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| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Islam and the Notion Modernity

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| **ABSTRACT**

Most Muslim countries and Muslim scholars continue to dispute Islam and modernity, even if contemporary Western scholars have begun to address post-modernity. The main issue is how to deal with modernity and whether or not modernity and Islam could be related. It appears that Muslim Reformists and Muslim Revivalists have somewhat diverse perspectives on the matter. This essay aims to examine Muslim reformists' points of view regarding Islam and modernity's compatibility.

1. Introduction

Western civilisation is a process where people are currently heading for leadership, inspiration, and development. Muslim societies must thus grapple with the challenge of assimilating into this civilisation without losing control of their Islamic principles. In Muslim nations, the conflict between Islam and modernity is still present. These days, the words "modern," "modernity," and "modernisation" are frequently observed in the media as well as in several political and social conversations. These concepts seem to be interrelated and revolve around the idea of change from the ancient to the present. Nonetheless, the notion of modernity has always been ambiguous and has many different definitions and interpretations. It is a complicated, multifaceted reality rather than an apparent, unified, coherent phenomenon. There are numerous schools of thought moving in different ways about it. So, this chapter aims to answer the critical query: Is there any form of compatibility between Islam and modernity, the civilisation of the Western world?

2. Religion and the Notion of Modernity

According to its etymology, "modern" comes from the Latin word "modernus," which means new, latest, recent, or just now. The term modernity, which derives from the word modern, is generally used to refer to the social, cultural, and intellectual state that aids in resolving the uniqueness of Western culture. In contrast to earlier epochs or more primitive existing civilisations, the concept of modernity is most frequently used to describe the state of the current world. It is commonly used to replace concepts like capitalism, industrialisation, rationalisation, and secularisation. The word "modern" was first used in Western history around the years 490–500, indicating the transition from the old Roman period to the new Roman period. Modernity typically refers to a shift in culture from the traditional to the contemporary. It has always been connected to the sweeping changes in a particular society. It inherently implies a comparison between times: past and present. Therefore, originality, advancement, and innovation are what is meant by modernity in this context. Thus, according to Heller (1999), everything in modernity is accessible to testing and questioning since novelty and a better future are the focus of modernity. Everything is a target to be studied to advance; everything

is evaluated if supported by logical and empirical grounds. Accordingly, modernity is always perceived as an ongoing attempt to promote society and enhance people's lives.[1]

As mentioned above, it seems that change, development, and improvement are the main goals of modernity. It is a large-scale undertaking centred on the basic idea that today must always be better than the future. The Swedish social theorist Göran Therborn (1995) claims, in his definition, that Modernity is regularly associated "with words like progress, advance, development, emancipation, liberation, growth, accumulation, enlightenment, embitterment, [and] avant-garde" (p. 4).[2] According to another point of view, Wagner (2008) thinks that until recently, "modernity was associated with the open horizon of the future, with unending progress towards a better human condition brought about by a radically novel and unique institutional arrangement" (Peter Wagner, 2008, P. 85).[3]

However, the middle of the eighteenth century is typically considered the beginning of "modernity." It resulted from industrial and technological expansiveness, enlightened humanism, and the emergence of political, economic, and social changes. It also depicts the transformation of Western society and culture, which was the product of bloody revolutions and brilliant ideas. To some, modernity is thought to have originated from the American Revolution (1763 – 1789) and the French Revolution (1789 – 1799). The revolts throughout these times explicitly proclaimed the individual's rights, emancipation, liberation, individualism, and rationalism. As a result, the concept of modernity was taken as a project of enlightenment in North America and Europe, emphasising rationality, regularity, the effectiveness of the state, control, and trust in progress.

On the other hand, many experts see the notion of modernity as a revolt against traditions and authority of all kinds, particularly religious ones. Because the concept of modernity owes its origins to the rise of science as an intellectual and social force, the existence of religion seems to be ignored and marginalised. Therefore, in modernity, the divine revelation and religious authority as the interpreter of God have been lost in many Western societies. Human life no longer relies on the intervention and action of God alone, but it instead leans primarily on science and rationality. Modernity has, therefore, come to replace all the patterns of thinking that are irrational and unscientific with more rational and scientific ones. Therefore, in the essence of modernity, humans have become independent from religious doctrines and authorities; humans have become the centre and not God the centre. A modern society, based on the scientific method, industry, and technological advance, has created new principles and rules that bind all, secular morality and a rational system that substitute for religious principles. In many contemporary societies in developed countries today (mainly in Europe, North America, and Japan), religious authorities are no longer able to impose religious morality and social control on matters like abortion, sexual orientation, the requirement of marriage before the birth of a child, and so on.[4]

