Incorporating Contemporary Social Sciences with Islamic Philosophy

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Abstract: The purpose of discussion in this paper is to understand the contemporary and Islamic social sciences in the light of Islamic philosophy and to define and prepare a theoretical framework to blend contemporary social sciences with Islamic philosophy. The first part, informs about the contributions of Muslims scholars to Science in the 8th century based on systematic observation and experiments, with a distinct concept of social sciences. The second part, gives an overview of contemporary social sciences; elaborates the branches and evolution of social sciences; evaluates and examines the modern social sciences; compares the methodology of contemporary and Islamic social sciences. The third part, elaborates and compares the philosophy of contemporary and Islamic social sciences. The fourth part, highlights the foundations of Islamic philosophy of social sciences; answers the questions: why and how to blend contemporary social sciences with Islamic philosophy.

Key words: Social Sciences · Islamic Philosophy · Islamic scholars · Ummah · Islamization of knowledge

INTRODUCTION

It is generally acknowledged that the Muslim scholars were the founders of contemporay science, which was based on systematic observation and experiments. They started the work in the 8th century and assimilated whatever their predecessors achieved. They not only preserved and disseminated it, but within a short period of time, systematised the previously acquired knowledge and made significant advances of such fundamental nature that the phenomenal development of the contemporay era could not have been possible without the contributions made by them [1].

On these grounds, Muslims believe in a distinct concept of social sciences. It means that Islam has its own social, economic and political system. Unfortunately, due to the colonial rule, Muslims did not have the opportunity to practice their own system. However, during the last half of the 20th century, when the Muslim nations got independence from colonial rule, there has been an urge to revive, induce and practice Islamic philosophy in contemporay social sciences. Several Muslim scholars took up this task and made scholarly contributions during the last centuries. These contributions gained momentum during late fifties of the 20th century, when some prominent Islamic scholars decided to Islamize contemporay social sciences [2].

During the last quarter of the 20th century, significant amount of research work has been done in this field, with the result that, these sciences are now been recognised as a scientific discipline in the academic circles as 'Islamic Social Sciences'. This is further increasing the interests of Muslim and the non-Muslim researchers in this field [3].

A program for the Islamization of the Sciences was conceived and crystallized in a number of conferences. It consists of twelve steps, designed to effect the necessary Islamization in the various disciplines of human knowledge. Details of this program can be seen in *"Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Workplan",* The International Institute of Islamic Thought, Washington, D.C. [4].

Some of these steps seek to survey and evaluate contemporay Contemporay accomplishments. Others do the same for the legacy of Muslim learning. The purpose is to reach full mastery of the "state of the art" in each discipline and to prepare that discipline for re-establishment on Islamic foundations [5].

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An Overview of Contemporary Social Sciences: Social Science in the field of human knowledge that deals with all aspects of the group life of human beings [6]. Any discipline or branch of science that deals with the social and cultural aspects of human behaviour; it is sometime called behaviourial science. Social sciences generally include economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, social psychology and human geography, cultural or social anthropology. Also frequently included are social and economic geography and those areas of education that deal with the social contexts of learning and the relation of the school to the social order. History is regarded by many as a social science and certain areas of historical study are almost indistinguishable from work done in the social sciences. Most historians, however, still consider history as one of the humanities. It is generally best, in any case to consider history as marginal to the humanities and social sciences, since its insights and techniques pervade both. The study of comparative law may also be regarded as a part of social sciences, although it is ordinarily pursued in schools of law rather than in departments or schools containing most of the other social sciences. During the past quarter of a century, the behavioural sciences have become more and more commonly used for the disciplines cited as social sciences. Whether the term behavioural sciences will in time supplant "social sciences" or whether it will, as neologisms so often have before, disappear without trace in a few years is impossible to say [7].

