

# **From Modernism to Neo-Modernism: A Religio-Political Context of Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman**

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## **Abstract**

Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman are among influential Muslim scholars after the Medieval era of the eighteenth to twentieth century. Their characteristics of thought are often titled Muhammad Abduh as a Modernist and Fazlur Rahman as a Neo-Modernist. Their thoughts became significant since they influenced several contemporary Muslim scholars in the Muslim world, such as Rashid Rida, Qasim Amin, Amina Wadud, Farid Esack, Nurkholis Majid, etc. This study examines the religio-political context of Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman in constructing their thoughts - the so-called - Modernism and Neo Modernism, followed by the comparison of both ideas. Through a comparative analysis of both scholars' thoughts, this paper ends with some results that the Ideas of modernism and neo-modernism brought by Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman are very relevant to his religio-political context and in accordance with the needs of the people of that time. Modernism of the 19th century offered about being responsive to Western progress and sticking to tradition, while neo-modernism presented the response in a more systematic and methodic.

**Keywords:** Muhammad Abduh, Fazlur Rahman, Modernism, Neo-Modernism, Religio-political Context

## **Introduction**

From the beginning of Islam through the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in the 6th century CE until today, Harun Nasution divided the history of Islamic civilization into three periods in general; the Classical period (650-1250 CE), the Middle Ages (1250-1800 CE) and the

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Modern period (1800 onwards). It can be understood that in the classical period, the Islamic civilization was very close to the Prophet, then the *Sahābah*, *Tābi'īn*, and *Tābi' Tābi'īn*. While the middle period is a period of decline due to disintegration, internal and external conflicts, the western conquest of Islamic territory, and the influence of religious practices such as Sufism that were not in accordance with the Shari'a (Nuning Hasanah, 2013)

The condition of the Islamic world after the fall of the Abbasid dynasty was followed by the weakening of Muslim intellectualism, one of which can be seen through the practice of superstition and eccentricities in religious practices and thought as mentioned above. Different from the classification of Islamic civilization made by Harun Nasution from Classic to Modern, The movement of thought in the Islamic world after the Medieval Era also experienced changes from time to time, as classified by Fazlur Rahman into four periods, firstly, the period of revivalism pra-modernism, which emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries. Among these groups were the *Wahhābis* in Arabia, the Sanusi in Africa, etc. with the main characteristics of this movement is calls to return to pure (original) Islam and eliminate superstitions contained in general Sufism, carry out the call of *ijtihād*, abandon pre-deterministic ideology. Their main purpose is purification, therefore it must always uphold *ijtihād* and avoid *taqlīd*.

Secondly, classical modernism, In the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, through the influence of Western thought, several modernist figures emerged in various parts of the Islamic world. such as Ahmad Khan (d. 1898 CE) in India, Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905 CE), and Jamaluddin al-Afghani (d. 1897 CE) in Egypt. They brought similar ideas of *Ijtihād* and to avoid *taqlīd*, but they specified their focus and scope of *ijtihād*, for instance, they were more open to the Western progressive ideas in several aspects like social, education, the status of women in family and society, as well the ideas of the politic governmental form and constitution. Thirdly, neo-revivalism, This movement is based on the previous thought movement that Islam covers all aspects of human life, both individually and collectively. but what distinguishes the second movement is that they tend to be totally anti-Western. the reason behind it is that it is a reaction to classical modernism. Fourthly, neo-modernism. While this fourth movement has the main characteristic, namely the development of a systematic methodology that is able to reconstruct the teachings of Islam in total but still based on religious texts and at the same time can answer the needs of the contemporary Muslim community. In other words, keep seeing the West as a progressive model by neither admiring it nor abandoning it blindly.

This paper will be focused on the study of the thought of Modern Muslim scholars, both Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman along with their concepts of Modernism and Neo-Modernism. The differences between the Modernism of Muhammad Abduh and the Neo-Modernism of Fazlur Rahman will be explored comparatively according to the

religiopolitical context of their times. This study will be significant since the previous studies of both scholars were concerned with their ideas rather than the religiopolitical context as a basic reason for constructing the ideas.