3. The Notion of Modernity and the Religion of Islam

Many Muslim reformists believe that there are some areas where modernity and Islam converge. Some Muslim scholars, including Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Abd El-Razzak El-Sanhuri, Syed Ahmad Khan, Ali Abdel Raziq, and others, believe in the idea that Islam is compatible with modernity and with many Western cultural and social values. Most of them point out that Islam does not contradict the issues of democracy, civil rights, gender equality, rationality, social justice, human rights, freedom of thought and expression, good education, and development of science and technology. Some even go further than that, arguing that Muslim societies ought to emulate and adopt these values because they do not conflict with their faith. Tariq Ramadan is one of these modernists who strongly believe in this view. In his book, *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity* (2000), Ramadan says:

> *"Nothing in Islam is opposed to modernity, and we can firmly state that the Muslim thinkers and 'ulama' (savants) who are opposed to this notion and to the idea of change and evolution that it covers often confuse it with the model which is current in the West». They confuse modernity with Westernisation. Thus, they justify an attitude versed in traditionalism and forms which are sometimes somber and rigoristic and which present Islam as opposed, by essence, to any social or scientific progress. Hiding behind the "drifts of the West," they deduce that faithfulness to the Message is achieved by an "absolute" and definitive interpretation of the sources."* (P.307) [5]

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[1] Heller, Agnes. (1999). *A Theory of Modernity. Massachusetts*: Blackwell Publisher. P. 118

[2] Therborn, Göran (1995). *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945-2000.* P. 4.

[3] Wagner, Peter (2008). *Modernity as experience and interpretation.* Cambridge: Polity. P. 85

[4] Reinhard Bendix, (1967) "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered, Comparative Studies in Society and History". Vol, pp. 292-346 (55 pages) Published By: Cambridge University Press

[5] Ramadan, T. (2000). *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity: Which Project for Which Modernity?* Leicester, U.K.: Islamic Foundation. P.307

Tariq Ramadan has called for a new reinterpretation of the Quran and the Sunna in the modern context to respond to Muslims' needs of the time and place. For him, Islam has a universal message, and therefore, it fits every area at any time and, consequently, never contradicts the values of modernity. On the other hand, Ramadan frequently accuses some scholars' interpretations of being outdated, as they oppose the core values of modernity. He maintains that Muslims today should not rely on textual scholars because, in his view, they are constrained by the text's literal interpretation and fail to address many modern challenges and issues, such as those relating to social sciences, education, women's rights, the economy, philosophy, and politics.

However, some Muslim reformist scholars who support the idea that modernity and Islam may coexist only concentrate on a few social issues and institutions that, in their opinion, characterise contemporary Western countries. Regarding the issue of politics, Ali Abdel Raziq claims that Islam has never opposed democracy and democratic institutions and values. He argues that the religion of Islam is a religion and a message of God and not a government or a state. He goes on to point out that the message of Islam has never addressed the issue of governance and politics in the beginning. Still, it was primarily related to simple Islamic teachings and fundamental religious and spiritual matters. Even though Abdel Raziq admits that the Prophet Mohammed had some sort of command over his followers because "the message in itself obliges [him] to have some kind of leadership and authority over his people," he states that this "is nothing like the leadership of kings and the authority they have over their subjects." Therefore, The Prophet's leadership should not be contrasted with the presidency or kingly leadership that are found in many different political systems because:

> *"The Messenger's trusteeship over his people is a spiritual trusteeship whose origin is faith from the heart, and the heart's true submission followed by the submission of the body. On the other hand, the trusteeship of the ruler is a material one. It depends on subduing bodies without any connection to the heart. While the former is a trusteeship leading to God, the latter is one for managing life's concerns and populating the earth. While the former is religion, the latter is the world. The former is divine; the latter is human. The former is a religious leadership, the latter a political one – and there is much distance between politics and religion."* (Abdel Raziq, p.30)[6]

In addition, Ali Abdel Raziq maintains that Islam is a message and a religion from Allah, just like any other religion. On this basis, Islam should not be construed as a political system. From his point of view, politics is a matter that should be handled by people who are "free to manage it in the manner that their minds, knowledge, interests, desires, and tendencies would guide them." (Abdel Raziq, p.35). This implies that Muslims are free to select any form of government that works for them and serves their interests, including democracy, which, in Abdel Raziq's opinion, is compatible with the core principles of Islam.

