

An Arab-Islamic Awakening or a Setback to the Community?

Dr. Labeeb Ahmed Bsoul¹

Abstract

Throughout history, Muslim think redeveloped a method that, in many respects, influenced thinkers of the Arab renaissance for decades, not to mention their contribution to the production and accumulation of knowledge. Through this, intellectuals sought to keep up with the overall political, social, economic, and ideological transformation defined by society, since the knowledge of the form of statehood in particular, and the subsequent attempts to modernise the various structure and institutions, in an attempt to catch up with the modern dominant culture. This paradigm has motivated scholars in the Islamic studies field to examine this attribute, scrutinise its validity and accountability, and its positive and negative impact on Muslims. This, study attempts to clarify the various position ns held certain scholars

Key Words: Islamic Reform, Arab Awakening, Islamic Scientific significance, Arab's contemporary politics and reality

Introduction

The subject of the Islamic awakening is perhaps one of the most contested issues facing the Arab nations and the world at large. This extends to both its theoretical and material aspects. Islamic movements throughout the Muslim world in general, and throughout the Arab world in particular, clearly constitute a potent force that deserves to be analysed, discussed, and debated.

Two streams of modern thought have reacted differently to this phenomenon: one group describes it as positive, healthy, and timely, factors that allow them to describe it as an "awakening"²; The other group, mainly scholars in the field, is examining this attribute, as well as scrutinising its validity and positive or negative impact upon Muslims. This study locates itself in the second group. If we look at the lexical definition of the term *Ālāwa*, we find that it means "awakening," "recovery of consciousness," or "state of consciousness."³

¹ 1 Labeeb Ahmed Bsoul, Associate Professor Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates. Author of *International Treaties (Mu'ahadat) in Islam: Theory and Practice in the Light of Siyar (Islamic International Law)*. Publisher: University Press of America, 2008; *Formation of Islamic jurisprudence: From the Time of the Prophetic to the middle of the 4th century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016; and *Islamic History and Law: From the 4th to the 11th Century and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016

² al-BĒĪĒ, Muhammad Sai'Ēd RamalĒn, 1990. *xiwĒr ĩawl MushkilĒt xalariyya*. Damascus: al-DĒr al-Mutafidah, p. 181; MuĒammad xusian FalĒlalah, 1991. *al-ThaqĒfah al-IslĒmiyya*, 3. Damascus: n.p., p. 118.

³ Ibn ManĒĒr, MaĒammed ibn Mukaram, 1997. *LisĒn al-'Arab*. Beirut: DĒr ØĒdir, vol. 7:293; FayrĒzabĒdĒ, Majd al-DĒn MuĒammad al-ShĒrĒzĒ, 2003. *al-QĒmĒs al-MuĒĒĒ*. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-RisĒlah, 2003, p. 1302; AbĒ NaĒr IsmĒ'Ēl al-JawharĒ 1999. *al-SiĒĒĒ*. Beirut: DĒr al-TurĒth al-'ArabĒ, vol. 5:1912; J. M. Cowan, 1994. *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. New York: Spoken Language Services, p. 590.

On the historical level, the Arab reformist⁴ discourse represented in the person of Jam'el al-D'En al-Afgh'En' (1839-97) expressed the spirit of the traditional reform movement and carried it forward (without feeling the need to declare himself a reformer).⁵ He was followed by Mu'ammad xassan al-Shir'ÉzÉ, whose Iranian Islamic discourse was heard during the 1893 tobacco (tinb'Ék) uprising directed at the British monopoly on Iranian tobacco granted by the Sh'ÉhN'É'ir al-D'En al-Qaj'ÉrÉ. The people answered his call and forced the shah to cancel the concession.⁶ The awakening in Islamic discourse in general thus occurred at the same time as the Arab awakening.⁷ In this respect, one is confronted with several questions, many of them hypothetical, which will be addressed in this study. For instance: If the Islamic discourse connects this awakening with a renaissance revival, does it see the latter as one of awareness of Islam or as awareness in general?⁸

Does the issue of religiosity constitute a modern and contemporary issue for Arabs, or is it a throwback to ancient times?⁹ Is the setback and intellectual and material dispersion, especially that of the Arabs since the "era of decadence" 13th-18th century (1258-1798)¹⁰ and which continues until today, due to their distancing themselves from the essence of Islamic thought and content ever since its inception, as suggested by several contemporary observers?¹¹ Is the continued Arab failure across the board, if one is considering Islamic reflections, evidence of the absence of an Islamic awakening?¹²

Perhaps our understanding of the awakening should be reversed. Does it reflect the religious revival that preceded the Islamic awakening, which some scholars interprets an expression of community-based ambitions, whether in the Middle East or even in the capitalist West or the socialist regimes – all of which are facing challenges?¹³ Is the concept of Islamic awakening linked to the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, or in the Islamists' access to political power in post-Zain al-'Abid'En Tunisia?¹⁴

⁴ For further discussion, see Malcolm Kerr, 1996. *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Mu'ammad 'Abduh and Rash'EdRilÉ*. Berkeley: University of California Press; 'Abd al-Raf'ÉmF'Éris Abu 'Ulbah, 2006. *Rum'Éz al-IlÉlÉ al-xalÉth: Ma'sÉt al-MÉlÉ wa-Muskkilat al-xÉlirwal-Mustaqbal*. Amman: al-Rashid'Enlil-Dir'ÉsÉt'wal-Nashir.

⁵ See Jam'el al-D'En al-Afgh'En', and Mu'ammed 'Abduh, 1990. *al-'Urwa al-WithqÉ*. Beirut: D'Ér al-KitÉb al-'ArabÉ; 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Nimir, 1991. *al-Sharqwa al-Gharb: QalÉyÉwa xiwÉrÉt al-Nahla al-'Arabiyya*, ed. Mu'ammadKÉmil al-Kha'Éb. Damascus: Wiz'Érat al-Thaq'Éfah, p. 77; Albert Hourani, 1993. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 103-129; QassimMa'Éd, Jam'el al-D'En al-Afgh'En': xayÉtuhuwa-Falsafatuhu. Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Ma'riyya; 'Abd al-Raf'ÉmF'Éris Abu 'Ulbah, 2006. *Rum'Éz al-IlÉlÉ al-xalÉth: Ma'sÉt al-MÉlÉ wa-Muskkilat al-xÉlirwal-Mustaqbal*, pp. 32-41.

⁶ Nikki Keddie, 1966. *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892*. London: Frank Cass, 1966.

⁷ Waf'ÉdTÉjÉ, 2006. *al-KhilÉb al-IslÉmÉilÉAyn?* Beirut: D'Ér al-Fikr.

⁸ Ma'inZiyÉdah, 1987. *Ma'Éim 'É'UarÉqTa'dÉth al-Fikr al-'ArabÉ, Silsilat 'Ólam al-Ma'rifa*. Kuwait: al-Majlis al-Wa'anÉlil-Thaq'Éhwa-l Fun'Énwa-l AdÉb, p. 115.

⁹ Ma'Éd 'Arafah, 1998. *al-'Arabqabl al-IslÉm: A'wÉlahum al-SiyÉsiyyawa-l D'ÉniyyawaAhmMa'ÉÉhir xalÉratuhm*. Cairo: ZahrÉ' al-Sharq; JawÉd 'AlÉ, 1956. *TÉrikh al-'Arabqabl al-IslÉm*. Baghdad: al-Majma' al-'IlmÉ al-IrÉqÉ; al-BÉlÉ, Muhammad Sai'Éd Ramal'En, *al-'AqÉdah al-IslÉmiyyawa-l Fikr al-Mu'É'ir*, p. 4.

¹⁰ Roger Allen, 2010. *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography 1850–1950*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 1-2, see also Allen, Roger, 1998. *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Development of Its Genres And Criticism*. Cambridge University Press; Thomas Bauer, 2005. "Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches," *Mamluk Studies Review*, vol. 9, issue 2: 105-32.