## **The Intellectual Journey of Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman**

### ***Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905)***

Muhammad Abduh was a famous scholar who was born in Egypt in 1849 and died in 1905. A man born to a father of Turkish blood named Abduh bin Hasan Chairullah and his mother who was a descendant of Umar bin Khattab named Junainah bint Uthman al-Kabir. Muhammad Abduh's religious education was obtained from his own family until he was 10 years old then he studied the Koran and within two years had been able to memorize it. Continuing to Thanta, he studied the Koran and other sciences such as grammar and fiqh. Not satisfied with his education, which he felt only prioritized memorization without deepening, he returned to his hometown. In 1866, Abduh continued his education at Cairo's al-Azhar University and shared his dissatisfaction with the more verbalized and dogmatic teaching methods ('Abduh, 1993; 'Abd Al-Rāziq, 1946; Adams, 1968; Amīn, 1944; Duniyā, 1958; Jackson, 2006; Ridā, n.d.; Scharbrodt, 2022; Sedgwick, 2014).

After getting advice from his father's uncle, Sheikh Darwish, he studied with Hasan al-Thawil about new sciences for him, such as logic, mathematics, and philosophy. Subsequently, he met Jamaluddin al-Afghani in 1871 and attended his lectures and studies. From him, Abduh learned philosophy, logic, and kalam, as well as social and political insight. Besides, he joined several intellectual activities outside the campus and explored his ideas through writing on Mass Media, then he graduated from al-Azhar University in 1877 though almost examiners challenged his ideas which contradicted their conservative thoughts, therefore he graduated with *darajah al-Tsānī* (Very Good), but he also got the opportunity to teach at this campus. He taught the Kalam and Logic course at al-Azhar University while he taught the book "*Muqaddimah*" by Ibn Khaldun and "*Tahdzīb al-Akhlāq*" by Ibn Miskawaih. His career flourished, and the government appointed Abdul as a permanent lecturer at *Dār al-'Ulūm* University and Khedevi Language College in 1879. He taught courses in Kalam, history, political science, and Arabic literature. As at al-Azhar, Abduh used the discussion method in his teaching so that students can contribute to each other in conveying their views. Because of some of his views and attitudes in responding to the socio-political conditions at that time, so he was dismissed and sent back to his hometown. but in 1880, the Minister of Riyadh Pasha again called him to be one of the directors of the government newspaper called "*al-Waqā'ī al-Misriyyah*" and later he was also given the task of being an Editor in Chief ('Abduh, 1993; Nasution, 1968)

In addition to intellectual activities, Abduh also engaged in political movements by joining the Egyptian National Party (*al-Hizb al-Watan*) founded by Jamaluddin al-Afghani (Al-Afghānī, 2000) Due to some reasons, Abduh was tried and exiled from the country for three years. In 1882 he has been exiled to Syria but he has chosen to stay in Beirut, 1883 he received an invitation from Jamaluddin al-Afghani to join him in Paris in an *al-Urwah al-Wutsqā* organization and finally Abduh followed him to Paris, and they published a weekly political magazine which could only be published as many as 18 editions because it was dismissed by the colonial government (‘Abduh, 1993; Syalāsy, 1987)

Latterly after Abduh returned to Beirut, he focused on the development of science and education. Apart from his teaching at several mosques, he also teaches at Madrasah Sultaniyyah in the fields of logic, *‘Ilm al-Tauhīd*, and history. Then he wrote a monumental work while in Beirut entitled “*Risālah al-Tauhīd*” (‘Abduh, 1994) In 1888, Abduh was allowed to return to Egypt and was immediately appointed as a Judge (*Hākim*), following in 1890 he was trusted to be a legal advisor to the Supreme Court based in Cairo. So afterward, in 1895 Abduh was appointed to represent the government as a member of the al-Azhar leadership council consisting of the ‘*Ulamā*’. His peak achievement was appointed as a Grand *Muftī* in 1899 replacing Sheikh Hasunah al-Nadawī until he died on July 11, 1905 (Adams, 1968; Jackson, 2006; Sedgwick, 2014)