Development of Contemporay Social Sciences: Although the social sciences not formally founded until the 19th century, their theoretical origins can be traced to the spirit of rational inquiry that informed Greek thought. In the following centuries, however, the impulse to explore human institutions and human nature weakened. In the Middle-Ages theology dominated scholarly views of human behaviour. Theology was replaced in the Renaissance by reducing respect for the Greek classics and, later, by an appeal from the geometrical-deductive philosophy of *Rene Descartes* (1596-1650). During the 17th and 18th centuries, however, the development of the social sciences was advanced by a rising awareness, through trade and exploration, of the variety of human experience, the idea of structure (borrowed from the physical and biological sciences) and the philosophy of developmentalism and the understanding that the present is an outgrowth of the past. The need for a redefinition of human culture was evident by the beginning of the

19th century and with the onset of French Revolution (1789-1799) and the spread of Industrial Revolution, the profound implications of social change became clear. 19th century literature and philosophy reflect the major social themes of the period. These themes became the source of new philosophies and ideologies.Conservative thinkers such as *Edmund Burke* (1729-1797)*, Alexis de Tocqueville* (1805-1859) and *Max Weber* (1864-1920) called for a return to the values of democracy, capitalism, industrialism and individualism, while such radicals as *Karl Marx* (1818-1883) rejected capitalism for Communism. Other popular 19th century ideologies that influenced the social sciences were positivism, humanitarianism and evolutionism. In the 20th century new issues in the social sciences surfaced. Nationalism, mass democracy, unchecked industrialism and technology have produced and nourished the ideologies of Existentialism, Marxism and Freudianism. These and other factors in turn have brought about increasing specialization, the growth of interdisciplinary research and the professionalization of the social sciences. Statistical studies, established as a separate branch, have become valuable tools for each of the disciplines. Despite the 20th century emphasis on method and fact, the search for unifying principles has continued. Some of the better-known contemporay approaches toward general theory are developmentalism, the social-systems method, structuralism and interactionism [7].

Evaluation of Contemporay Social Sciences: The disciplines of the social sciences are just about a century old. In most of the universities, these include five disciplines, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics and history. Two more disciplines enjoy a double status. They are geography and psychology. Although these disciplines have achieved independent status in the universities during the last century, the forces that led to their emergence and success are about two centuries old.

Today's social sciences have grown out of moral philosophy (as the natural sciences have emerged from natural philosophy). It has often been observed, that their separate identity owes much to the great revolutions of the 18th century, the Industrial (English) and the bourgeois (French) Revolutions. Among the Scottish moral philosophers of that time the study of political economy was tied with wider social issues (though not called social science). With the dominance of positivism in the early 19th century, especially in France, positive philosophy or

social science took the place of moral philosophy. According to *Auguste Comte* (1798-1857), Positivism emphasizes the realistic as against the speculative, the useful as against the idle, the certain as against the indecisive, the precise as against the vague, the positive as against the negative or critical. It is thus both are sciences in the sense of 19th century materialism. Comte borrowed the term, *science sociale,* from *Charles Fourier* (1772□1837) to describe the artificial discipline of the construction of science. At the same time, he had no doubt that the method of social science (which he also called social-physics) was in no way different from that of natural sciences [8].

Five developments either stemming from *Comte,* or encouraged by different traditions, have helped in confusing the methodological picture of the social sciences:

• Many of those who took the analogy to the natural sciences seriously, engaged in social research. The great factual surveys of *Charles Booth* (1840-1916) in Britain and of the Chicago School in the United States, bear witness to this trend. *Frederic Le Play* (1806-1882) had started a similar tradition in France. In Germany, the *Verein für Socialpolitik* (Social Policy Association) adopted the same research techniques. Such often large-scale descriptive enterprises are the precursors of contemporay ('Empirical') social research and analysis.

• Science, of course, is more than fact-finding. Thus, a natural-science notion of theoretical social science has informed at least two of the heroes of sociology, *Emile Durkheim* (1858-1917) and *Vilfredo Pareto* (1848-1923). *Durkheim* in particular was impressed by the need to study 'social facts', whereas *Pareto* stimulated both metatheoritical insights and specific theories. They have had few followers.

• Instead, by the turn of the century, methodological dichotomy was born which gave rise to a third aspect, or notion, of social science. Against the ambitions of those who tried to emulate the natural sciences in the study of social phenomena, the German school of thought gained ground, according to which social phenomena do not lend themselves to such rigid analysis, but require a different approach, one of *Verstehen* [understanding]*,* of empathy and understanding. *Max Weber* (1864-1920) straddles different approaches, but introduced into social science what were later called 'hermeneutic' or 'phenomenological' perspectives.

