism in religion is any movement in the religion based on the belief that scientific and cultural progress requires a reinterpretation of the traditional teachings of the religion in the light of modern philosophies in knowledge. So in essence, what it means is that as science progresses then we have to go back to religion and reinterpret all of those teaching s in the light of what is now known as modern science. However, we are not only talking about science here. Maybe, if we had stuck to the original or actual physical science it may have not been as harmful, but as indicated before, we are going beyond what human mind can ever think and conclude be it true or false. For example, issues about women: nowadays people are argued that women don't have to wear hijab, or they should be free mix with men, or they should be

⁴² *Ibid.*

able to work and so forth. None of this is based on what you can call the science. And to go to the Qur'an to go to the Hadith and reinterpret in the light of what women are now doing in the 20th century. However, unfortunately, this is basically what these people believe in and this is how they approach the Qur'an and Sunnah of Prophet. And when we think about all these modernist ideologies, whether they are Christian or Jewish or Muslim whatever their source might be, they all reject the idea and notion that there are some transcendental truths and values that are true for all time.

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