Table 1. *Intellectual Journey of Muhammad Abduh*

Year	Intellectual And Political Journey
1849	Muhammad Abduh's birth
1859	Learn the Qur'an from a <i>Hāfidz</i> and memorize it for 2 years
1866	Entering Cairo's al-Azhar University Studying with Hasan al-Thawil on Logic, Mathematics, and Philosophy
1871	Started attending lectures and studies of Jamaluddin al-Afghani, studying philosophy, logic, kalam science, and social and political insight.
1873	Wrote the first book entitled “ <i>Risālah al-Wāridah</i> ”
1873	Writing the <i>Hāsiyah</i> book ‘ <i>alā syarh al-Dawwānī</i> ’ ‘ <i>alā al-‘Aqāid al-‘Adūdiyyah</i> ’
1877	Graduated from al-Azhar University with the rank of <i>darajah al-Tsānī</i> (very good) and had the opportunity to teach at the same campus.
1879	The government appointed Abduh as a permanent lecturer at <i>Dār al-‘Ulūm</i> University and Khedevi Language College in the subjects of Kalam, History, Political Science, and Arabic Literature. Taufiq Pasha dismissed Abduh from his teaching duties and sent him back to his hometown

1880	Appointed as editor of the government newspaper “ <i>al-Waqā’i al-Misriyyah</i> ” and later became Editor in Chief.
1882	Exiled to Syria and chose to live in Beirut
1883	Jamaluddin al-Afghani invited Abduh to follow him to Paris and joined the <i>al-Urwah al-Wutsqā</i> organization and founded the magazine with the same name.
1884	The weekly magazine has been published as many as 18 editions and was banned from circulation
	Abduh returned to Beirut and focused on developing science and education
	Teaching at Madrasah Sulthaniyah; logic, monotheism and history
	Actively convey the study of the interpretation of the Qur’an
	Writing <i>Risālah al-Tauhīd</i>
1888	Allowed to return to Egypt and appointed to become a Judge
1890	Trusted to be a legal advisor to the Supreme Court in Cairo
1895	Elected to be one of the leadership councils of al-Azhar from among the Ulama
1899	Becoming a Grand Mufti
1905	Muhammad Abduh’ death

### **Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988)**

Fazlur Rahman was born in Pakistan on September 21, 1919. His family was a religious family, Maulānā Shahāb al-Dīn was his father who graduated from Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband, he started his traditional study from Dars-i-Nizāmī with his father and also the modern school as well. In 1940, he got his B.A. (Hons) in Arabic from Punjab University Lahore and finished his first-class first of M.A. at the same campus in 1942 (Muhammad Khalid Masud, 1988). After he finished his master’s, he decided to continue his higher education at Oxford University England in 1946. With the hope that he could study Islam more critically and dynamically to face the development of society in the future then he prefer to go to Oxford instead of al-Azhar University in Egypt, then in 1949, he completed his Ph.D. in just 3 years, this is what Khalid Masud says has affected his health of eyesight (Abbas, 2017; Ahmed, 2017; Akbar, 2020; Ali, 2018; Sibawaihi, 2021; Usman et al., 2022).