• It can readily be seen that all three approaches mentioned so far are most closely associated with the subject of sociology and its history. Indeed, economics soon began to go its own way. Ever since the decline of the German historical ('romantic') school of economists, it developed as the discipline which of all the social sciences most nearly deserves the name, science. Economic knowledge is to a considerable extent cumulative; theories are developed and tested, if not always against reality, then at least against models and their assumptions. *Verstehende* (Interpretative Sociology) economics, even descriptive economics, have become the exception.

• *Max Weber* (1864-1920) also insisted on another distinction, which defines the fifth aspect of social science that between knowledge, however gained and values, prescription and description (or theory) belongs to different universes of discourse. The distinction was explosive at the time (*Werturteilsstreit:* A value-judgment dispute in German sociology and economics) and continues to be that, although political theory, moral philosophy, jurisprudence have gone their own ways and the study of social policy has shifted from the prescriptive to the analytical. These, are the distinct methodological elements of social science today [8].

Methodology of Contemporary Social Sciences: The contemporary scholarship of human nature and society possibly not realised, that not all the data of human behaviour is observable by the senses and hence cannot be quantified and measured. The human phenomenon does not consist of "natural" elements exclusively. Elements of morality and spirit are also the prominent intergral parts of it. These are not necessary results of the elements of nature and are not deducible from them. They are independent in the sense of their validity even if the accompanying elements of nature differ or violate them. Yet, no description of social relations is complete without reference to them. Nor are they universally the same in human groups but depend upon traditions of culture, religion and personal and group preference and which can never be logically defined. Being spiritual, these elements are not isolable, separable from their natural carriers. Nor can they ever ben measured or quantified by science. Science treated them as inexistent or irrelevant. It pressed the claims of its analysis of the observable, natural elements in human behaviour and insisting on explaining human conduct, which resulted in substandard theories and incomplete

explanations. In order that the analysis might remain scientific, the social scientists perhaps mistakenly reduced the moral or spiritual component of social reality to its material effect or carrier. To this day, their methodology remains devoid of tools to recognize moral or spiritual component of social reality [9].

This fundamental mistake in defining and identifying the data of social sciences led to another mistake that the laws, which govern social reality, can be established if the rules of science are carefully followed.

This argument shows that Contemporay social sciences are incomplete; hence useless as a model for the Muslims; and they breach a crucial requirement of Islamic methodology.

Methodology of Islamic Social Sciences: Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Islamic methodology is the principle of the unity of truth. This principle holds that truth is a modality of God and is inseparable from Him, that truth is one just as God is one. Reality does not merely derive its existence from God Who is its Creator and ultimate cause; it derives its meaning and its values from His will which is its end and ultimate purpose. It means fulfilment or non-fulfilment of value. Indeed, reality becomes actual when it turns into example of the divine will. Therefore, it should be studied in the modality of value-realization or value-violation. As such, i.e. outside that modality, reality is nothing at all. It is hence invalid to seek to establish a knowledge of human reality without acknowledging what that reality ought to be. Any investigation of a human "is" must therefore include its standing as an "ought to be" within the domain of possibility [9].

Philosophy of Contemporary Social Sciences: Every science begins as philosophy and ends as art; it arises in hypothesis and flows into achievement. Philosophy is a hypothetical interpretation of the uknown (as in metaphysics), or of the in-exactly known (as in ethics or political philosophy) [10].

The philosophy of social science can be described broadly as having two aims. First, it seeks to produce a rational reconstruction of social science. This entails describing the philosophical assumptions that underpin the practice of social inquiry. Second, the philosophy of social science seeks to critique the social sciences with the aim of enhancing their ability to explain the social world or otherwise improve our understanding of it. Thus, philosophy of social science is both descriptive and prescriptive. No single approach to social inquiry

seems capable of capturing all aspects of social reality. But a kind of unification of the social sciences can be posited by envisioning the various methods as participating in an on-going dialogue with each other [11].

The philosophy of contemporay social sciences is based on the denial of metaphysical phenomenon or holds a mechanical concept of life in which the existence of non-material things is not recognized. It holds, secular concepts regarding the creation of Man and other creations; creation and administration of the universe by Laws of Nature; the mechanical or accidental concept of universe; universe being subservient to Man to benefit according to his personal instincts and whims; concept of life Hereafter and trial; people's sovereignity; concept of humanism; concept of rights and obligations; laws for the protection of life, property and honour [12].