On the other hand, some Muslim academics have also made the case that Muslims must embrace democracy as a system for ruling their nations and societies. They firmly believe that most democratic principles and values do not affect the tenets or fundamentals of Islam. Some scholars even go further than that and say that the concept of "Shura"[7] is compatible with democracy because they think they have many principles in common. Both of them are premised on the ideas of popular will or widespread consultation.

Muhammed Khalaf, for example, asserts that the idea of a "Shura" and democracy may coexist. He makes the following conclusions after making a comparison between the Islamic notion of "Shura" and the legislative arm of Western countries and democracy:

> 1- **On the issue of law:** *"They [the Europeans] say that the umma is the source of laws. We [Muslims] say the same thing with regard to matters for which there is no Qur'anic reference or mention in the sunna, as the Imam [Fakhr al-Din] al-Razi has stated. And very few things have such references [in the Qur'an]*
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> 2- **On the issue of representation and election:** *"They [the Europeans] say there must be those who would represent the people so that what they decide would be as if the people had*

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[6] Ali , Abdel Raziq, (1888-1966) "Message not government, religion not state", in Liberal Islam: a sourcebook, Charles Kurzman, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press 1998)

[7] **Shura** (شُورَى) is an Arabic word that literally means consultation and, in its simplest form, as an Islamic principle, calls upon Muslims to gather and, through articulate debate and sound reason, form productive opinions and strategies of implementation to be presented to the Khalifa.There is clear mention of Shura in the Holy Quran, which, amongst other definitions, outlines it as a method by which consensus can be achieved, thus preventing ideological deadlocks that may ultimately lead societies toward disunity:"And those, who hearken to their Lord, and observe Prayer, and whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation, and who spend out of what We have provided for them." (The Holy Quran, Ch.42: V.39) https://www.alhakam.org/the-islamic-institution-of-shura-mutual-consultation/

decided it. We, too, say the same thing. They say that this is known as elections and that they have different ways of organizing them. We have not been limited by the bounteous Qur'an to a specific way. We have the right to follow in every age how we feel will achieve what is intended. [God] called those who represent the people "those in authority," which means those who are distinguished among the people, to whom people's interests are referred, whom the people feel safe in following. They may be confined to the center of government at times, as they were at the beginning of Islam.

3- **On the issue of obedience and change of government:** *"They [the Europeans] say that if [the representatives] agree, the government must execute that which they agree upon. And the people must obey. They have right to bring down the ruler if he does not execute their law. And we say the same thing. This is the real consensus which we consider to be one of the fundamentals of our law."*

4- **On the issue of the majority:** *"They [the Europeans] say that if they disagree, the opinion of the majority should be followed. We know that the Prophet acceded to the majority's opinion, even if it was incorrect, as occurred during the battle of Uhud. And this position on his part, peace be upon him, trained us. The majority's opinion is not the correct one – but it is the one on which people with real interests agree."* (Muhammed Khalaf, p.35-45)[8]

As a result, Muhammed Khalaf is fully convinced that democracy exists in the essence of Islam and goes perfectly in line with its principles and values. Sadek J. Sulaiman, of course, supports this claim by saying, "as a concept and as a principle, "Shura" in Islam does not differ from democracy. Both "Shura" and democracy arise from the central consideration that collective deliberation is more likely to lead to a fair and sound result for the social good than individual preference. Both the concepts also assume that majority judgment tends to be more comprehensive and accurate than minority judgment." (Sadek J. Sulaiman, 1998. P. 42)[9]

On the other hand, many Muslim states need to seriously explore the concerns of social justice and human rights, which are seen as crucial components of democracy. The majority of Muslim nations appear to have several laws and customs that limit people's rights, contravene the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, therefore, go against the fundamental tenets of democracy and modernity. The following are some instances of these laws and traditions in this context:

1) It is against Islamic law for Muslim women to wed a non-Muslim man they love.
2) Women were not permitted to operate motor vehicles in Saudi Arabia until recently.
3) In Iran, women are required by law to cover their heads.
4) In Syria, the prospective husband and the bride's father sign the marriage contract.
5) A Muslim cannot inherit a non-Muslim, and the opposite is true.
6) A woman is only given half of the man's share in Islamic law regarding women's inheritance rights.
7) It is forbidden for a Muslim to convert from Islam to another faith, such as Judaism or Christianity.
8) Even though slavery has been outlawed in Muslim cultures, the "Sharia" continues to acknowledge it.

