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Criticizing Muslim Thinkers' Views on Religion and Development in Modern Islamic Civilization

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT	
Article History: Received: 20 February 2024 Revised: 18 April 2024 Accepted: 15 May 2024		SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: The emergence of the epistemic system of modernism and its epistemological requirements has caused Eastern societies, including the Islamic world, conflicts such as the conflict between religion and development and efforts to resolve it. This research aims to explain the pattern of the new Islamic civilization by emphasizing the views of <i>Muẓaffar ‘Iqbāl</i> from the book <i>Islam and Science</i> . Also, most Muslim thinkers view the relationship between Islam and its efficiency in new scientific topics, including development, as positive and admirable. METHOD & FINDING: Using the method of qualitative analysis and referring to his books, essays, and other thinkers, it has been found that the Islamic scientific tradition began at the time of the Prophet. Additionally, Islamic scientists have continued this movement throughout history with ups and downs and have rejected the discussion of conflict that has been raised by Westerners, especially <i>Goldzihar's</i> theory which denied the connection between Islam and science. CONCLUSION: According to <i>Muẓaffar ‘Iqbāl</i> , Islam is a comprehensive religion and these views and scientific theories are always changing and can be modified. Therefore, he does not consider them comparable to Islamic texts. In <i>Muẓaffar ‘Iqbāl</i> 's view, the Islamic tradition, relying on the approach of complementarity, can create and guide a comprehensive civilization and provide a pattern of progress in the new era.	
Key Words: <i>Religion</i> <i>Development</i> <i>New Islamic Civilization</i> <i>Muslim Thinkers</i> <i>Muẓaffar ‘Iqbāl</i>			
DOI: 10.22034/imjpl.2024.9291			
			
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NUMBER OF REFERENCES 18	NUMBER OF AUTHORS 3	NATIONALITY OF AUTHOR (Iran, Pakistan)	

Introduction

Before the serious confrontation of the Islamic world with the Western civilization from the 18th century onwards, Muslim thinkers and people did not feel a conflict between the Islamic religion and other aspects of life, including society, business, professions, etc. Parallel to the expansion of Western civilization to other parts of the world, the conflict between religion and development, which had a long history in the Christian West, became a problem for other cognitive and religious systems that did not suffer from such a problem. In other words, the emergence of the epistemic system of modernism and its epistemological requirements have caused conflicts in Eastern societies, including the Islamic world, such as the conflict between religion and development and efforts to resolve it. In recent years, major issues have been raised among researchers that have made attention to the issue of the relationship between religion and development more serious,

including the discussion about the possibility and necessity of religious science and compiling the Islamic pattern of progress (*Ref: Parsania, 2015; Golshani, 2018; Nasr, 2003*).

Although various kinds of research have been conducted on the relationship between science and culture during the last decade (*Ref: Parsania, 2015; Golshani, 2018*), as well as the relationship between science and religion (*Ref: Bagheri, 2008; Golshani, 2018; Rezania, 2018; Haught, 1995*), but the relationship between religion and development has received less attention. Meanwhile, the conflict and challenges between material and secular civilizations as well as religious and spiritual civilizations have reached their peak and become clearer.

This study seeks to the relationship between religion and development from the perspectives of Muslim thinkers, which can strengthen the theoretical foundation of the Islamic pattern of development. As the main question, are there serious inconsistencies between the epistemological

propositions of science and the epistemic propositions based on human rationality and revelation teachings? Is it possible to take seriously the development made by human hands, including experimental science and new technologies, and to focus on revelation teachings? We will pay attention to the answers to the above questions from the point of view of *Muẓaffar 'Iqbāl*.

Theoretical Foundations and Research Background

The relationship between religion and development is usually placed under the discussion on the relationship between science and religion among Western researchers and under the relationship between intellect and religion in the Islamic world.

To analyze the relationship between development and religion, it is necessary to briefly discuss the relationship between science and religion in the West. In the Middle Ages, religion had absolute superiority and science did not have a wide circle that could cause a serious challenge to religion.