In addition to developing the study of Islamic philosophy, he also mastered several languages other than English and Arabic, such as Classical Greek, Latin, German, and French. Thus he can learn Islam not only from the classical treasures but also from literature written by orientalist. Ali Raza Naqvi wrote in “Memorium: Dr. Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988)” along with the other authors Muhammad Khalid Masud and Seyyed Hossein Nasr saying that “Fazlur Rahman was a serious scholar, a devoted teacher, an honest researcher, and whenever

invested with authority, kind and compassionate towards his subordinates.” While Seyyed Hossein Nasr called Fazlur Rahman a modernist interpreter of Islam, a fine scholar, master of traditional texts of Islamic thought, and a meticulous teacher (Muhammad Khalid Masud, 1988) At the age of 32, he received a doctorate degree and was considered an intellectual figure, so he chose to live in England and teach at Durham University. then he moved to Canada and worked as an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Institute of Islamic Studies (Ahmad Amir Aziz, 2009)

In the early 1960s, Fazlur Rahman returned to Pakistan and worked at the Islamic Research Institute (IRI) in Islamabad and became a senior staff member. then in 1962, he was appointed by the government to be a Director of the research institute. He succeeded in publishing two academic journals; “Islamic Studies” in English and “*Fikr-u Nazhr*” in Urdu. Furthermore, he was also appointed to be a member of the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology founded by the Government of Pakistan. Rahman’s step received a lot of attention, especially from traditionalist Muslims and resistance to his thoughts and movements grew stronger so he later resigned in 1968. Although there is also an opinion that says the resistance to him is merely a form of resistance to the government, explicitly President Ayub Khan for Rahman’s position which was given to Rahman instead of given to the traditionalist scholars. In 1969 he moved to America and settled in Chicago as a professor of Islamic studies at the Department of Near Eastern Language and Civilization. for approximately eighteen years until he died in that country in 1988 (Bektovic, 2016; S. Hunter & Hunter, 2014; Muhammad Khalid Masud, 1988)

*Table 2. Intellectual Journey of Fazlur Rahman*

Year	Intellectual And Political Journey
1919	Fazlur Rahman’s birth
1940	completed his B.A. (Hons) in Arabic, Punjab University Lahore
1942	completed his M.A. in Arabic, First class first, Punjab University
1943-1946	became a research student at Punjab University
1946-1949	Doing his Ph.D. and completed in 1949 at Oxford University on Avicenna’s Psychology
1950-1958	Lecturer in Persian studies and Islamic philosophy at Durham University, England
1952	Published “Avicenna’s Psychology”, Oxford University Press
1958	Published “Prophecy in Islam”, London
1958-1961	Associate professor, Institute of Islamic Studies McGill University, Montreal Canada
1959	Published “Avicenna’s De Anima”, Oxford University Press
1961-1962	Visiting professor, Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, Pakistan
1962-1968	Director at Central Institute of Islamic Research, Islamabad Pakistan
1965	Published “Islamic Methodology in History”, Karachi
1967	Published “Islam”, London and New York
1968	Published “Letters of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi”, Karachi; Iqbal Academy
1969	Visiting Professor, Spring Term, University of California, Los Angeles, USA



1969-1988	Professor at the University of Chicago, USA
1975	Published "Philosophy of Mulla Sadra" State university of New York Press
1979	Published "Major Themes of the Qur'an", Bibliotheca Islamica
1982	Published "Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition" University of Chicago
1984	Published "Islam and Modernity" Paperback, University of Chicago
1987	Published "Health and Medicine in Islamic Tradition", New York. The Cross Road Publishing
1988	Incomplete Writing "Revival and Reform in Islam. A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism"
1988	Fazlur Rahman's Death

## Religiopolitical Contexts of Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman

### Egypt of the Nineteenth Century

Studies on Modern Egypt can be categorized into two types; the early modern period and the Modern Egypt period. Early modern can be traced from Ottoman Egypt (1517-1867), French Occupation (1798-1801), Egypt under Muhammad Ali Pasha (1805-1882) and Khedivate Egypt (1867-1914). In the period of Modern Egypt then emerged the British occupation (1882-1922), the Sultanate of Egypt (1914-1922), the Kingdom of Egypt (1922-1953), and the Republic (1953-now). While Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) was an Egyptian reformer and Muslim scholar who lived during the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha and the Khedivate of Egypt (Adams, 1968; Daly, 1998; Hourani, 1983)