¹¹ Ma'inZiyÉdah, 1987. *Ma'Éim 'É'UarÉqTa'dÉth al-Fikr al-'ArabÉ, Silsilat 'Ólam al-Ma'rifa* p. 106; Rosenthal, Franz, 2007. *The Concept of Freedom Prior to the Nineteenth Century*. Beirut: D'Ér al-Mad'Ér al-IslÉmÉ, pp. 23-54; al-BadrÉ, 'Ódil 'Abd al-Raf'Ém'En, 2010. *Ma'Émil al-Fikr al-SiyÉsÉ wa Na'Ðariyat al-Dawlah fÉ al-IslÉm*. Tahrán: al-Majma' al-'IlmÉ lil-TaqrÉb bayn al-Madh'Éhib, pp. 64-73.

¹² al-JÉbri, Mu'ammad 'Óbid, 1992. *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'ArabÉ: Dir'ÉsahTa'ÁlÉliyyaNaqdiyya li-Ni'Ðum al-Ma'rifaÉ'É al-Thaq'Éfah al-'Arabiyya*. Beirut: MarkazDir'ÉsÉt al-Wildah al-'Arabiyya; xassan xanafÉ, 1990. *xiwÉr al-Mashriqwa-l Maghrib: Na'Á'ÉdatBinÉ' al-Fikr al-QawmÉ al-'ArabÉ*. Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyalil-Dir'ÉsÉt'wa-l Nashr.

¹³ FÉlilÉ 'Abd al-Jab'Ér, 2006. *al-IstishrÉq wa-l IslÉm*. Damascus: D'Ér al-MadÉ, p. 6.

¹⁴ In particular seethework of Anas al-'UarÉqÉ, "al-Øalwah al-IslÉmiyyahbayn al-Dawlahwaqayd al-Dawlah al-D'Éniyya" in Mu'ammad al-xadÉd, *Min Qalbatibn 'AlÉilÉThawarat al-YasamÉn al-IslÉm al-SiyÉsÉfÉTÉnis*. Dubai: Markaz al-

Faced with these questions and hypotheses, scholars must approach the case studies thoroughly and comprehensively in light of the following themes: (1) Scientific rationale for the awakening argument. (2) Scientific significance of the awakening, (3) The awakening in the hierarchy of comparisons, (4) Arabs and religion, and (5) Is the awakening a real phenomenon?

Scientific rationale for the awakening argument

Perhaps contemporary international conditions have played a role in the prominent activity of Islamic forces throughout the Muslim world. Finding the underlying motivation and reasons, however, demands that we look at some of the following scenarios: For a long time, western countries have been largely successful in portraying socialist countries as the enemy of religion.¹⁵ However, their activities did not stop there, for they extended such activities by supporting Islamic governments adjacent to the former Soviet Union. For example, they supplied financial and military assistance to the Islamic military forces in Afghanistan.¹⁶

Perhaps the most significant outcome of this conflict was the continuing contradiction between Islamic and national forces immediately after World War II. One example of this was Egypt's internal conflict under President Gam'el 'Abdel N'asser (r. 1954-70) and the spread of these Islamic forces to many Arab countries.¹⁷ But the Soviet collapse, which was inessential support for those national forces, caused the latter to withdraw from the arena of confrontation with its Islamist "enemies" and begin to accommodate them.¹⁸ Their activities went almost unnoticed by ordinary Arabs. Furthermore, the Islamists in some Arab countries became almost a state within a state in the absence of rational force on the one hand and the silence of those in power on the other.¹⁹

For the common person, any religious activity in the Arab arena was by definition Islamic and thus a manifestation of an Islamic revival. This, in turn, raises the following questions: Is it healthy for the Arab world to continue with this image? Is there a failure to consider the sweeping changes in socialist societies and in the Arab countries in general, as an awakening? Muslims, wherever they live in the Arab world, are particularly proud of their early glorious history: And so can still hear both the Arab and Persian and other Eastern speaking; we are descendants of those ancestors and we are a dynasty and the descendants of that glorious past and we are making agitate the grievances.²⁰

Misb'Erilil-Dir'Es'Étwa-I Bu'Éth; Keddie, Nikki, 2006. *Modern Iran: The Roots and Results of Revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Shaul Bakhsh, 1986. *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution*. New York: Basic Books.

¹⁵ For discussion of the cold war era, see Fried, Albert, *McCarthyism*, 1997. *The Great American Red Scare: A Documentary History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; McAuliff, Mary Sperling, 1987. *Crisis on the Left: Cold War Politics and American Liberals, 1947-1954*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

¹⁶ Bergen, Peter, 2001. *Holy War Inc.*, New York: Free Press, p. 68; Weiner, Tim, 1990. *Blank Check: The Pentagon's Black Budget*. New York: Warner Books, p. 149; Kuperman, Alan. 1999. "The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan." *Political Science Quarterly* Issue 114, 2, pp. 219-263; Maley, William and Saikal, Amin, 1989. *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 127-132; Urban, Mark. 1990. *War in Afghanistan*. New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 300.

¹⁷ Heikal, Mohamed, 1972. *Nasser: The Cairo Documents: The Inside Story of Nasser and His Relationship with World Leaders, Rebels, and Statesmen*. London: New English Library, pp.15-18; 'Abdallah Sal'Em as-Samar'É'É, 1986. "×arakat al-Qawmiy'En al-'Arab waDawruhaf'É al-Wa'É al-Qawm'É," *al-Mustaqbal al-'Arab'É*, February, p. 86; Ahmad Hamrush, 1983. *QissatThawrat 23 Y'Éliy'É: Khar'Éf 'Abd al-N'Ésir, al-Juzi' al Kh'Émis*. Cairo: MaktabatMadbouli, pp.386-7; Sami Gawhar, 1975. *As-Sami'Ényatakalam'En: 'Abd al-N'ÉsirwaMadhba'fat al-Ikhw'En*. Cairo: al-Maktab al-Mi'Ér'É al-×ad'Éth, pp. 89-92.

¹⁸ Im'Em 'Abdallah, 1979. *'Abd al-N'Ésirwa-I Ikhw'En al-Muslim'En*. Cairo: D'Ér al-Khay'Él; Riy'Él al-Øayd'Éw'É, 2003. *Ma'Érik 'Abd al-N'Ésir*. Beirut: D'Ér al-Kun'Éz al-Adabiyya; al-J'Ébir'É, Mu'ammad, 'Óbid, 1996. *al-D'Énwa al-DawlahwaTalb'Éq al-Shar'É'ah*. Beirut: MarkazDir'Es'Ét al-Wi'Édah al-'Arabiyya.

¹⁹ Qu'ub, Sayyid, 1981. *Milestones*. Delhi: MarkaziMaktabaIslam'É, p. 9; Fuller, Graham E., 2004. *The Future of Political Islam*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 67; Murphy, Caryle, 2002. *Passion for Islam: Shaping the Modern Middle East: The Egyptian Experience*. New York: Scribner, p. 160.

²⁰ Mu'ammad B'Ésh'É al-Makhz'Ém'É. 1980. *Kh'É'Ér'Ét Jam'Él al-D'Én al-Afhg'Én'É al-×ussin'É*. Beirut: D'Ér al-×aq'Éqah, p. 290.

Muslims are even more ready to remember past glory when confronted by the negative present.²¹ I do not think that our contemporary reality is much different from that of al-AfghĒnĒ; in fact, contemporary western civilisation still denies Arabs their rights,²² even while paying lip service to the historic importance of Arab contributions and leadership in various modern scientific fields, and particularly in the realm of medicine.²³

²¹ Ibid.

²² Aġmad SalĒm S'ĒdĒn, 1988. *Muqadama li-TĒrĒkh al-Fikr al-'IlmĒ fĒ al-IslĒm*. Kuwait: al-Majlis al-WaġanĒ lil-TaghĒfah wa-l-FunĒn al-AĒĒb, pp. 114-125; Albert Hourani, 1983. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 103-129.