This philosophy considers man completely free in his thought and action and regards this worldly life alone to be the sole target. It is the material gain alone, which counts.This concept of natural and social sciences disregards the soul and its requirements and gives exclusive attention to human body and its demands. In consequence, moral values, which prove to be a barrier in the realisation of worldly objectives are either rejected, or regarded as merely relative subject to the needs of time [13].

In the light of above arguments, we may assume that the philosophy of contemporay social sciences is not compatible to the Islamic philosophy social sciences.

Philosophy of Islamic Social Sciences: Islamic philosophy, is a unique and fascinating form of thought and particular interest lies in its classical (Greek-influenced) period, when many of the ideas of Greek philosophy were used to explore the issues and theoretical problems which arise in trying to understand the Qur'ân and Islamic practice [14].

Islamic philosophy is a branch of Islamic studies on the Qur'ân. It is the continuous search for +*ikmah* (means wisdom, Qur'ân, 2, 269) in the light of the Islamic view of life, the universe, ethics, society and so on. Islamic philosophy, understood as a "project of independent philosophical inquiry" began in Baghdad in the middle of the 8th century [15].

It is hard understand the role of "philosophy" or any other intellectual discipline in Islam by selecting only one dimension of Islam or one particular area, no matter how important that dimension or that area may be in itself. As for "Islamic philosophy," the sense in which we intend to use it in this discussion must be defined with care [16].

A philosophy, howsoever attractive, remains lifeless and ineffective if not integrated with practice. The Muslims own a philosophy, which encompasses every branch of natural and social sciences (Qur'ân, 23, 12-13; Qur'ân, 28, 68; Qur'ân, 13, 31; Qur'ân, 21, 33; Qur'ân, 32, 9). Islamic philosophy does not only demand to have certain beliefs and practice some rituals, but it also fervently demands to have firm belief in the revealed knowledge (Qur'ân, 2, 28; Qur'ân, 2, 246-248; Qur'ân, 51, 21; Qur'ân, 37, 142), sent by Allah through His Messengers (peace be upon them), to confirm the the Truths of this universe and the Man itself (Qur'ân, 4,163; Qur'ân, 4, 150-151; Qur'ân, 23, 51-52; Qur'ân, 40, 78). Thus, Islamic philosophy means, true belief in the revealed knowledge, total submission to the Will of Allah, to live a life according to the teachings of Allah and his Messengers, to understand the purpose of Man's life on this planet as a unit and an organic whole, which cannot be divided into several compartments (Qur'ân, 2,148; Qur'ân, 5:100; Qur'ân, 6,32; Qur'ân, 19,76; Qur'ân, 67,2; Qur'ân, 73,20) [17].

To conclude, we may state that Islamic social sciences are embedded in Islamic philosophy, which can be cultivated in an Islamic society and cannot necessarily be concerned with religious issues, nor exclusively produced, by Muslims.

Foundations of Islamic Philosophy of Social Sciences: In this section, we have formulated some foundations for the Islamic philosophy of social sciences, which are adapted from Qur'ân and Sunnah [18-21].

- Man and all other creations owe their existence, to Allah alone.
- Universe is created and administered in accordance with the regulations set by Almighty Allah, known as "Laws of Nature." Negation of the mechanical concept of universe, which claims, it a product of an accident.
- Whole universe is subservient to Man for his use and benefit.
- Humankind's life in this world is a place of trial, which results in the life of Hereafter.
- Allah alone is the Sovereign; this concept of sovereignty gave birth to the concept of human unity and human equality. Negation of the rule of man over man and the concept of kingship, dictatorship, priesthood and Brahmanism.