This study will focus on the religiopolitical situation in the 19th century where Muhammad abduh lived. Starting from the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha as a Governor of Egypt under the Ottoman dynasty, he won the war against the Mamlūk dynasty that ruled previously for centuries, in 1805 Muhammad Ali finally took over Egypt's power with the approval of the Ottoman Sultan (Fahmy, 1998; F. R. Hunter, 1998). During his leadership, modernization occurred in several aspects, both in the military and educational fields. Why is this important because the advancement in the military field will support his power, and it is impossible to progress if not supported by developing the education and modern sciences. This can be seen through the establishment of the Ministry of Education for the first time in Egypt (1815), besides he also built a Technical School (1816), a medical school (1836), and a translation school (1836). To succeed the programs, he sent Egyptian students to France, brought lecturers from France, sent hundreds of students to study in Italy, England, Austria with government scholarships. The students were sent to study military, naval, mechanical engineering, medicine, pharmacy, arts and crafts (Abidin, 2015; Adams, 1968; Botman, 1998).

Discussion about the political condition of Egypt in Modern age is discussing Muhammad Ali, Hitti calls him the father of the Egyptian state, at least in the Modern era. His work in taking all the roles of his government absolutely and distributing it to the chosen people he trusted. One of them was Seve, a French Colonel who converted to Islam and changed his name to Sulaimān Pasha. Has reorganized and modernized the Egyptian armed forces and followed the Syrian invasion. Another action was the first military expedition in 1811 to 1818 by attacking the Wahhābī group in Saudi Arabia for a long time. An effort to defend his power against the rebellion of the Mamlūk, Tūsūn, a son of Muhammad Ali invited a total of 470 of them to a coffee banquet at the Cairo Fort and then slaughtered him to warn the surviving Mamlūk to not revolt against Muhammad Ali. In 1831, Muhammad Ali's troops invaded Syria and succeeded in 1816 to 1818 when they attacked the Wahhābīs and failed against the Greeks. This is the largest military effort carried out by Muhammad Ali. In 1841, the power of Egypt was passed to his son Ibrahim (Hitti, 1970; F. R. Hunter, 1998).

The Modern Age made many people paradoxical, some of them opposed the progress and influence of the West and on the other hand accepted their ideas and knowledge, including the ideas of nationalism and political democracy which were very influential at that time. Among the reformers who had a great influence on the religio-political in Egypt was Muhammad Abduh. He is troubled by the weakening condition of the Muslim community, he even denounces superstitious and heretical practices that can damage their faith (Hitti, 1970). Abduh often regret the traditionalist teaching of Islam, emphasizing memorization without critical thinking, therefore when he taught in campus, he applied the discussion method with his students so that it was not just normative and dogmatic.

### ***Pakistan of the Twentieth Century***

Pakistan of the Twentieth century started with its form of the dominion of Pakistan in 1947 within the British Commonwealth as the result of the Pakistan Movement and the partition of India (Lawrence, 1997; Metcalf, 2004). It transformed into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan from 1956 until the present (Jan, 1998; Mehdi, 2013). Fazlur Rahman was a Pakistani scholar born in the North West of Pakistan in 1919, while in 1933 he live in Lahore until he accomplished his M.A. in 1942 and became a research student up to 1946 (Ahmed, 2017). During this time, Pakistan was still not established, the region was appropriated by the East India Company by 90 years of direct British rule. Due to efforts of future national poet Allama Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah to independent Pakistan. Iqbal said:

“India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages, and professing different religions [...] Personally, I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire, or



without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India.”(Iqbal, 1977).

From 1947 to 1956, the head of state was the Pakistani Monarch linked to the Monarch of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth realms. So that the Monarch was represented by the Governor-General in Pakistan until it became Republic under the constitution of 1956 and the head of state was replaced by a ceremonial President. Then Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the first Governor-General of Pakistan. While the first called president was Major General Iskandar Mirza from 1956 to 1958, and his successor was Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan from 1958 to 1969. Rahman returned to Pakistan from England during the reign of President Ayub Khan (Lawrence, 1997).