According to *Barbour* the companionship of science and philosophy with religion and the harmony of the views of thinkers and philosophers, nature's service to man, and man's service to God are among the characteristics of the Middle Ages that no serious conflict between science and religion is observed (*Barbour, 1997: 18; Alizmani, 2001*).

The first sparks of the conflict between science and religion were struck in the 17th century since the new science of the 17th century was different from the experimental science of the Middle Ages. In addition, mathematical reasoning and experimental observation were considered the most important methods of gathering data from epistemological propositions. Accordingly, with the revelation of the secrets of nature by new science and the inadequacy of the concept of God that the church presented, needing God was less felt, so the first sparks of the conflict between science and religion were ignited (*Mohiti Ardakan, 2013: 29-42*).

William James, an American philosopher and psychologist, considered the 18th century a rationalist age, which entered the field of religious truth with the foot of rationality, in such a way that all aspects of life, including human progress, were considered dependent on empirical reason (Ref: *Carroll, 2018*).

In the 19th century, the conflict between science and religion was formed in different ways in the West. In addition to the relationship between religion and science, the relationship between religion and progress was also considered. *August Kent* talked about societies passing through divine and philosophical stages and entering the scientific and educational period so that the progress and development of mankind were considered dependent on the supremacy of experimental science over religion and philosophy, as well as religion as an obstacle to progress and development. *Darwin's* species exchange theory is one of the other types of conflict between

science and religion in this century. (Ref: *Rezania, 2018*).

In the 20th century, the interaction between science and religion was discussed and development as a product of science concerning religion was investigated. At the beginning of this century, *Freud* considered religion a type of neurosis and the most important enemy of science, and logical positivism emerged by calling metaphysical propositions meaningless (*Golshani, 2021:130*).

However, in the continuation of the 20th century, in existentialism and the differentiation of the language of religion in the philosophy of linguistic analysis, religion was introduced as completely distinct from science, not conflicting with it (*Barbour, 1997: 144*). In the second half of the 20th century, the failure of the development paradigms and the weaknesses of science-based progress in individual and social life, the conflict between religion and science, and the resulting development became weaker. The modernization

theorists considered religion and tradition serious obstacles to the development of countries. However, at the end of the 20th century, the thinkers of the new modernization paradigm such as *Giddens* did not consider tradition and religion as obstacles to development, but rather as one of the factors for the development of countries.

After the Middle Ages, significant progress in natural sciences from the 17th to the 19th century in the West provided the context for the conflict between science and religion. From the 19th century, discussions related to human growth and development were raised with the works of thinkers such as *Comte* and *Marx*, and the idea that religion not only has no role in the development of man and society but also is the main obstacle became popular. In the 20th century, various interactions between science and development and religion were proposed, including the distinction between development and religion and the complementarity of development

and religion (*Ref; Razania Shirazi, 2022; Sajidi, 2001*).

Muẓaffar 'Iqbāl has also addressed this issue in his works. In the definition of science from the perspective of Islam, he stated:

Science is an organized study of nature. Since it was developed in Islamic civilization, could not treat nature and its study as an alien being to Islam (Ref: Iqbal, 2019).

He argued with the Qur'an, verses of chapter *Noor*, that nature, e.g., everything between the heaven and the earth, obeys the divine command and acts according to it, and the nature that the Qur'an described, instead of being a self-standing, automatic or random entity, is a structure. It is a development whose parts are interconnected, compatible, integrated, and vibrant, and in terms of ontology, all of them are dependent on the Creator, and in their way, they praise and glorify Him (*Ibid*).