²³ Whilst the Golden Age of Islam (traditionally dated from the 8th century to the 13th century, but has been extended to the 15th and 16th centuries by recent scholarship) was a time of intellectualism and scientific, social, and philosophical advances, the Muslim world's greatest contribution was medicine. Islamic scholars gathered vast amounts of information from around the known world, added their own observations, and developed techniques and procedures that would form the basis of modern medicine. For example, the great polymath al-KindĒ (800-870) contributed to the history of medicine. In his *Aqradhin* (*Medical Formulary*), he described many preparations drawn from plant, animal, and mineral sources, and also added knowledge drawn from India, Persia, and Egypt. Like many Islamic works, his books contained information based upon medicinal herbs, aromatic compounds such as musk, and inorganic medicines. It could, quite legitimately, be argued that this particular Muslim contribution to the history of medicine saw the first divide between medicine and pharmacology as separate sciences. al-RĒzĒ (aka Rhazes [850-923]), who was at the forefront of Islamic medical research, produced over 200 medical and philosophical works. One of his most famous achievements was, when asked where to erect a hospital in Baghdad, was to hang meat in locations around the city and select the spot where it rotted the least. He wrote extensively about human physiology, understood how the brain and nervous system operated muscles, and only the Islamic distaste for dissection prevented him from refining his studies in this area. His main book, *The Comprehensive in Medicine* (*al-ĒwĒfĒ'UĒib*), was translated into Latin and became the main reference in Renaissance Europe. Ibn-SĒnĒ (d. 1037) believed that many diagnoses could be made by checking one's pulse and the urine. In fact, a large part of the *Canon* (*QĒnĒnfĒ al-'UĒib*) deals with making diagnoses from the colour, turbidity, and odour of urine. His other breakthroughs were some suggestions for infant care and, based upon his belief that bad water caused many ailments, he included guidelines on how to check its purity. Ibn al-NafĒs (born 1213) is the first scholar of medicine to understand the respire-circulatory system, although his knowledge was incomplete. He understood that the heart was divided into two halves and stated that there were no pores connecting the two halves, as proposed by Galen. al-NafĒs stated that the blood could only travel from one side of the heart to the other by passing through the lungs. al-ZahĒwĒ, Abu al-QĒsim Khalaf Ibn 'AbbĒs (936-1013), the father of surgery, made contributions to science by uprooting cancers and stopping bleeding. His famous *al-TaĒrĒf* is the most celebrated work of the Middle Ages on the subject. An important part of it deals with pharmacology, obstetrics, pediatrics and midwifery, as well as general human anatomy. His discussion on mother and child health and midwifery is of immense interest in the history of nursing. Ibn Zuhr, (484-557/1072-1162) (aka Avenzoar) was the other renowned Andalusian physician who left an indelible mark on the development of Arabic clinical medicine and therapeutics. In his famous *al-TaysĒrfĒ al-Mudawatwa al-TadbĒr* (*On Preventive Regimen and Treatment*), he wrote on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. Ibn Rushd (aka Averroes [1125-1198 AD]), was another man of many talents of Muslim Spain. He was, in fact, more of a philosopher and theologian than a physician. Nevertheless, his medical works are remarkable. In fact, *KulliyĒtfĒ'UĒib*, which deals with the general rules of medicine, was translated into Latin in 1255 AD. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1987. *Science and Civilization in Islam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 184-229; George Saliba, 1988. *al-Fikr al-'IlmĒ al-'ArabĒ: Nash'atuhuwa Tat}wurah*. Beirut: Jami'at Belmont, pp. 163-190; idem, 2007. *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*. Cambridge: MIT, pp. 194-197; M. Levey, 1966. *The Medical Formulary or Aqradhin of al-Kindi*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press; HassĒn xallĒq, xarbĒ 'AbbĒs MaġmĒd, 1995. *al-'UIĒm 'ind al-'Arab: UIĒlahawa- MaĒĒmġuha al-xalĒriyya*. Beirut: DĒr al-Nahġah; Howard R. Turner, 1997. *Sciences in Medieval Islam*. Austin: University of Texas Press; O'Leary De Lacy Evana, 1979. *How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs*. Chicago: Ares Publishers; Joel L. Kraemer, 1993. *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, pp. 1 & 148; Ahmad Y Hassan, 1996. "Factors Behind the Decline of Islamic Science After the Sixteenth Century," *Islam and the Challenge of Modernity*. Kuala Lumpur, International Institute of Islamic Thought, pp. 351-389; Jim al-Khalili, 2010. *Pathfinders: The Golden Age of Arabic Science*. London: Penguin Books.

Scientific significance of the awakening

Islamist discourse focuses on Islam and calls for its revival, evoking its "medieval" period of power and greatness, progress and prestige. It seeks to restore the respect that earlier generations once felt, a true greatness that made the Arabs of that time a powerful state in every sense of the word, namely, science, wealth, and human resources. The question here is: Where do the Arabs of today find themselves on the world map? The answer may be that they are, in fact, concealed,²⁴

For their failure to adopt a consistent approach to life, economics, politics, society, and intellectual pursuits, as well as the question of national unity, has gradually undermined their civilization's legitimacy as a nation (as distinct from a collection of nation-states). Hence, their contemporary image is the exact opposite of what it was in the past, and little is being done to reverse this trend. Various external and internal factors may be causing this painful reality, factors that raise their hopes that they may find comfort in looking back at their glorious past.²⁵ This is where the past exercises power over the present and endangers the future; the wish to return to old fashioned values (al-madiyĒn) is an irrational one that is too easily diverted toward building only more mosques and religious schools. Its proponents chose to pretend that this was all part of the Islamic awakening and thus missed the real awakening, the one occurring at the human level.

Thus, the perception of the awakening must extend beyond religion, asceticism, and mysticism and encompass work, community building, and constructing modern society.²⁶ The Islamist discourse on modern society, however, is limited to the following observations²⁷: Several westerners who began to study Islam actually converted, and Arab youths must be directed toward Islam. This suggests that the Islamists have lost contact with the real roots of these issues, for while it is true that many westerners have studied Islamic discourse in modern times,²⁸ it must be remembered that (1) studying Islamic thought in society represents Islamic terms of thought and behaviour, which helps some scholars better understand people's attitudes and thus makes it easier to deal with the latter for whatever purpose,²⁹ and (2) the numerically significant Muslim community is largely ignored by the rest of the world. In order to deal with it, non-Muslims must consider Islamic thought and ideas (i.e., heritage) as an essential part of the community and as a factor behind its behaviour and expectations.

As regards the turning of Arab youths toward religiosity, this reveals that the crisis facing this generation, particularly the problem of unemployment,³⁰ is not controlled by authoritarian regimes or cultural programmes. These factors are not responsible for the phenomenon of the religious tide³¹ among the young. Does not their turning to religious thought reflect the contemporary reality of loss that they have experienced that, in turn, reflects the reality of their society?³²

²⁴ Ma'in ZiyĒdah, 1987. *Ma'Īim 'ĪĒĪarĒqTaldĒth al-Fikr al-'ArabĒ, Silsilat 'Īlam al-Ma'rifa*. pp. 11-32; 'AlĒm Sa'id ŪĒha, 2007. *al-Tanmiyya wa-l Mujtama'*. Cairo: Maktabat MadbĒĪĒ, pp. 221-234; Walad IbrĒhĒm al-ØĒfĒ wald al-ShaybĒnĒ, 200. *1 al-Tanmiyya wa Hijrat al-Admighah fĒ al-'Īlam al-'ArabĒ*. Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, pp. 35-42; AlĒmad YĒsuf AlĒmad, and Nivin Mus'ad, 2010. *×ĒĪ al-Umma al-'Arabiyya, 2009-2010: al-Nahlāh aw al-SuqĒ*. Beirut: Markaz DirĒsĒt al-WiĒdah al-'Arabiyyah, pp. 25- 52 and 113-134.