- Every human is equal in the eyes of Islam. All humans enjoy equal rights and can seek redressal, if wronged, through a court of law. Everyone has protection of his life, property and honour.
- Islamic Philosophy is based on *Wahî* (revelation), which demand a believer to adopt a balance between the requirements of body and soul and function for the larger interest of human good. This philosophy is not neutral to morality. It believes in eternal moral values, through which nations rise and fall.
- Fundamentals of Islamic philosophy come from Qur'ân and Sunnah. Every innovation, for which there is no proof in the fundamentals, is condemed. However, Islamic philosophy is not static. It gives a golden tenet of *Ijtihâd,* an instrument, for use in all places and times of need.
- Regarding the reason of truth, Islam prescribes that where there is valid evidence for another point of view, should be accepted with humbleness. However, where the evidence is fake or lacking, the Islamic philosophy feels obligated to expose that discrepancy. The truth is exclusive and should be accepted without compromise. The good value is recognition of Allah as the source of all truth.
- A common misunderstanding about Islamic philosophy is that it demands blind faith in its principles and blocks the way of evaluation. This is a mistaken view, which has created hostility between the natural and social sciences. Islamic philosophy on the contrary, repetitively invites and encourages humankind for judicious thinking about the phenomena of nature.

Why Incorporate Social Sciences with Islamic Philosophy?: The answer to the question, why should Islamic philosophy be blended with contemporay social sciences or why should the contemporay social sciences be Islamized?, is very simple that the philosophy of contemporay social sciences is not compatable with Islamic social sciences; as discussed under the aforesaid title '*Philosophy of Contemporay Social Sciences'*.

Even though, the Muslims in the past were not using the term 'Social Sciences', as understood today, this does not mean that the Muslims did not had any philosophy and application to their social sciences, as used in the contemporay era. On the contrary, the Muslims did had an Islamic concept of social sciences, which they were practicing from the advent of Islam and are still practicing

individually and collectively to an extent in the Muslim and non-Muslim world. Yet, due to the moral downfall, which resulted into the colonial rule, Muslims did not had the opportunity to practice their own social, economic and political system, according to their own philosophy of life derived from Qur'ân and the Sunnah.

Incorporating Social Sciences with Islamic Philosophy: How?: In this section, a brief strategy to blend Islamic philosophy with contemporay social sciences is presented, with a hope of execution. Details can be seen in these footnotes: [2, 4, 10, 22-24], from which this strategy has been adapted.

All the knowledge of social sciences concerning to individual and group, to man and nature, to religion and science, can be restructured under the principle of *tawhîd*, i.e. that Allah *(swt)* exists, is One, He is the Creator, Master, Provider, Sustainer, the ultimate metaphysical cause, purpose and end of everything that is. All objective knowledge of this world is knowledge of His will, of his arrangement, of His wisdom. It needs implementation of His command, understanding of the divine pattern, which He has revealed, to achieve intense happiness of human soul and body.

The social sciences, which study man and his relations with other humans, have to recognize man, as living in a kingdom dominated by Allah metaphysically and axiologically. They have to be concerned with the Sovereignty of Allah on earth, with man's vicegerency. In addition, since man's vicegerency is necessarily social, the sciences that study it should properly be called *Ummatic Sciences*.

There should be no bifurcation between humanities and social sciences, because the Muslim learning rejects it. The disciplines of natural sciences dealing with nature and the ummatic sciences dealing with man and society also need a reclassification from an Islamic perspective. This spirit of Islamic philosophy includes all the branches of natural and social sciences. Their place in the total scheme of human knowledge is similar, with the difference lying in the object of study, not the methodology. Both aim at discovering and understanding the divine pattern: the one in physical objects, the other in human affairs. Understanding the pattern in each realm certainly needs different techniques and strategies.

There is a need for systematic attempt to assess contemporay Anthropology from an Islamic point of view. There is a lot in this subject for Islamic scholars to learn and much to avoid with the uniqueness and neutrality of

the Islamic spirit. The mistaken conclusions of the contemporay anthropologists should be exposed with rational and scholastic quality and those of which have resulted from misinformation may be regarded as methodological errors. The positive direction for a rectified anthropology can be derived from the vision of Islam, which calls to find the Truth. This vision can be determined by the unity and transcedence of Allah, rationale, life & world assertion, universalism, ummaism and ethical service of humanity.

Islamization of the social sciences must endeavour to show the relation of the reality studied to that aspect or part of the divine pattern relevant to it. Since the divine pattern is the standard reality, it ought to actualize, the analysis of what ought to be. Moreover, the divine pattern is not only normative, enjoying a heavenly modality of existence removed from actuality. It is also real in the sense that Allah (swt) has inclined reality to demonstrate it, a kind of *fitrah* existence, which Allah has implanted in the human nature of the individuals. Hence, every Islamic scientific analysis should therefore endeavour to expose this inherent divine pattern in human affairs, to underline that part of it which is required.