Few researches have been done about the relationship between

Islam and development to explain the pattern of progress. Most of the research has examined the relationship between science and religion. In *Muṣaffar 'Iqbāl*'s view, considering what is happening in the Western world, more reliance is placed on explaining the relationship between religion and science, but based on his research, especially in the book *"Islam and Science"* (2019), the pattern he considered was also extracted in the relationship between religion and development. However, in the following, we will explain some research that is closer to the problem of this article in some aspects. *Mansouri* (2008) in an article entitled *"Critical Considerations on Facing the Problem of Science of Religion and Development"* concluded that the use of recent achievements in philosophy, sociology, and historiography of science, in critically understanding the past scientific tradition and paying attention to them is necessary to make policy according to the needs of the country. According to his

belief, scientific activity is a collective activity, and elitist policies without restraint will lead to technocracy, which considers the country's stability and well-being to depend on a few interests. Scholars of religious sciences should also carefully monitor the scientific achievements, foundations, and metaphysical tools of science and the various results of its application in society with more obsession and sensitivity than Western theologians.

Haji-Ahmadi (2005) has written a paper entitled *"Religion and Economic Development, Understanding or Conflict"*. Based on the findings within the mentioned research, we come across concepts that are incompatible with economic development. An exact examination shows that there is no such change, and what is presented as incompatible concepts is caused by their misunderstanding. Thus, the relationship between religion and economic development is understanding, not conflict, as this topic has been widely discussed and accepted in

philosophical and theological contexts (*Rezania, 2013: 94*).

Regarding the conflict between religion and development in its current sense, *Muzaffar 'Iqbāl* has an important placement from the thinkers' perspectives.

Dr. Muzaffar 'Iqbāl, born on December 3, 1954, in Lahore, Pakistan, is a Pakistani-Canadian chemical and Islamic thinker and author. From the beginning of his studies, he has been concerned about the Islamization of sciences, that's why he started scientific and cultural activities since he got his doctorate. The result of *Muzaffar 'Iqbāl* 's research is nearly 23 volumes of books and dozens of articles in three languages namely, Arabic, Urdu, and English.

Iqbal is the editor-in-chief of a publication on science and civilization from the perspective of Islam and Islamic sciences. His most recent project is the publication of the first encyclopedia of the Qur'an by Muslims. An article about Islamic sciences published in the *New York Times* quoted *Iqbal* saying that new science

has nothing to say about the purpose of life, while science in the Islamic world was inseparable from the purpose. In the book *Islam and Science*, consisting of eleven chapters, he examined the scientific movement in Islam and its signs, the connection between Islam and science, the destruction of the tradition and its causes, the transmission of the Islamic tradition and its transformation, and the end of colonialism, as well as the scientific interpretation. In this article, we will pay attention to the analysis and search for the pattern of progress and development in the works of *Muzaffar 'Iqbāl*, emphasizing the blessings of Islam and science.

Methodology

This study benefitted from an analytical documentary and library method. First, most of *Muzaffar 'Iqbāl* 's works were studied. Then, according to the objectives and questions of the research, some texts were extracted relating to development and religion in terms of meanings and themes.

Then the extracted texts were compared with each other to find the logical connection within. Finally, they were chosen and analyzed, finding that contained themes were related to religion, development, and progress, and there was compatibility and logical connection among them.

Theoretical Foundations of *Muḥaffar 'Iqbāl*

Muḥaffar 'Iqbāl was initially a chemist and scientist, but his concerns are in the field of Islamic studies such as "Islamic rational tradition" "Islamic history", "philosophical and metaphysical aspects of the relationship between Islam and science", "Islam and the West" and "Islam and modernity". He actively engaged in scholarly research and study within the mentioned spheres. He believes that the Islamic civilization emerged and the conflict of ideas was raised, including both Muslims and non-Muslims, just as the questions that are raised about creation and the atom as the general philosophy of the material

world and the constituents of all parts are raised. Muslims accept this permanent world that exists in this sense, and nothing other than Islamic schools believe in this permanent existence of the world. In the philosophy of creation, it is said that we created everything, as well as humans, we find meaning in the universe and the world that continues to exist, and this perception was the first challenge. *Muḥaffar 'Iqbāl*, especially in the book *Islam and Science*, described various Islamic traditions and efforts, emphasizing the products and successes achieved (*Iqbal*, 2019: 122).