These are only a few instances that highlight the lack of social justice and respect for human rights in many Islamic countries, but there are countless others. Muslim reformers contend that these laws and customs are no longer valid and applicable in the contemporary world. They continually urge Muslims to use the "Ijtihad" tool to deal with this issue, modify these rules, and alter these customs. It has been pointed out by Abdullahi Ahmed Naim that the "discrimination on the grounds of religion and gender under shari'a ... violates established universal human rights." He believes that such discrimination is behind a lot of conflicts and wars. For this reason, Naim sees that "discrimination on the grounds of either gender or religion is morally repugnant and politically untenable today." [10] (P. 332)

Abdullahi Ahmed Naim claims in his statement on the subject of slavery in Islam that.

> *"In continuing to recognise slavery as a lawful institution, even if only in theory, shari'a is in complete violation of the most fundamental and universal human right. It is very significant that slavery was abolished in the Muslim world through secular law and not*

[8] Khalaf-Allah, Muhammad, (1998) "Legislative authority," in Liberal Islam: a sourcebook, Charles Kurzman, ed.; Sadek J. Sulaiman, "Democracy and Shura" in Liberal Islam: a sourcebook, Charles Kurzman, ed.

[9] Sadek J. Sulaiman (1998), *"Democracy and Shura"*, Ed. Charles Kurzman (New York: Oxford University Press) P.42.

[10] An-Na'im, Abdullahi Ahmed (1987) "Islamic Law, International Relations, and Human Rights: Challenge and Response," Cornell International Law Journal, Vol. 20, No. 2, Article 3. P. 332

> *shari'a and that shari'a does not object to the reinstitution of slavery under its conditions*
> *regarding the source of enslaved people and conditions for their treatment."[11]* (P.177)

Therefore, many Muslim reformists and human rights activists yearn for the freedom of thought and expression compared to that which prevails in contemporary Western society when it comes to this topic. They fiercely defend the public's freedom to express oneself freely, to think freely, and to do so without interference or fear of retaliation. They contend that one of the essential liberties guaranteed by the United Nations Charter's Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the freedom of opinion and speech. Because most Muslim countries have ratified the Charter, they are obligated to uphold and defend these rights. They also view freedom of speech and thinking as one of the fundamental tenets of democracy. Since they feel that the ideals of democracy will better protect people's rights, many Muslim intellectuals are adamant about instituting a democratic political system in Muslim cultures. They maintain that because democracy is compatible with Islam's Shura principle, it will safeguard the rights of Muslims (male and female) and non-Muslims under one common law and equitable judicial system.[12]

The topic of women's rights in Muslim nations is another contentious social issue that is still often discussed and has sparked many acrimonious arguments among Muslim thinkers. Muslim women continue to experience gender discrimination and are still constrained by the idea that they are different or the weaker sex compared to their male counterparts. In contrast, women in most Western modern societies are granted the right to work and compete with men in all spheres of life, enjoy equal rights to participation in sports and recreational activities, and enjoy equal status and exercise equal rights in political and public affairs. Due to this, many Muslim women and reformist academics are now speaking out against how Muslim males treat women, particularly in Muslim-majority countries. According to Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons:

> *"When women are going on space missions and walking on the moon, flying F-16s, performing heart transplants, and so on and so on, can we continue talking and preaching about woman being created from a rib and that this has determined that she is too emotional and mentally fragile to work outside the home or to pursue a meaningful career? The facts on the ground dispute these contentions resolutely. We must let these myths go. We must bring the best of Islam into the twenty-first century and stop dragging those antiwoman perspectives and interpretations of medieval men into our masjids, our classrooms, our homes, and our hearts."[13]*(P. 242)

Other academics, such as Zoharah Simmons, uphold their Muslim faith and decide to fight for women's rights in their respective Muslim societies. Through their rereading and reinterpretation of the Quran and the Hadith in modern times, they conclude that Muslim women are not discriminated against in the holy book; instead, the patriarchal interpretation of the sacred book by Muslim men should be criticized for the blatant discrimination against women. Benazir Bhutto speaks against the patriarchal understanding of the message of Islam and says:

> *"It is not religion which makes the difference. The difference comes from man-made law. It comes from the fact that soon after the Prophet died, it was not the Islam of the Prophet (s.a.w.) that remained in place. What took place was the emergence or the re-assertiveness of the patriarchal society, and the religion was taken over to justify the norms of the tribal society, rather than the point that the Prophet (s.a.w.) had made in replacing the tribal society with a religion that aimed to cut across narrow loyalties and sought to create a new community, or umma, on the basis of Islam and the message of God."* (Benazir Bhutto, 1998. P. 109)[14]

The same opinion is held by a large number of Muslim academics and activists, like Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud, and others. As a result, they reject the strict patriarchal interpretation of the sacred text that deprives Muslim women of pursuing a wide range of

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[11] An-Na'im, Abdullahi Ahmed (1990), *Toward an Islamic Reformation. Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law.* Syracuse University Press. P. 177.

[12] https://www.bostonreview.net/forum/khaled-abou-el-fadl-islam-and-challenge-democracy/ (Consulted online on 7 December 2018)

[13] Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, (2003) "Are we up to the challenge? The need for a radical re-ordering of the Islamic discourse on women" in Progressive Muslims: on justice, gender, and pluralism P. 242.

[14] Bhutto, Benazir. 1998. "Politics and the Muslim woman," in Liberal Islam, Charles Kurzman (Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 107.

activities. They uphold Muslim women's rights to engage in society fully, live in peace and without discrimination, have access to the best possible physical and mental health education, own property, vote, and be paid equally.[15]

As far as education is concerned, Muslims who support educational reform believe that doing so will help them catch up with contemporary Western civilisations. Some academics advise Muslims to consider a new educational system that addresses the issues of globalisation, ongoing world changes, and industrial and technological advancements, as well as to fit their present time, rather than recycling and glorifying their past legacy and accomplishments. On the other hand, Western modern societies' educational system is advocated for full adoption by other reformists because they believe it has produced significant success, particularly in philosophy and science. This success, in their view, has resulted in high living standards, peace, security, unity, good governance and the rule of law, a well-educated and learning society, and a strong and competitive economy.

Accordingly, Muslim reformers claim that the only way for Muslims to advance is to adopt the contemporary Western system of education and knowledge, and they insist "on the idea of independent, innovative thinking as an important element in dealing with socio-economic problems because the Qur'an encourages... man to think, to reflect, to use his reason, and to exploit nature for beneficial human ends."[16] (Babeair, Abdulwahab Saleh, 1991. P.198)

Following the same line of thinking, the pursuit of knowledge and science, according to Muslim reformists, never contradicts Islam; instead, Islam as a religion exhorts followers to read, learn, think about the creation of the universe, and use their reason to seek the truth. Therefore, in their opinion, Islam and modernity are similar in knowledge and education. Consequently, Muslim reformists contend that since contemporary Western civilisations have made significant strides in various sectors through "independent" and "creative" thought, Muslims should choose the same path to develop their societies. In this context, some Muslim scholars, such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, call for the reinterpretation of the Quran in light of the modern sciences and discoveries. He states,

> *"...truth cannot contradict truth; therefore, there cannot be any discrepancy between the truth of God, the Qur'an, and science. Further, the word of God and the work of God as we get to know it better by the advancement of science cannot contradict or be at variance."[17]* (Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 1978. P. 165.)

On the other hand, Mohammad Abduh suggests that the Al-Azhar educational and knowledge structure should be changed to align with the contemporary Western educational model. He argues that "... since the nation has developed, times have changed, and new ways of life need a new type of education. It is a duty, in the interest of Egypt and the Islamic world, to reform the subject and themes of sciences. The reformation should include the content of the books and even the names of the sciences themselves. It could even change the content of specific sciences. The only thing that remains is a title to be applied to this different content."[18]

Muslim reformists passionately argue that the educational system in Muslim cultures should be modelled after that of the Western world, which suggests that they have been inspired and influenced by the educational system of contemporary Western societies. They contend that the educational system in the Islamic world is still conventional, "passive and receptive rather than creative and inquisitive."[19] Meanwhile, the modern Western educational system encourages critical thinking, enables man to respond adequately to new challenges, and generates a creative and well-educated society.

Muslim reformists are also concerned with science and technology, connected to the earlier discussion of education and knowledge. For example, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani holds that Muslims must accept and use Western science and technology to advance their countries. He contends that the Islamic faith has a flaw that prevents science and philosophy from progressing. He states, "In truth, the Muslim religion has tried to stifle science and stop its progress. Thus, it halted the philosophical or intellectual movement and turned minds from searching for scientific truth."[20] However, he believes that this barrier that hinders progress in science and technology might be readily removed by a reinterpretation of the Quran and a genuine reformation of many false beliefs in Islamic traditions. Al-Afghani supports his position by using the example of Christianity, which served as a similar barrier

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[15] https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-women-in-society/ (Consulted online on 13 December 2018)

[16] Babeair, Abdulwahab Saleh (1991) 'Intellectual Currents in Contemporary Islam', *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXI, Nos. 3-4: 231-44.