²⁵ KhalĒĪ AlĒmad KhalĒĪ, 1982. *Jadaliyat al-Zaman*, translation of Bachelard Gaston, *dialictique de ladurĒe*. Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-Jami'iyah lil-DirĒsĒt wal-Nashr wa-l TawzĒ', pp 198-208; AlĒmad YĒsuf AlĒmad, and Nivin Mus'ad, *×ĒĪ al-Umma al-'Arabiyya, 2009-2010: al-Nahlāh aw al-SuqĒ*, pp. 91-112; HishĒm JuĒĒĪ, 2008. *al-ShakhĒiyya al-'Arabiyya al-IslĒmiyya wa-l- MaĒĒr al-'ArabĒ*. Beirut: DĒr al-ŪalĒ'ah, pp. 8-15.

²⁶ MuĒammad AbĒ RumĒn, 2010. *al-ĪĪĒĪ al-SiyĒsĒ fĒ al-Fikr al-IslĒmĒ*. Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, pp. 31-47 and 99-112.

²⁷ al-BĒĒĒ, Muhammad Sa'Ēd RamaĒĒn, *×iwĒr ×awl MushkilĒt ×alĒriyya*, p. 91.

²⁸ Edward Said, 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Classics, pp. 260-263, and 300-321.

²⁹ Albert Hourani, 1991. *Islam in European Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-60; AlĒmad BahĒ' al-DĒn, 1984. *Nadwah al-Hawiyawa al-TurĒth*. Beirut: DĒr al-Kalima, p. 91.

³⁰ LayĒ 'AlĒ, 2006. *al-ShabĒb al-'ArabĒ walrĒdat al-TaghyĒr min DĒkhil al-TurĒth*. Alexandria: al-Maktabah al-MaĒriyya, pp. 263-281; 'Izzat SharĒrah BayĒĒn, 2006. *al-ShabĒb al-'ArabĒ wa Ru'yya al-Mustaqbal*. Beirut: Markaz DirĒsĒt al-WiĒdah al-'Arabiyya, pp. 24-53.

³¹ Ibid.

³² AlĒnĒh, 1990. "Ishkaliyat ŪayĒ' al-ShabĒb al-'ArabĒ: Azmat ShabĒb am Azmat Mujtama'," *DirĒsĒt 'Arabiyya*, 12, p. 71.

Those contemporary Islamic movements have managed, via the slogan of Islamic awakening, to attract the younger generation with their programmes. But where do their future ambitions lie?³³ Their biggest focus is to call for Islam in the absence of any vision for the future that can solve the problems faced by young people, particularly economic ones.³⁴ Therefore, what contemporary Islamic movements, all of which claim to be part of this Islamic awakening, are seeking is to secure the younger generation's support against their opponents. However, is Islam enough of a basis for political change? Which era of Islam would serve as a model: that of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Companions, the Umayyads, or the 'Abbasids?

Many preachers evoke these events as part of the Islamic awakening, trying thereby to provide a certain model of behaviour. The younger generation will, they hope, be inspired by the vast knowledge of past generations to emulate them.³⁵ Scholars may ask whether it is a rush of emotion that persuades young people to review their beliefs and embrace certain positions (e.g., cutting off the hands of thieves) as a moral and practical punishment (viz., leading to fewer thefts). Here, the question might be asked: Did Islam enforce this particular punishment merely because someone stole something? Any Islamic punishment (*ḥudūd*) has only the following purposes: to secure ultimate justice, prevent the crime from reoccurring, and stop wrongdoing.

Thus, should not the criminal investigation consider the motives and reasons behind the crime[s] committed?³⁶ Islam imposes a physical and moral punishment after determining the underlying motives and reasons. The verdict of Islamic criminal law is issued after a legal process, which means that it is based on logic and therefore rational. Therefore, provisions emerged to achieve justice, solve these judiciary problems quickly, and provide a fundamental guarantee against their unjust application.³⁷ This highlights the need to revolutionise human rights, or the rights of citizens before the law.³⁸

The awakening in terms of historical comparison

A discussion of the Islamic awakening requires every scholar to return to the nineteenth century, the time of the Arab renaissance, when the religious movements experienced an important upsurge of activity and vitality in the society's socio-political life. Among the chief themes of these movements was the call for renewal based on the assertion that, over time, Islamic thought had been infiltrated by myths and distortions. A renaissance of true (as defined by modern Muslim reformers,) religious thought was needed to rid Islam of these flaws.³⁹ Sheikh Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905)⁴⁰, this view's chief proponent, emphasised the necessity of religious renewal and of ridding Islam of the sediment and myths that had accumulated during its the era of decadence 13th-18th century (1258-

³³ 'Izzat Shar'rah Bayḍūn, 2006. *al-Shab'Eb al-'Arab'ewa Ru'yya al-Mustaqbal*; Maḥmūd Am'En al-'Ōlim, 1997. *Lughatun'É al-'Arabiyyat'Éma' rakat al-×al'Érah*. Cairo: Qal'Éy'Éfikriyya, p. 7; "Saving Arabic with innovative ideas," *The Nations*, 22 May, 2013.

³⁴ Muḥammad Maḥmūd 'Abdallah, 2006. *al-Makh'Éliralt'É Tuw'Éjih al-Shab'Eb wakayfiyat al-Wiq'Éyahmin'É*. Cairo: D'Ér al-Taqw'É; 'Abdallah N'Ét'Él, 1988. *al-Shab'Eb al-Muslimif'É Muw'Éjahat al-Taḥadiy'Ét*. Damascus: D'Ér al-Qalam; H'Éshim 'Abd al-×am'Éd, 1991. *f'ÉThaq'Éfa al-Isl'Émiyya*. No. 35, p. 146.

³⁵ 'Abd al-×am'Éd al'Él'É Mahmoud, 2008. *al-Shab'Eb Ōun'É' al-×al'Érah*. Cairo: Hibat al-N'Él al-'Arabiyya, pp. 57-93; al-B'Ét'É>, *×iw'Ér'lawlMushkil'Ét ×al'Ériyya*, p. 207

³⁶ Constantine K. Zurayk, 1998. *MÉ al-'Amal? ×ad'Éth 'ilÉ al-Ajy'Él al-'Arabiyya al-Ū'Éli'Éh*. Beirut: Markaz Dir'És'Ét al-Wiḥdah al-'Arabiyya.

³⁷ Ab'Éy'Ésuf, Ya'q'Ébibn Ibr'Éh'Ém al-An'Ér'É (d. 182/798-9). 1979. *Kit'Éb al-Khar'Éj*. Beirut: D'Ér al-Ma'rifah, pp. 89-97; Sub'É Maḥmūd'Én'É, 2007. "Adaptation of Islamic Jurisprudence to Modern Social Needs," in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, by John Donohue and John Esposito. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 143-150.

³⁸ Muḥammad Sa'Éd al-Ashm'Éw'É, 2007. "Reforming Islam and Islamic Law," in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, by John Donohue and John Esposito. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 178-183.

³⁹ A'É al-Muḥ'Éfaḥ, 1975. *al-Itijaha>t al-Fikriyya 'ind al-'Arab f'É 'A'Îr al-Nahḥah 1798-1914: al-Itij'Éh'Ét al-D'Éniyyawa al-Siy'Ésiyaawa l-Ijtim'É'iyawa al-'Ilmiyya*. Beirut: al-D'Ér al-Ahliyya, p. 37.

⁴⁰ Muhammad 'Abduh, 1987. *al-Isl'Ém D'Én al-'Ilm wa-l Madaniyya*. Cairo: Sin'É lil-Nashir, p. 147; Muḥammad 'Am'Érah, 1993. *Muḥadimmaḥ lil-A'm'Él al-K'Émilah lil-Ust'Él al-Im'Ém Muḥammad 'Abduh*. Cairo: D'Ér al-Shur'Éq, p. 15; Aḥmad Am'En, 1970. *Zu'am'É' al-Il'Él f'É al-A'Îr al-×ad'Éth*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḥah al-Ma'riyya, pp. 120-126.