He also believed that in the realm of God, man has a real relationship with his Creator, but in the realm of humans, we act self-centered. We need people to return to their schools of thought according to Islamic laws because the center of wisdom and humanity is the Islamic school of thought. Islamic civilization has everything, but we have to tell those who think of colonialism how to live. All schools of thought

have entered with a colonial approach, whereas Islamic countries and nations must solve this problem through the field and university, and this is a long-term process since we are surrounded by non-Islamic paradigms. Of course, along with this approach, it seems that *Muḏaffar 'Iqbāl* could not fully and clearly show in his books and research exactly which of the scientific works of Islamic civilization have been used other than gaining motivation from religious texts.

In the books, *Islam and Science or Philosophy of Religion and Science*, *Iqbal* not only did not fully express his claim but also no new word or research even found within, needing for completion. All the contents of his works are taken from others' research while no new points are found. The role of Islam in natural and unnatural sciences is undeniable, but a complete analysis of this fact in the works of *Muḏaffar 'Iqbāl* such as his recent books needs more completion.

Explaining The Islamic Pattern of Progress in *Muḏaffar 'Iqbāl*'s Approach

The thinkers of the differentiation approach do not consider a distinct place for religion in the field of development, because religion and development are two distinct aspects of life, in the best case, there is no conflict between them because they follow different logic. The conflict approach seeks wisdom, but to achieve this goal, many development achievements are set aside. The concept of development in today's world is linked to advances in experimental sciences, productivity, nature utilization, employment, health, well-being, and longevity. The development has made these improvements in the shadow of changing the view of man.

The conflict that some thinkers like *Nasr* believe between religion and development originated from here, restoring the sacred to human life puts aside many of the achievements of development (*Ref: Nasr, 2003*).

Seemingly, some thinkers like *Muḏaffar 'Iqbāl*, who believe in the approach of evolution between religion and development are the founders of the Islamic pattern of progress based on facts. On the one hand, they believe that the pattern of external development is an imitation that does not bring about real progress in Islamic society because it causes much dependence and lags behind human evolution and the progress of society. On the other hand, for those who believe in the evolution approach, the pattern of Western countries is not the criterion of action, but their development achievements are of interest. This approach sees religion as serving society. Religion in cooperation with development, in addition to correcting the disadvantages of development, can guide society and lead people and society toward evolution. According to *Muḏaffar 'Iqbāl*, Islam can make the Islamic nation flourish once again under the shadow of Islamic tradition (*Ref: Iqbal, 2019*).

In general, in the approach of evolution, religion should be examined in the field of society by taking the achievements of development. It is an advanced, justice-oriented, and prosperous society. As stated, this approach should answer important questions and become a research program.

A Critique Against *Muḏaffar 'Iqbāl* 's Approach

Muḏaffar 'Iqbāl seeks to express a new definition of religion so that it enables religion to move in the direction of worldly interests and prosperity. He seeks to show that Islam is not only behind in the competition between human and divine schools to build this world and create worldly technology and civilization but is more complete than all of them. Updating the religion, which from his point of view is true Islam, means turning the religious concepts, values, and teachings to the new sciences to gain the benefit of a good world, and even our hereafter will be prosperous in this way. However, ideologies

are subject to dogmatism and stereotypes. The proponents of the complementary approach, including him, have not been able to explain well how development and religion complete each other and what should be done when facing conflicts. In this respect, Peterson said:

If religion and development are considered in such a way that they can produce contradictory results, then how can the view of completion explain a single and unified reality (Peterson et al, 2012: 377).

Additionally, the lack of attention to the Shiite scientific movement is evident in his two books namely, *Islam and Science* and *Formation of Islamic Science*. The discussion demands that the views of all Islamic schools and important services in the field of science be raised. It seems that this point has been paid less attention in the mentioned two works. For example, in addition to the infallible Imams (PBUT), the

students of those nobles, including the late student of Imam Sadiq (PBUH), *Jabir Ibn Hayyan*, watered from the fountain of Imamate and made Islam and Muslims proud, but in the utter disbelief of *Muzaffar Iqbal*, his scientific activity was partial. In this respect, he said:

Among the group of scientists of the first centuries, Jaber bin Hayyan is a prominent figure. But the fact that Jabir's collection of works and writings, which are many and varied, covers a wide range of topics, shows that there must have been a growing scientific tradition much before him, because such mature and complete works cannot be a person's life will appear (Iqbal, 2019).

