

The Theory of Modernization in Islamic Thought and Collective Revival; A Study from the Perspective of Philosophy of Religion and Jurisprudence

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ABSTRACT

The theory of modernization in Islam rests on the proposition that religion must remain capable of responding to individual and social questions in every age. Existing scholarship has largely approached Islamic renewal historically through movements of *tajdīd*, while paying less attention to a comprehensive theoretical reconsideration of religion in relation to new forms of life. This article asks which rational and epistemic foundations can support modernization from within the Islamic tradition and how the concept of *ihyāʾ*, or revival, can provide a legitimate and continuous framework. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining philosophy of religion and Islamic jurisprudence, and examines necessity, legitimacy, possibility, scope, institutional form, and continuity through conceptual analysis, historical evidence, and philosophical argument. It finds that revival is both practically possible and rationally and religiously legitimate. It does not alter foundational principles, but renews religious understanding in individual, social, and institutional fields. Collective revival, conceived as a civil, interdisciplinary, and open-minded process grounded in tolerance and persuasion, can provide a sustainable model for the reconstruction of Islamic civilization.

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Introduction

Social transformation is inseparable from changes in time, place, knowledge, and human institutions. Religious understanding, because it shapes both personal conduct and collective life, also encounters new questions and new conditions. Islamic intellectual history has generally expressed the response to such change through the concepts of *iḥyā'*, revival, and *tajdīd*, renewal. Yet the theoretical foundations of these concepts have received less attention than the historical movements associated with them. A durable account of modernization must therefore explain why renewal is needed, whether it is religiously legitimate, what it may change, who may undertake it, and how it can continue without dissolving the identity of the tradition.

Methodology

The study is theoretical and analytical. It combines conceptual analysis of *iḥyā'* and *tajdīd* with historical evidence from Islamic intellectual and legal development and with philosophical arguments concerning continuity, rationality, and religious authority. Jurisprudence supplies an internal account of how norms are interpreted and applied, while philosophy of religion provides an external analytical perspective on the meaning and justification of religious change. The two perspectives are used together to construct a coherent framework rather than to catalogue particular reform movements.

Literature Review

Academic literature on Islamic modernization has concentrated on historical reformers, political movements, and the social consequences of *tajdīd*. This work is valuable but often treats renewal as an event or movement rather than as a recurring theoretical problem. Independent studies of the rational legitimacy, scope, institutionalization, and continuity of revival are comparatively scarce. The neglect of these questions contributes to suspicion among believers and to reform projects that are either coercive and hasty or so cautious that they fail to address contemporary realities.

Findings

The study distinguishes revival from alteration of religion. Revival concerns the recovery, clarification, and renewed application of religious meaning, not the replacement of foundational beliefs and values. Its necessity arises from changing circumstances, accumulated distortions, institutional stagnation, and new fields of human action. Its possibility is demonstrated by the history of *ijtihād* and by the capacity of legal theory to relate stable principles to variable circumstances. Its legitimacy rests on reason, the scriptural commitment to reflection and reform, and the preservation-oriented purposes of the *Sharī'a*. Its proper scope includes personal understanding, social practices, educational and legal institutions, and the public articulation of religion.

Discussion

The preferred model is collective revival. Modern complexity makes the solitary reformer an inadequate institutional model. Renewal should instead involve jurists, philosophers, social scientists, specialists, and affected communities in a civil and interdisciplinary process. Freedom of inquiry must be paired with methodological discipline, and disagreement should be managed through tolerance and persuasion rather than denunciation or force. Such a process allows movement from individual awareness to social and eventually transnational awareness while preserving the distinction between immutable principles and revisable human understandings.

Conclusion

Islamic modernization is defensible when framed as *iḥyā'* rather than as the unrestricted reconstruction of religion. Revival is necessary, possible, and legitimate, provided that it preserves foundational principles and subjects inherited interpretations and institutions to disciplined reconsideration. A collective, civil, interdisciplinary, and continuous model of revival offers the most promising basis for sustainable intellectual and civilizational renewal. Its success depends on institutional structures that protect inquiry, include diverse expertise, and replace coercive reform with reasoned persuasion.

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