1798).⁴¹ Muḥammad 'AmĒra, who advocates the need for a return to the era of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions, echoes this call today.⁴² Thus, during its renaissance and modern periods, the Arab-Muslim vision of society has focused on the importance of religious renewal as a means of promoting community.

But what is the justification for this awakening, if some religious scholars still complain about the myth and others claim that religious thought needs to be purified and renewed? What is the evidence for this? If Islamic thought since the renaissance has been able to rid itself of its problems and obstacles, should we not say that there is an Islamic awakening and revival and that Islamic thought has already taken the correct path?⁴³

Hence, scholars of the Arab intellectual heritage need to revisit the renaissance of Arab-Muslim discourse and discover its source⁴⁴ if we want to avoid rehashing the negative European vision of Islam and Muslims, based on the efforts of certain Orientalists.⁴⁵ This is especially true when we try to deal with Ernst Renan (d. 1892), who is famous for telling his students at the Sorbonne that Islam did not encourage science, philosophy, and free research as well as the "fact" that it was a hindrance to knowledge at large since it still believed in the supernatural and paranormal. Moreover, he argued that only those Muslim philosophers who managed to secure the protection of the caliph or a prince escaped persecution and having their books burned.⁴⁶ And even if Muslims did contribute to philosophy, they achieved nothing that had any great value in itself, for it was simply a distorted form of Greek philosophy.⁴⁷

Despite this, however, Renan admitted that, in view of Islam's teachings and high principles, he regretted not being a Muslim. He was attracted to Islam, even though he taught that it obscured the mind for meditation on the realities of things. He saw the Muslim mind as being characterized by hatred toward science and the [Muslim] belief that research is a heresy and waste of time. In the past, many Muslim philosophers had been persecuted and their works had been burned. Renan concluded his lecture by inviting all nations in the East and the West to use education to achieve justice, while insisting that progress is founded on the freedom of the people.⁴⁸ Yet the study of history shows, among other things, that Islam was a factor in advancing the Arabs. However, it does not clarify how the foundation of Islam led to this result.

In reviewing the reasons for this advancement, one must acknowledge that the main factor is the Arabs' constant desire to seek knowledge and rationality.⁴⁹ Moreover, the constant warfare between the neighbouring Persian and Byzantine empires had a positive result for the Arabs: merchants, considering Makka and the surrounding Arab lands as secure and stable, directed their trade there.⁵⁰ Makkawas already known as a centre on the international trade route due to its security, economic status, and central position in regional affairs.⁵¹

⁴¹ Roger Allen, 2010. *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography 1850–1950*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 1-2.

⁴² Muḥammad 'AmĒra, 1980. *al-TurĒth fĒ Ōau' al-'Aqil*. Beirut: DĒr al-WaĀdah, p. 12.

⁴³ 'AbdallĪh Bilqaziz, 2008. *al-Dawlah wa-l Mujtama': JadiliyĒt al-TawĀĒd al-InqisĒmfĒ al-IjtimĒ' al-'ArabĒ al-Mu'ĒĪr*. Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, pp. 109-112; Muḥammad AbĒ RumĒn, 2010. *al-IĪĒĪ al-SiyĒsĒ fĒ al-Fikr al-IslĒmĒ*, pp. 159-167

⁴⁴ Muḥammad AbĒ RumĒn, 2010. *al-IĪĒĪ al-SiyĒsĒ fĒ al-Fikr al-IslĒmĒ*, pp. 293-302

⁴⁵ MurĒd Hoffman, 2002. *al-IslĒm KabadĒl*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-'ArbakĒn, pp. 212-222.

⁴⁶ Edward Said, 2003. *Orientalism*, pp. 105, 231-234; Muḥammad 'AmĒrah, 1988. *JamĒl al-DĒn al-AġhĒnĒ: Muwqil al-Sharqwa-FaylasĒf al-IslĒm*. Cairo and Beirut: DĒr al-ShurĒq, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁷ SalĒm BarakĒt, 1982. *MafhĒm al-xuriyyi fĒ al-Fikr al-'ArabĒ al-xadĒth*. Damascus: al-Mu'asassa al-'Ōmma lil-ŌaĀĒfih wal-Nashir, p. 271; Muḥammad 'AmĒrah, 1988. *JamĒl al-DĒn al-AġhĒnĒ: Muwqil al-Sharqwa-FaylasĒf al-IslĒm*, p. 71.

⁴⁸ Edward Said, 2003. *Orientalism*, pp. 132-133.

⁴⁹ Ibn KhaldĒn, 1989. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, translated by Franz Rosenthal. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 11-32. In the introductory chapter, he states "The excellence of historiography. An appreciation of the various approaches to history. A glimpse of the different kinds of errors to which historians are liable. Why [do] these errors occur...[?]"

⁵⁰ Ahmad 'Abbas ŌĒlĪĪ, 1973. *al-YamĒn wa-l-YasĒr fĒ al-IslĒm*. Beirut: al-Mu'asassat al-'Arabiyya, p. 19

⁵¹ This indication can be true, especially in relation to the discovery of oil in the Arabian Peninsula in the early 1930s, and even during the Portuguese domination and the pearling industry up to its decline upon the introduction of Japanese cultured pearls, which had direct effect on the Gulf region economy. During the same period, oil was discovered, and the region captured the attention of the industrial world, in particular Britain and the United States. In addition, throughout history the region served as a trade route for European and Asian merchants. This gave it strategic importance in political, economic, and geographic terms. See

Thus, this external and internal interaction during the sixth century gave the Arabs historical significance, a reality that coincided with the birth of the Islamic community in the early years of the following century. This gave the Arabspower and splendour at an early stage.⁵² But what about comparing the past with the present?

On the international level, the contemporary period has seen the decline of the socialist nations in international decision-making and the corresponding rise in influence of the capitalist nations, particularly the United States. These latter nations represent a hegemonic and powerful force that influences world decisions through the UN Security Council. The United States is always granted the power to interfere in many parts of the world, but particularly in Muslim countries. This is because these countries have not yet attained true independence, for they still must refer to external powers, especially the United States, which have had a significant and direct influence on them since the Second World War. On the domestic level, it seems that the reality of contemporary Arab society lies outside history while its internal affairs seem to be wrapped up in sectarian and regional dissension and the lack of a single vision of Arab identity.

In addition, the emergence of all kinds of dependency has led to famine in some Arab/Muslim countries (Somalia and Sudan) and external challenges causing the division of others (Iraq and Yemen), not to mention attempts at regime change in legitimate nations dismissed as terrorist (Syria, Sudan, and Libya). Perhaps the future will bring even higher risks.⁵³

Faced with this reality and confronted by these contradictions, Islamic forces began to imagine themselves as a very significant political force in the Arab arena. They saw Islam as being able to help by promoting religious observance through their access to some Arab parliaments (Jordan, Tunisia, and Lebanon) or to power in some others (Sudan). Elsewhere, such as in Algeria and Egypt, they anticipated playing a greater role or already acted as a government within a government.⁵⁴

Faced with this reality, we must ask the following questions: Is not the nation, which retains power over the army and the economy and enjoys universal support, the decision-maker even today? Where do the forces of Marxism and Arabism fit? Are Islamic forces actually ready to take power in some Arab countries (Syria, Egypt, and Libya) and elsewhere?⁵⁵ Is their silence at this stage a sign that they realise they are not ready? Can we not say, therefore, that the forces of the contemporary Islamic awakening need to study the higher (and especially Arab) realities and then decide, scientifically and objectively, whether the Arabs are awake or asleep, whether they have really encountered a setback that calls for Islamic intervention? For it cannot be denied that, historically, the Islamic forces have failed to protect Arab and Muslim land.

Fred Halliday, 2005. *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Fred Lawson, 2006. *Constructing International Relations in the Arab World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁵² ×asanIbrÉhÈm ×asan, 1996. *TÉrÈkh al-IslÈm al-SiyÈsÈwa-l DÈnÈwa-l ThaqÉfÈwa-l IjtimÉ'È*. Beirut: DÈr al-JalÈl, vol. 1, pp. 54-55, and pp. 144-149; Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 31-44; Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 43-58; George Saliba, 2007. *Islamic Sciences and the European Renaissance*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 3-25; Lyons Jonathan, 2009. *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization*. New York: Bloomsbury Press.