The divine pattern in human affairs should be the object of Islamic social scientist's constant attention as well as their expectations and desires. They are not only scientific in the sense of not leaving out the axiological aspects, but are preminently critical in the light of the divine pattern.

Muslim social scientists (the *'Ulama of Ummah*) are the planners and designers of its future and educators of its political, social and economic activities. Their studies are the *Ummatic sciences*, i.e., those disciplines that study reciprocal effects of human behaviour and society. The Muslim social scientist is a student and teacher too. Ummah's vision and its pursuit constitute his concern as *'+lim* (man of knowledge) and Muslim (committed to vision). As the Ummah is the carrier of the divine message and witness unto the rest of humanity (al-Qur'ân 2,143), so is the Muslim social scientist the trustee of the vision and its first executor. He is, in a unique sense, the true heir of the Prophet □ in the role of witness of God over the Ummah (al-Qur'ân 2, 142).

The Islamic social scientists, should maintain an open and public commitment to the values of Islam, an ideology that lays a rational, critical claim to the truth. They should not be afraid or ashamed of being corrected by their Muslim or non-Muslim monitors, because the truth in their view, is none other than the intelligent reading of

nature in scientific reports and experiments, or the reading of Allah's revelation in His holy book. Because, Allah is the Author of both and both of His works are public, appealing to no authority other than that of reason and understanding. From such a view, the Islamic social scientists are capable of bringing a new critique to natural and social sciences. Islamic social sciences can therefore, humanize all the disciplines of the contemporay natural and social sciences.

The Islam-committed scientists should strengthen an awareness that the problem of Islamization of contemporay natural and social sciences exists. Moreover, it is becoming extremely grave and dangerous and the all efforts of reconstructing the *Ummah* will be unproductive, unless the Muslim intellegenstia becomes aware of *Ummah's* mission and translating this mission in all fields of human life.

Islam–commited, scientists and scholars of natural and social sciences should be identified and be asked, to seek the Islamic relevance of their knowledge. Similarly, traditional scholars *('Ulama)* should be asked to contribute in the task of Islamization.

A curriculum for Islamic social sciences should be developed with a complete consensus of the Islamic scholars of the world, to eduacate the human resources. Islam-commited scholars should be equally conversant with the paradigms of contemporay sciences as well as with traditional doctrines. They should hold a firm stand on the relation of science and religion and must be capable to describe the premises of both.

The vision of Islamizing the natural and social sciences is only shared by few scholars and is not readily available to any one. Training Muslim talents with this vision is another urgent task. Such training must be carried out on the post-doctoral level. Intensive courses, workshops, seminars, conferences and research projects will also serve the required purpose.

Annotated, topically arranged bibliographies on major disciplines should be prepared for both the Islamic and Secular traditions of learning. Specialists of Islamic fields should identify the relevant passages and discipline experts to determine those issues of the Ummah.

Bibliographical surveys, topically systematized anthologies for each problem or area within the discipline, analytical surveys or articles dealing with the historical development of the problem or discipline, or with the contemporay state of research, should be prepared by the experts, for use by the less advance in the field. This is the speediest way out for extending the frontiers of Islamic knowledge.

Preparation of textbooks for teaching in the Muslim institutions is the next job ahead. A textbook is ineffective without a trained teacher, or a teacher whose loyalty is elsewhere and whose Islamic-vision and knowledge is deficient.

It is the responsibility of the political leaders, thinkers, philosophers and scholars of the Muslim Ummah to blend Islamic philosophy in contemporay social sciences, which will save their destiny and create a peaceful and harmonious future of today's global village.

The Muslim community is in a dilemma to deliver solutions for many of the challenges, especially in the field of social sciences. Solutions can be explored, understood and secured, within the creative and scientific principles, if blended with the philosophy of Qur'ân and Sunnah.

CONCLUSION

Blending contemporary social sciences with Islamic philosophy can be an alternative to save the future identity of the Muslim Ummah. Therefore, it is high time to substitute the secular-materialistic philosophies of contemporary social sciences by Islamic philosophy of social sciences. In this context, this paper has provided an outline to construct an Islamic infrastructure, to replace the already entrenched secular philosophies in the Mulim World.

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