It seems that *Muzafar Iqbal* is doubtful about attributing all of *Jabir's* works since he said, "In recent years, *Paul Kraus*, with his opinion that the authorship of the collection of *Hayyan's* works is a group he attributes the authors and his

work is a list of manuscripts and the author has put the texts in a comprehensive order. *Muẓaffar 'Iqbāl* expresses the views of Shia scholars who have performed the most important services throughout history. For instance, *Seyyed Hassan Sadr*, the author of the book *Ta'sis al-Shi'a li-'Ulum al-Islam* proved that the foundations of Shia have been transmitted in many sciences.

In the middle of different approaches, the main question raised is how to provide an explanatory framework and pattern for such research projects by taking advantage of the strengths of the three approaches. Although we do not intend to present this pattern here, it is suggested that it contains several following characteristics:

1. It is better to distinguish between the development resulting from science and religion, intending to preserve the special features and concerns of each, thereby:

First of all, not considering this distinction should not lead

to the interference and confusion of the goals, concerns, and preoccupations of each of them. Secondly, it should not lead to the removal of one of them or their complete adaptation at the very beginning of the research project.

2. The primary distinction should not lead to the interruption of interaction and dialogue between the two. Interaction and constructive dialogue between these two come as follows:

- Do not lead to a fundamental conflict and break the relationship.
- Provide the context for the third characteristic.

3. To prepare the way for the completion approach with clear criticism: In other words, by providing the possibility of dialogue between development and religion, let's achieve a theoretical pattern about the relationship between religion and development, which is not just claiming the relationship and stating a few examples.

Research Findings

Dealing with science in Islamic society has always received special attention. This article shows that the production and expansion of science is dependent on authentic Islamic sources i.e. The Qur'an, Sunnah, and Hadiths, while Islam does not conflict with science. Other nations have influenced their progress and benefited from the scientific resources of other civilizations. However, Muslims have produced science under the shadow of Islam and its teachings, so that over several centuries, various sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, physics, medicine, and so on have made significant progress. By encouraging and inciting Muslims to study science, Islam has provided the basis for their scientific development and has allowed the use of other people's scientific progress. Islam asks Muslims not to be consumers of other people's scientific advances, but to be producers of science themselves.

Unlike some Western theorists, including *Goldzihar* who said that there was no scientific activity in Islam. He explicitly stated that science came to the Islamic world through the translation of Western texts, but it was not welcomed and returned to Europe again, causing progress and scientific revolution in Europe. (*Iqbal, 2019*)

But we should consider that Muslims were not just users, rather they produced science and knowledge themselves and created a new civilization, even Westerners in scientific productions from tradition have used Islamic sciences.

In this case, *Muẓaffar 'Iqbāl* has stated in his works that what we have from historical texts and scientific sources has proven that Muslims have always studied scientific topics, especially mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy. It has been proven that in Islamic civilization, the production of science was a definite matter, and this shows that Islamic culture could create a science

production movement. Hence, *Muzaffar Iqbal* is considered among those who believe in the complementarity between science and religion. He emphasized the continuous dialogue between the two to explain the epistemological propositions of both. There is no doubt that from the point of view of Islam, man has a noble position. Man is the end of existence i.e. the goal for creation of nature is the perfection of man. The true evolution of man passes through the world, but the world is not the destination and end of man. In Islamic society, attention is paid to both the world and the hereafter. It means that the path to human happiness passes through this world.