⁵³ Consider Arab Spring, the people's resistance and challenge to the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere. After constant resistance, in some places it took months to overthrow the regimes in a peaceful and civilized way.

⁵⁴ Heikal, Mu'amed, 1972. *Nasser: The Cairo Documents*. London: New English Library; Cooper, Mark N., 1982. *The Transformation of Egypt*. New York: Taylor & Francis; Ya'qÈb, SÈlim, 2004. *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

⁵⁵ Mu'ammad Anwar 'Abd al-SalÈm A'Imad, 1981. "Ma'ÉhÈm al-Lamarkaziyya al-IdÈriyya wal-SiyÈsiyya wa Qimatuha li Fikrat al-Wiláda al-'Arabiyya" *Shu'Èn 'Arabiyya*, 5, YÈlyu>, p. 29

Arabs and religion

A review of Arab intellectual history demonstrates two fundamental facts: Arabs have been devout⁵⁶ and religion has always permeated their lives. Nevertheless, there have been periods when they have been borne along on a religious tide, such as under the Abbasids (the beginning of declining religious differences)⁵⁷ And the Ottomans (when the imperial court promoted a religion-based ideology resulting in the spread of mysticism and a corresponding upsurge in Sufism).⁵⁸ Thus, despite the high prevalence of religiosity in the above-mentioned eras, there is little evidence of an actual Islamic revival or awakening. Instead, in each case it was a renaissance of cultural awareness.

The concept of awakening nevertheless persists, although it plays the role of a placebo designed to placate Muslims who, according to contemporary Islamic discourse, have faced the same problems and obstacles for centuries.⁵⁹ Moreover, Arab cultures in medieval times has been dominated by Islamic thought, especially if we accept the views of some contemporary scholars that Arabs in the Middle Ages attempted to give Arab culture an Islamic nature. The result was a popular culture devoted to religious education, one that spread submissive fatalism in a range of popular saying highlighting humanity's weakness before God.⁶⁰

Many Arab governments have sought to maintain the religious fabric (e.g., building mosques or accommodating religious customs) often at the expense of resolving the problems faced by other citizens.⁶¹ In this way, these mainly authoritarian governments have encouraged a tide of religious feeling, giving the lie to the Islamist opposition's charges that they support atheism and heresy. Indeed, these governments even provide support to those Islamists working in government departments.⁶² The number of new mosques in some Arab countries has mushroomed.

Thus, if recent history has recorded some lapses on the part of certain Arab countries to maintain the rights of denominations (e.g., Lebanon),⁶³ these countries have been – and are still – full of religious faiths and this, in turn, confirms that the Islamic awakening has either ignored or not understood the Arab world's general history. In addition, the Islamic awakening has interfered with the scientific and objective dialogue going on among contemporary Arab political forces, depicting some in ways that suggest hostility and aggression and thereby suggesting that it alone holds the right to represent certain values. In other words, any group that does not agree with it is deluded.

Given this context, and reviewing the pages of history, we find that Arab regimes have made Islam a source of legislation and included in their constitutions many of its principles.⁶⁴ They have considered Islam to be beyond religion. There have been a series of confrontations between these systems and the Islamic political forces (with the stage of Nasser as a model). They have accused Marxism of being secular and anti-religion, even though the positions of these party leaders on religion are clear, explicit, and reflect a positive attitude.⁶⁵

⁵⁶Albert Hourani, 1993. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*, pp. 1-24.

⁵⁷AbĒ ManĪĒr 'Abd al-QĒdir b. ŪĒhir al-BagdĒdĒ, 1980. *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq wa BayĒn al-Firqah al-NĒjĳyya minhum*. Beirut: DĒr al-AfĒq al-JadĒdah; AbĒ al-FatĪl 'Abd al-KarĒm al-ShahrastĒnĒ, 1982. *al-Milal wal-Nifal*. Beirut: DĒr al-Ma'rifah.

⁵⁸'Abdallah xanĒ, 1987. *Min al-ItijĒhĒt al-Fikriyya fĒ SĒriya wa-l LebnĒn*. Damascus: DĒr al-AhĒĒ, p. 22.

⁵⁹Ibrahim Abu Rabi', 2004. *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History*. London: Pluto Press, pp. 63-72.

⁶⁰See for example KamĒl al-ManĒfĒ, 1980. *al-ThaqĒfah al-SiyĒsiyya lil-FalĒĒn al-Ma'rĳyĒn: TalĪĒl NaĒrĒ wa DirĒsah Madaniyya*. Beirut: DĒr Ibn KhaldĒn, p. 198.

⁶¹Ibid, p. 216; BĒ 'AlĒ YĒsĒn, 1985. *al-ThĒĒĒth al-MuĒaram: DirĒsah fĒ al-DĒn wal-Jins wa-l-ŌirĒ' al-ŪbaqĒ*. Beirut: DĒr al-ŪalĒ'ah, p. 189.

⁶²One of many indications of this is the widespread practice in government departments of granting leave with full pay to civil servants for the entire month of Ramadan. BĒ 'AlĒ YĒsĒn, 1985. *al-ThĒĒĒth al-MuĒaram: DirĒsah fĒ al-DĒn wal-Jins wa-l-ŌirĒ' al-ŪbaqĒ* pp. 143-145.

⁶³HĒnĒ, FalĪ, 1989. *FĒ al-WĪdah al-IslĒmiyyawa-l-Tajzi'a*. Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-JĒmi'iyyalil-DirĒsĒt wal-Nashr, p. 17.

⁶⁴Joseph Mughizil, 1989. "xawl al-xiwĒr al-QawmĒ- al-DĒnĒ," *al-Mustaqbal al-'ArabĒ*, 130:12, November/December, pp. 50-59.

⁶⁵KhĒlid BiqdĒsh, 1990. *al-ŪarĒq*, 3, p. 105.

Nationalist parties have included in their ranks prominent Muslims and non-Muslims without problem or persecution. Thus the prevailing religion, whether Islam or another one (but more specifically Islam), has continued to exist among these parties and organizations despite the presence of Islamist groups. In the contest between the forces of Islam and secularism, one may ask: Do the former not recognize this as an expression of piety? Do they fear for the continued existence of religious and Islamic organizations, or that the national (essentially secular) forces, do not assign any value to Islam?

Do they not realize that scientific and historical evidence proves that such accusations are unwarranted and that the Prophet rejected hostility and reaching snap judgments and conclusions?⁶⁶ Therefore, through a review of the historical evidence, one can argue that Islam has not harmed the Arabs of today or vice versa. Any rupture between these forces may be attributed to a misunderstanding on the part of one or another party, whether Marxist, nationalist, or Islamic. It might even be said that what divides all of them is their rejection of pluralism.⁶⁷ The situation began to disadvantage neutral individuals when people began suggesting that anyone outside the organization was its enemy. This issue took on a more critical dimension (mainly for religious reasons) when it began to affect the daily lives of citizens.⁶⁸

Thus, historical actions have been seen as partisan, political, or even extreme, as leading to more repression and terrorism throughout the Arab world, despite the fact that such matters need be addressed in a spirit of rationalism and civilized dialogue among the parties involved. A true awakening would be one of a society embracing both democratic thought and behaviour, something that we have not yet seen. However, some positive indications can be seen in a few Arab countries that change is indeed taking place, even if we are still far from any genuine revival that meets the demands of the Arab masses.

Is the awakening a reality?