The conflict that occurred in early Pakistan was between traditionalist and modernist groups so ideologically they differed in opinion in determining the form of an Islamic state (Amin & Rauf, 2021; Nasr, 2001). Therefore 1956 Pakistan just promulgated its first constitution after a long debate and compromise over nine years. During the reign of the Governors-General, the government was guided by the “Objective Resolution” to accommodate people’s thoughts at the time by compromising the form of the state with the sovereignty of God as determined by traditionalist Ulama as well the Modern Intellectuals. However, the government is still facing resistance from extreme traditionalists regarding the position of minorities so they want to draft their own constitution. until finally there was an anti-Ahmadiyah Qadiyan demonstration by the traditionalists, they demanded that the Qadiyans be declared as a non-Muslim minority and it is not allowed the non-Muslims to be involved in the government (Nasr, 2001).

In 1956, Pakistan officially became the Islamic Republic but since the elected President Iskandar Mirza was secular, he wanted to separate the state and religion and he made big movements; suspended the 1956 constitution, dissolved political parties, eliminated the legislative, and changed the ‘Islamic Republic of Pakistan’ to the ‘Republic of Pakistan’ (Jan, 1998). Because of the extraordinary chaos and disappointing society, finally Ayub Khan overthrew Iskandar Mirza through the 1958 Military Coup. Ayub Khan strived for the Islamization of Pakistan. in 1962 formed a second constitution, and from the new constitution then formed two important institutions, namely the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology and the Islamic Research Institute. he is very ambitious to make Pakistan advance according to the demands of modernity. Therefore he appointed people who were in line with him, and Fazlur Rahman was among them. Rahman was appointed to be a director of the Islamic Research Institute with the command to interpret Islamic teaching into scientific and rational formulas so that it can encounter the needs of a progressive modern society (Lawrence, 1997).

## Comparison of Modernism and Neo-Modernism

Modernism literally refers back to the Modern age as understood as the post-traditional and post-medieval historical period. In the general definition, it is modern thought, character, and practices. It caused many traditionalists to consider that modernism will challenge the religious heritage more than modernization itself. According to Fazlur Rahman, the Muslim Modernist as “those who have made an articulate and conscious effort to reformulate Islamic values and principles in terms of modern thought or to integrate modern thought and institutions with Islam.” Here he stated that the Quranic text could not be substituted but the interpretation of its value could be adjusted to the need of modern society. Muhammad Abduh was also impressed with modernity which principally supported the progression of Muslim society, he proposed the basic substance of a modern ideal was grounded in rationalism, liberalism, nationalism, and universalism of Islam. The idea of his modernity showed its impact in the field of Tafsīr, Hadīts, philosophy, Islamic theology or Kalām, etc (Ahmad N. Amir, Abdi O. Shuriye, 2012; Sedgwick, 2014).

Abduh was very critical of the development of Islamic thought in his time, especially after he studied with Jamaluddin al-Afghani and took higher education at al-Azhar University. He wrote his first book entitled *Risālah al-Wāridah*, in which he talked about the problems of religious life based on his experience of living the life of Sufism. In addition, he also conveyed his personal experience in practicing a religion that adapts to the demands of the times. The next proof of his critical thinking was his notes entitled *Hāsiyah ‘alā syarh al-Dawwāni ‘alā al-‘Aqā’id al-Adhūdiyyah* in 1873.

Basically, he commented and gave different views of Jalāluddin al-Dawwāni in reviewing the theological book of Abdurrahman al-Iji entitled *‘Aqā’id al-Adhūdiyyah*, he exposed his independent thought through this work (Ahmad Amir Aziz, 2009). Starting two of his works at a young age has invited a lot of resistance from various parties, especially among the traditional ‘Ulamā’ of al-Azhar. They even thought that Abduh had revived the Mu’tazilite sect while the majority of Muslims in Egypt at his time were Ash’ariyah. He stated that why should he *taqlīd* to Mu’tazilah instead of leaving the *taqlīd* to Asy’ariyah, here he really prioritized a strong argument.