[17] Troll, Christian W. Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1978): *"A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology"*. New Delhi: Vikas. P. 165.

[18] Muhammad 'Abduh, "The necessity of religious reform", in *Modernist and fundamentalist debates in Islam*, 41 – 81.

[19] Pervez Hoodbhoy (1991), *"Islam and science: religious orthodoxy and the battle for rationality"* London: Zed Books. Ltd, 124.

[20] Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, (2000) *"Religion versus science" in Modernist and fundamentalist debates in Islam,* (M.Moaddel & K. Talatoff eds.) Palgrave, P. 25.

to the advancement of science and philosophy before being overcome by Western scientists and philosophers. Therefore, in this context, he says,

> *"If it is true that the Muslim religion is an obstacle to the development of sciences, can one affirm that this obstacle will not disappear someday? How does the Muslim religion differ on this point from other religions? All religions are intolerant, each one in its way. … Realizing, however, that the Christian religion preceded the Muslim religion in the world by many centuries, I cannot keep from hoping that Muhammadan society will succeed someday in breaking its bonds and marching resolutely on the path of civilisation after the manner of Western society, for which the Christian faith, despite its rigors and intolerance, was not at all an invincible obstacle."[21]* (Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, 1883. P. 32)

According to Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, religious reform is necessary to advance Islamic countries. He contends that if Muslims free themselves from the tutelage of their religion, progress will be unavoidable. Muhammad Abduh, one of his students, was greatly influenced by this point of view and advocated for a radical reform of the educational system in the Muslim world. He maintains that the "nation has developed, times have changed, and new ways of life need a new type of education."[22] Al-Afghani's viewpoint is shared by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who proposes a comprehensive reinterpretation of the Islamic text to consider contemporary scientific advancements. To keep up with contemporary Western civilisations, he also counsels Muslims to quickly absorb and assimilate modern scientific knowledge. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, in this regard, says:

> *"…those who forbid science and knowledge in the belief that they are safeguarding the Islamic religion are the enemies of that religion. The Islamic religion is the closest of religions to science and knowledge, and there is no incompatibility between science and knowledge and the foundation of the Islamic faith."[23]*

4. Conclusion

The majority of Muslim reformists undoubtedly recognise that Islamic countries are lagging in a variety of spheres of life, and they blame this on the incorrect interpretation of the holy book as well as various customs and regulations that were created by medieval men. They contend that this makes a reformation of Islam necessary. They go on to say that this reform should take into account current modern trends, modern lifestyles, new information, and science and technology. Theoretically, these reformist scholars attempt to demonstrate how Islam is compatible with modernity and provide numerous examples, including the compatibility of Shura and democracy, the pursuit of knowledge and science in Islam, and the condemnation of discrimination based on race in Islam. However, in practice, many Islamic practices continue to counter the idea of modernity as they violate some fundamental human rights, support discrimination based on gender and religion, and encourage hatred and violence.

The bulk of Muslim reformists blames Muslim cultures' backwardness on their refusal to embrace modernity and learn from the successful experience of Western civilisations, which have greatly benefited from the improvement it has wrought. They contend that Muslims reject Western innovation, particularly modernity, and its ideological goals. As a result, these academics have worked hard to persuade Muslims to join modernity, ensuring that its beliefs do not conflict with Islam and that its practices do not in any way conflict with modernity. They advise Muslims to use the "*ijtihad*" process to interpret Islamic doctrine in modern times.

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Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

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[21] Houghton Mifflin, 2004, *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East*, edited by Akram Fouad Khater. Boston and   New York: pp. 30-35.
[22] Muhammad 'Abduh, (2000) "*The necessity of religious reform",* In: Moaddel, M., Talattof, K. (eds) Contemporary Debates in Islam. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. P, 46.
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[4] Khalaf-Allah, M, (1998) Legislative authority, in Liberal Islam: a sourcebook, Charles Kurzman, ed.; Sadek J. Sulaiman, "Democracy and Shura" in Liberal Islam: a sourcebook, Charles Kurzman, ed.

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