A review of old and new Islamist discourses shows that the fundamental differences within the Muslim community are difficult to overcome; however, it also highlights the differences in adherence to each position on each issue. Perhaps these differences also lead to disagreement over other minor issues, such as the number of prayers a day (five or three), the date to begin and/or end a fast, and the means of determining the first day of a feast (by relying on a telescope or by direct visual perception). The issues that are subject to dispute among Muslims are many and varied. Perhaps chief among these is the question of who should lead an Islamic government: the imām or the caliph.⁶⁹

⁶⁶According to the classical sources regarding the Prophet's peace be upon him, position, Usāma bin Zayd b. al-Mu'allaq "There is no god but Allah" (*La ilahā illallāh*). When news of this reached Allah's Messenger, he condemned Usāma in the strongest terms and he said to him: "How can you kill him after he said *La ilahā illallāh*?" He replied: "But he said it with the sword hanging over his head." The Prophet – Allah bless and greet him – said again: "How can you kill him after he said *La ilahā illallāh*?" He replied: "O Messenger of Allah, he said it in dissimulation (*taqiyyatan*)." The Prophet – Allah bless and greet him – said: "Did you split his heart open (to see)?" and he did not cease to reprove him until Usāma wished that he had not entered Islam until after he had killed that man so that he might have been forgiven all his past sins through belief. See Ibn al-Jawzi, 1996. *Fatāwā al-Bayhaqī bi Sharīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, p. 84.

⁶⁷Muḥammad Nūr al-Fārūqī 1992. "al-Ta'adūdiyya al-Siyāsiyya al-ʿAlāmiyya al-ʿArabīyya: al-Qaḍī' wa-l Taʿāduyya," *al-Wilāyah*, no. 8, issue, 91, April, p. 15.

⁶⁸Zuhayrī, Wahbī, 1981. *ʿUḥd al-ʿArab fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr; Majid Khadduri and Herbert J. Liebesny, 1955. *Law in the Middle East: Origin and Development of Islamic Law*. Washington: Middle East Institute; Muhammad Waqīʿallah, 2013. *Islamic Ethics in War*. Alexandria: al-Maktab al-Jamīʿ al-ʿArabī, pp. 73-106.

⁶⁹See Ann K. S. Lambton, 1981. *State and Government in Medieval Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Eliash, Joseph, 1969. "The Ithna Asharī: Shīʿī juristic theory of political and legal authority," *Studia Islamica*, no. 29; Mālmūdī, 2006. *al-Khilāfa al-Islāmiyya bayna al-Fikr wal-Tārīkh*. Cairo: Maʿr al-ʿArabīyya; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, 1983. *ʿUḥd al-ʿArabīyya al-Istīḍāʿ al-Maʿrīʿ al-Istīḍāʿ*, p. 115 and *Umm al-Qurʿ*. Beirut: Dār al-Riʿāʾ al-ʿArabīyya, p. 28; John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, 2007. *Islam in*

Long a subject for dialogue and debate, the differences between the various schools of Islamic thought on this topic have so deepened over time that we are confronted with a dialogue of the deaf. Everyone is sticking to his position, known, written, or taught⁷⁰ – leading, among other things, to the phenomenon of a state faqih⁷¹ – so that some of the differences lead to mutual condemnations.⁷² Such a dispute evokes the old tradition that was expressed in the following form: Was AbĒ Bakr or 'AĪĒ more deserving to be the Prophet's political successor? This dispute's historical context has produced a contemporary dispute translated into new formulas.

Some of the greatest differences in Islam turn on the interpretation of the Qur'Ēn, but in this case the debaters seek to justify their positions via the traditional texts.⁷³ Modern Islamic groups justify their differences based on interpretation of original texts. Nevertheless, this leads us to ask: If Muslims agree on the Qur'Ēn's status as God's revelation to humanity but differ over its interpretation; will this ever lead to unity. Are some of them saying that the Qur'Ēn must be judged differently by different Muslims, and that separating the affairs of Muslims will solve the problems of contemporary Muslims? Will this be the future as long as there a difference in interpretation?

This also turns on differences in the understanding of history, with some Muslims seeking legitimacy in certain events and others rejecting the same. One can therefore ask another question: Can contemporary Muslims agree on their history? If they cannot, how can they agree on their present and future? Such questions only reinforce the fact that Islamism, which faces a host of problems without necessarily having any solutions, contributes to the community's ongoing disunity that makes it so hard to resolve the issues facing it. There are two apparent trends of Islamic discourse among Arab and Islamic thinkers in evaluating possible solutions: one insists that Islam is the only source for such solutions, while the other maintains that Islam is justified in looking to the East for answers. Many scholars in the tradition of Islamic thought have found justification for this in the precedents of earlier generations:

1. Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, relied on SulaymĒ>n al-FĒ>risĒ>'s advice before the Battle of the Trench,⁷⁴ arguing that any idea of Persian origin might be suitable for eastern Arab Muslims, on the grounds that Persia is located east of their country and was one of the greatest empires of that period.
- 2.
3. The second rightly guided caliph, 'Umar b. al-KhaĪĒb, did not hesitate to adapt the Persian bureaucracy (al-DawĒwĒn)⁷⁵ over the objections of some Companions when he discovered that its vast experience could help solve administrative problems. The experiment confirmed 'Umar's vision and led to centuries of continuity and stability.
- 4.

Transition: Muslim Perspectives. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 24-31; MuĀammadSalĒm al-'AwĒ, 2008. *fĒ al-NiĀĒm al-IslĒmĒ.* Cairo: DĒr al-ShurĒq, pp. 111-113; an interesting discussion about the nature of caliphate in 'Abd al-RaĪmĒn al-KawĒkibĒ, entitled *al-A'mĒl al-KĒmilahlil-KawĒkibĒ*, by MuĀammadJamĒlĪaĪnĒn.Beirut: MarkazDirĒsĒt al-WiĀdah al-'Arabiyya, 1995.

⁷⁰AntonFarah, 1988. *Ibn al-RushdwaFalsafatuhu.* Edited by TayibTizĒnĒ.Beirut: DĒr al-FarĒbĒ, pp. 43, 53, 89, 99, 105; Yvonne Haddad, 1994. "Muhammad Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform," in Ali Rahnama, *Pioneers of Islamic Revivals.* London: Zed Books Ltd., pp. 52-53; M. A. Al-JabirĒ, 1986. *NaĪnu wa'l-TurĒth: QirĒ'at Mu'ĒĪrah fĒ TurĒthinĒ al-Falsafi.* Casablanca: Arab Cultural Center, p. 149; see also Edward Said, 1996. *Representations of the Intellectual.* New York Vintage Books.

⁷¹AĀamd al-KĒĪĒb, 1998. *TaĪawur al-Fikr al-ShĒ'Ē min al-ShĒrah 'ilĒWilayat al-FaqĒh.* Beirut: DĒr al-JadĒd; KawtharĒ WajĒh, 2007. *Bayn al-Fiqh al-IĪĒĪ al-ShĒ'Ē wa-WilĒyat al-FaqĒh: al-Dawlah wal-MuwĒĪn.* Beirut: DĒr al-NahĒr.

⁷²al-MĒwardĒ, AbĒ al-×asan 'AĪĒ ibn MuĀammad al-BaĪrĒ 1973. *al-AĪ}kĒm al-SulĪĒniyya.* Cairo: MaĪba'at MuĪĪafa al-BĒbĒ al-×alabĒ, p. 8; al-ŪabarĒ, AbĒ Ja'far MuĀammad ibn JarĒr (d. 310/923), 1979. *TĒrĒkh al-Rusul wa l-MulĒk.* Ed. MuĀammad AbĒ al-FaĪl. Beirut: DĒr al-Ma'Ērif, vol. 5, p. 158; BurhĒn GalyĒn, 2001. "al-IslĒm wa-Azmat 'ĪĒqĒt al-SulĪah al-IjtimĒ'iyya" in *al-HarakĒt al-IslĒmiyya wa al-DĒimuqraliyya: DirĒsĒt fĒ al-Fikr wa-l MumĒrasah.* Beirut: MarkazDirĒsĒt al-WiĀdah al-'Arabiyya, pp. 155-160; AbĒ al-'AĪĒ' al-MawĀdĒdĒ, 1981. *NaĀariyat al-IslĒm al-SiyĒsiyya.* Beirut: Mu'asasat al-RisĒlah; MuĪĪafĒ ×ilmĒ, 1977. *NizĒm al-KhilĒfah fĒ al-Fikr al-IslĒmĒ.* Cairo: DĒr al-AnĪĒr, pp. 132-133; AĀamd al-KĒĪĒb, *TaĪawur al-Fikr al-ShĒ'Ē min al-ShĒrĒ ilĒWilayat al-FaqĒh.* Beirut: DĒr al-JadĒd.