Abduh’s modernist thought also developed in religious-social perception, he promoted the importance of learning logic and rational argument to strengthen religious understanding so it will not be easy to get stuck in a rigid understanding of seeing the latest social changes. His ideas were explored -for instance- through an article titled “*al-‘Ulūm al-Kalāmiyah wa al-Da’wah ilā ‘Ulūm al-Asriyah*” published in a Newspaper “*Al-Ahrām*”. Abduh’s thoughts and

attitudes appeared to be actually a response to the situation and social demands of his time, which is one of the characteristics of a modernist; being fast in responding the community developments as well as being quickly responding to by the community.

Abduh's modernism in the field of law is very influential on society. For him, the law is a means of creating benefits (*maslahah*) for humans, so that it can be continuously restructured for the purpose of human welfare and not just maintaining the legal material. For example regarding the polygamy matter, In general, scholars have agreed that polygamy is permissible in Islam based on clear arguments in the Qur'an. But for Abduh, polygamy is a practice that cannot be separated from the social law that develops in society. meaning he urged to see the side of the problem first. because basically, the principle in Islamic law of marriage is monogamy, not polygamy, according to him.

There were many other ideas of Abduh's modernism, which if concluded, it focused on three things: the liberation of thought from *taqlid*; efforts to provide an understanding of religion like the *Salaf* without declining the possibility of later different perspectives; placing religion equivalent to the development of science. Contrary to Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhāb's idea of returning religious understanding to the *Salaf* Ulama, Abduh was more positive about science, so the door of *ijtihad* was always opened for his *Ummah* to use their minds in understanding the text because Islam for him was a rational religion. H.A.R. Gibb argued that Abduh specified four main points of his modernism: (1) purification of Islam from deviation, (2) revitalization of Islamic higher education, (3) reformulation of Islamic teachings in line with modern thought, (4) Islam defense against European-Christian influences and attacks (Gibb, 1947).

Unlike Abduh, Fazlur Rahman is a figure who continued his higher education in the West even though he also studied the fundamentals of Islamic teaching in Pakistan. so this is one of the factors that encourage him to develop intellectually and academically. His idea of neo-modernism can be seen in his works (Rahman, 1975, 1979, 2000, 2009a, 2011), being able to speak foreign languages other than Arabic and English, like classical Greek, Latin, French, and German made it easier to study literature in different languages. One example is when he edited one of Ibn Sina's works "*al-Nafs*", the first step he had to examine and compared with eight Arabic manuscripts, two in Latin, and one in Tehran text. Another monumental work was his book entitled "Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy" (Rahman, 1958) published in 1956. He discussed the prophethood was halfway between the lines of orthodoxy and philosophy, and critical opinions on these two groups. He concluded that basically, the prophetic doctrine conveyed by philosophers is the legacy of Hellenism, there is no fundamental difference between philosophical and non-philosophical positions in the concept of prophethood, so he saw the difference with orthodox opinion was natural because the approach was indeed different (Ahmed, 2017).

According to Rahman, Islamic philosophical thought in the early modern period was unbalanced because it only focused on practical legal and social issues. so philosophically, Muslims faced attacks from Western criticism concerning Islam. until finally he was amazed by the writing of a modern philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (Lee, 2018). “Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam” (Iqbal, 2012). Rahman was impressed by Iqbal’s approach in that he combined religious doctrines and philosophical thought, he carried up the role of religion to individual and social as well. Influenced by Iqbal’s thought, Rahman developed Islamic theology as he wrote in an Islamic Studies journal in 1967, he wanted for a theological doctrine to be truly functional it must run parallel to the principles of the Qur’an. From there, he wrote the book “Major Themes of the Qur’an” (Rahman, 2009b), his method was to synthesize various themes logically and chronologically so that it is clear how the Qur’an talks about itself, some say that its interpretation is contextual interpretation.