Accordingly, *Muzaffar Iqbal* has expressed in his works, including *Islam and Science* and *The Formation of Islamic Science*, an extensive discussion about the relationship between Islam and science and the formation of Islamic science and its impact on Western science and its influence as

well as different branches of science that are directly related to Islam., and empirical studies

Some of the results of the opinions of Muzaffar Iqbal and Muslim thinkers:

The production and expansion of science is dependent on authentic Islamic sources
Islam does not conflict with science.
Other nations have influenced their progress and benefited from the scientific resources of other civilizations.
Muslims have produced science under the shadow of Islam and its teachings.
By encouraging and inciting Muslims to study science, Islam has provided the basis for their scientific development and has allowed the use of other people's scientific progress.
Muzaffar Iqbal has discussed in his works, that in Islam, what we have from historical texts and scientific sources has proven that Muslims have always studied scientific topics, especially mathematics, and astronomy.

Conclusion

Despite a group of traditionalists trying to question the legitimacy of the development, science, and technologies of the new world and make the claim that Islam has more appropriate answers

for the blissful life of man and that traditional science with the help of revelation and infallible reason is more effective, but it can be concluded that the pattern of development is not necessarily destructive of ethics, family, environment and most importantly, truth and history. Such a development that takes place in the shadow of Islamic tradition by using the strategy of parallel dialogue and explanation between science and religion has no complete conflict with the Islamic worldview.

The distinguishing thought is that the revelatory and narrative propositions and the sciences that have been formed to explain these propositions are valuable and prescriptive sciences that have been formed to guide mankind and achieve his happiness, and every religion must be responsible for this purpose. But experimental sciences, especially human experimental sciences, and the development formed from these sciences have been formed for the empirical description and explanation of

the social world and people's material well-being. Therefore, religion and development are not in conflict with each other but are related to two independent areas, each of which has its function.

Another approach to the relationship between religion and development i.e. the opinions of *Muṣaffar 'Iqbāl*, which we named as the complement, unlike the other two approaches, believes that new human development, which is based on experimental sciences, is not incompatible with religion. Of course, an undistorted and non-regressive religion and the teachings of religion cover the defects and weaknesses that exist in this type of development and progress, including the loss of meaning in life and the unquestioning rule of instrumental rationality. Many components in Islam show the lack of conflict between these two realities. Therefore, religion complements human development.

Muslim thinkers showed that effective and fruitful

sciences are not the only sciences that have been obtained from a sensory and experimental basis.

Nowadays, it has become evident that development is not necessarily based on the same basis as the *Renaissance* standard bearers and then the experimental philosophers of the sect claimed, while they removed the supernatural and religious teachings from the circle. In the end, the paper presented multiple characteristics. The first characteristic is to consider the distinction between the development resulting from new science and technology and religion. The second characteristic is to avoid drawing a decisive border between development and religion to deny the interaction between them and to provide the possibility of an enriching dialogue with the strategy of explaining the epistemological propositions between the two. In the end, it is not enough to simply claim the relationship and view of complementarity between the

two and mention a few examples, we need an explanatory theoretical pattern.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank all my professors, especially *Dr. Hosseini* and *Dr. Rezania Shirazi*, and the reviewers of *the International Multidisciplinary Journal of Pure Life*, who provided the means of correcting and enriching this article with their compassionate guidance and insights.

Funding

This research project was carried out without financial support from scientific centers, and it was the result of the scientific efforts of the authors.

Author Contributions

Writing of the article is done by the corresponding author considering that it is derived from a Ph.D. thesis titled “*Analysis and Review of Dr. Muḏaffar ‘Iqbāl 's Views on Islam and Science*”. The second and third authors also helped to article enrichment by expressing scientific suggestions.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Ali, Asghar. Hosseini, Syed Mahdi. & Rezania Shirazi, Hamid. (2024). **Criticizing Muslim Thinkers' Views on Religion and Development in Modern Islamic Civilization (2020-2024).** *International Multidisciplinary Journal of PURE LIFE*, 11(38), 101-120.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22034/imjpl.2024.9291>

URL: http://p-l.journals.miu.ac.ir/article_9291.html