⁷³ MuĀammad 'Ūbid al-JĒbrĒ, 1988. *TakwĒn al-'Aql al-'ArabĒ: Naqd al-'Aql al-'ArabĒ.* Beirut: Markaz DirĒsĒt al-WiĀdah al-'Arabiyya, p. 143.

⁷⁴AbĒ al-×asan 'AĪĒ Ibn al-AthĒr, 1987. *al-KĒmilfĒ al-TĒrĒkh.* Beirut: DĒr al-Kutub al-'Almiyya, p. 70

⁷⁵al-MĒwardĒ, AbĒ al-×asan 'AĪĒ ibn MuĀammad ibn ×abĒb al-BaĪrĒ (d. 450/1058). *al-AĪkĒm al-SulĪĒniyya,* p. 226.

5. Many aspects of western civilization owe their origin to Arab and Muslim culture, such as scientific advancements and even institutions of education.⁷⁶

By virtue of this connection, applying such experience to problems in Islamic thought finds credibility in the Qur'Ēn and the lives of the Prophet and Companions. This leads to the following question: If Islam, as indicated, accepted interaction with other civilizations in its "golden era," then by what justification does contemporary Islam reject it? What may be at stake in contemporary Islamic discourse is avoiding any admission of weakness before others, seeing as dialogue between West and East is never neutral, but rather a strategy devised to co-opt Arabs and Muslims into supporting western agendas.⁷⁷

Such a position shows a lack of understanding of what is important as well, for when the Prophet consulted SulaymĒn al-FĒrisĒ, he acknowledged that Islam was in a moment of weakness and could only reach a position of strength through innovation. The issue was not who Muslims could take from or why, but how to overcome a state of weakness and vulnerability, especially when compared with other communities enjoying a high degree of scientific and technical progress. This offers an opportunity to catch up, all the while being careful only to benefit from others' experiences. Moreover, if they are thought to have benefited already from Islam and its civilization, why not reclaim the good that once belonged to the Muslim world? Thus, the brand of cultural isolationism advocated by contemporary Islamic discourse may be seen as an expression of a state of weakness that leads to isolation. What this means is that the argument in favour of the awakening fails to take into account the Arab world's past and present, which it must do if society is to advance. Indeed, the advancement of society may be said to be an awakening in itself.

Today, authoritarian Arab regimes sometimes call for Islamizing the state in an effort to revive the image of the ancient Arab state as part of the Islamic heritage. This, however, distorts the reality of the Arab-Islamic cultural project, which is characterized by Arab interaction with other peoples. Sometimes these regimes play an active role in perpetuating this ancient tendency by preserving heritage and monuments. And yet a careful analysis of the contemporary Islamic discourse, especially in regard to the notion of an awakening, forces us to admit the failure of Arabs and Muslims to safeguard humanitarian and cultural rights.

The ensuing chaos and turmoil that has affected their societies points to clear and tangible evidence of the contradiction inherent in the Islamist project. If the path to salvation is Islam, as alleged by contemporary Arab-Muslim rhetoric, then turning away from Islam is portrayed as the key reason for underdevelopment. Indeed, one of the reasons offered – the cause of all causes – is the departure of Muslims from Islam and their refusal to acknowledge their Lord. Thus, at least according to the Islamists, the correlation is clear and explicit: There is a direct link between underdevelopment and the people's remoteness from Islam, despite the fact that its historical spread, expansion, and cultural achievements seem to prove the exact opposite. This call's main concern is to increase Islam's spread and expansion, not to rescue the Arabs from backwardness. As long as everyone acknowledges the teachings of Islam in their "correct" form, all the doors of Islam will open – even to the peoples of Europe and the United States – and everyone will walk in and Islam will assure equal development for all.

However, we maintain that this discourse's basic concerns, especially the contemporary call to Islam, must acknowledge that Muslims still suffer fragmentation, loss, and underdevelopment. All of this mitigates against the effort to move forward, to achieve an awakening that must go beyond mere religious awakening, given that ignoring development will most probably engender even greater backwardness.

⁷⁶See George Saliba, *Islamic Sciences and the European Renaissance*; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, pp. 188-229, 285-292; HassĒ ×allaq, ×arbĒ 'AbbĒsMaĒmĒd, 1995.al-'UIĒm 'ind al-'Arab: UIĒlahawaMaĒĒmifahu al-×alĒriyya. Beirut: DĒr al-NahĒah; Howard R. Turner, 1997.*Sciences in Medieval Islam*.Austin: University of Texas Press; O'Leary De Lacy Evana, 1979.*How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs*.

⁷⁷ The observation of both the post-Bin 'Ali and post-Mubarak elections, when such Muslim parties as al-NahĒa in Tunisia (led by al-GhanushĒ) and the Muslim brotherhood of Egypt laid out their political plan and views of women, minorities (i.e., Christians), and the form of government.

Although this context has been absent from the discourse, the foundations of a modern Arab society must begin from a perception of the fundamental need to update the community. This is a true awakening from backwardness, one that must be effected via a number of different channels, but chiefly through education, which was the focus of such Arab renaissance figures as Sheikh ʻUahīīÉwĒ (d. 1773)⁷⁸ and Sheikh ʻAlĒMubĒrak (d. 1893).⁷⁹

The modernization of Arab society, a basic and urgent need of our contemporary reality, must be achieved through social organizations and political parties, for it depends upon such material considerations as agriculture and industry. Indeed, a spiritual reawakening may be meaningless without full employment or improved food security.

Conclusion

The reality faced by contemporary Arabs is a religious revival rather than a cultural awakening. As long as contemporary Arab society is marginalized, it will remain mired in its problems and concerns and unable to achieve any real awakening. The contemporary Islamic revival's excessive religiosity both detracts from this goal and shows that modern-day political Islam is not in any position to achieve its objectives. Moreover, it reveals that it cannot even apply the basic teachings of Islam, except with a variety of interpolations and opinions.⁸⁰ It should also be borne in mind that the Prophet, peace be upon him, rejected religious extremism and thus limited the state's options.⁸¹ Some people have argued that the contemporary Islamic awakening is mainly an attempt to import Islam into the current political and military powers-that-be. Given the present analysis, this may be a valid argument.⁸² As to whether the Islamic awakening will limit itself to rule by scripture alone, that remains to be seen.⁸³

⁷⁸ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*, pp. 67-82.

⁷⁹ MuĒammad ʻAmĒrah, 1984. *ʻAlĒMubĒrak: Muʻrikh al-Mujtamaʻ waMuhandis al-ʻImrĒn*. Beirut: DĒr al-WiĒdah, p. 263; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*, pp. 63-89.

⁸⁰ John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, pp. 59-63.

⁸¹ See Q. 3:134: "Those who spend [in AllĒh's Cause—deeds of charity, alms, etc.] in prosperity and in adversity, who repress anger, and who pardon men [and women]; verily, AllĒh loves *al-MuĒsinĒn* (the good-doers)." These good-doers are those who perform good deeds totally for AllĒh's sake only without any show-off or to gain praise or fame, etc., and they do them in accordance with the Sunna/legal way of AllĒh's Messenger. Prophet MuĒammad said: "The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger." Give the hadith reference.

⁸² Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*, pp. 81-82.

⁸³ Q. 12:53: "And I free not myself (from the blame). Verily, the (human) self is inclined to evil, except when my Lord bestows His Mercy (upon whom He wills). Verily, my Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."