Rahman Neo Modernism in public policy, such as: (1) He was one of those who passed the ordinances of Muslim family law, including polygamy laws, women’s rights, and inheritance provisions which later reaped the protests. (2) Through Islamic Research Institute, he promoted the idea of family planning or population control followed by the protest against him. (3) As an advisory board for Islamic ideology, he suggested that the taxation structure be defined by re-implementing Zakat but the Government saw this idea was too early. (4) Pakistan’s high commissioner’s office in London asked for his confirmation regarding the Islamic legal status of mechanical slaughter and he stated that there is no danger from the Shari’ah point of view, it is still legal and lawful (Ahmad Amir Aziz, 2009; Bektovic, 2016).

Some of his other works also did not escape criticism and protests, especially from traditionalists, but his modernity of thought was within his review, evaluation, and attitude on various problems. But theoretically, his studies lead to a lot of religio-philosophical issues that seek a way out between the debates of philosophers and non-philosophers. While practically, he was trying to find an Islamic identity for his country Pakistan. Unfortunately, this has not been successful because Pakistan at that time was not conducive until finally, he decided to leave his country for reasons; of the absence of intellectual freedom, and because his career has more place in the West (Abbas, 2017; Akbar, 2020; Ali, 2018; Muhammad Khalid Masud, 1988; Usman et al., 2022).

In Chicago, he noted the need for the reconstruction of Islamic intellectualism with the concept that Muslims must be able to distinguish normative Islam and historical Islam, as well as the need to reconstruct the Islamic sciences which include theology, law, ethics, philosophy, and social sciences. Here then he formulated the typology of the Islamic movement by categorizing his thoughts as part of neo-modernism because of the development of a systematic methodology in carrying out a total reconstruction of Islam (Abbas, 2017).

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## Conclusion

Personally, Muhammad Abduh and Fazlur Rahman have significant similarities and differences. They were both born and raised in a religious family, had a love for science and education, and memorized the Qur'an at a very young age, they were not anti-Modern and West but they adapted the progressiveness, especially in intellectual, academic, social, and political aspects. The difference between both scholars is Abduh studied Islam from various teachers both on campus and off campus, including studying with Jamaluddin al-Afghani and even being his partner in several activities. He studied at al-Azhar University and took part in political movements with Afghani until he was expelled from Egypt. Had a career in Paris within a few months and finally returned to Egypt with various achievements until his death. Rahman's higher education level started at Punjab University Lahore - Pakistan in the field of Arabic, then he continued his Ph.D. at Oxford University England, he built his academic career in Europe while he skilled in several languages including English and Arabic, such as classic Greek, Latin, French, and Germany so that most of his life spent in the West. A few years later, he returned and received several positions and achievements in Pakistan, but the confrontation against him was so strong that he returned again to the West until his death. Abduh was involved in political movements while Rahman only focused on the field of academics.

Abduh's modernism is a positive response to the progress of the contemporary world, but on the other hand, he also did not leave the traditional heritage. For example was his concern with the preservation of the Arabic language, for him as Muslims it is obligatory to uphold the Arabic language for the sake of sustaining the originality of Islamic understanding, as well as he taught classical books such as the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun and *Tahdzib al-Akhlāq* of Ibn Miskawaih. As compared to the Modernism of Abduh, Fazlur Rahman developed a systematic methodology to reconstruct Islamic teaching comprehensively while still grounded in the spiritual roots of Islam to answer the needs of the modern Muslim world. On the one hand, he was not blindly adopted the West nor denied it at all, as well as the historical heritage of Islam, and neo-modernism will still be critical. To him, tradition is not a collection of static and unchanging past inheritances, but a dynamic process that continues to change but is directed in line with Islamic principles.



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