

Research Article

# The Ideology of Islamic Secularization of Muḥammad ‘Abduh, the Most Prominent Pioneer of Enlightenment Thinkers in the Middle East and the Arab World

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## Abstract

As is known, secularism is the principle that separates the government, its institutions, and political authority from religious authority or religious figures. Secularism is known as a principle and intellectual approach that sees that human interaction with life should be based on a worldly basis, not a religious one. Secularism is commonly promoted as the separation of religion from state affairs. Here, the title of the article was chosen as The Ideology of Islamic Secularization, because many modern thinkers or reformers have applied this secular mechanism in dealing with Islamic doctrinal, jurisprudential, and historical issues. Such a trend can be called the modern rational school or enlightenment thinkers. Perhaps the most prominent pioneer in this field is the Islamic thinker with a reformist tendency, *Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, the most prominent pioneer of enlightenment thinkers in the Middle East and the Arab world. *Muḥammad ‘Abduh* is considered the founder of secularism in modern Egypt, but there has been much controversy over his attribution to secular or Salafist thought. This study follows the approach adopted by *Muḥammad ‘Abduh* and his influence on Middle Eastern thought by dividing the study into three fundamental axes. This study is considered the first and only one that deals with the problem of *Muḥammad ‘Abduh* affiliation in a precise manner. *Muḥammad’s ‘Abduh* historical reform and criticism had an ideological character influenced by the Enlightenment movement. He played a role in reforming Al-Azhar, endowments, Sharia courts, Arabic language, religious sciences, and others. He also dealt with historical criticism from a modern perspective. The research focused on some ideological aspects that changed his intellectual path to adopt another conservative ideology transferred by *Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā*. It can be said that *Riḍā’s* reformist ideology for Islamic history and thought is a continuation of what *Muḥammad ‘Abduh* began, although he deviated slightly from the intellectual path despite being influenced by his teacher *Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, even though some Salafi reformers considered him a reformer that belonged to the Salafi school of thought.

## Keywords

Ideology, Reform, Pioneer, ‘Muḥammad ‘Abduh, Change Direction, Middle East, Intellectual Compatibility, Salafi, Criticism, Vision, Islamic Thinker, Islamic Secularization

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## 1. Introduction

Islamic modernism is essentially a religious reform, "an attempt to liberate the Islamic religion from the constraints of rigid dogma, and to bring about reforms that make it adaptable to the complex demands of modern life. It is inspired and dominated primarily by theological considerations. From this definition, Charles C. Adams sees religious reform as dominated by theological considerations to liberate Islam from the rigidity of dogma and to demonstrate its adaptability to the demands of modern life. "He distinguished the Egyptian modernists from the reforms founded by the Indian group of rationalist reformers, whose aim was primarily a cultural movement, modifying Islam to fit the conditions of modern European civilization." In his critical analysis of political Islam, Islamic modernists emphasized the need to revive Islamic society through reinterpreting or reformulating their Islamic heritage in the light of the contemporary world. It is a response to the political, cultural, and scientific challenges of the West and modern life. Modernists attempted to demonstrate the compatibility (and hence acceptance) of Islam with contemporary ideas and institutions, whether rationalism, science and technology, democracy, constitutionalism, and representative government [1].

Most studies of the prominent nineteenth-century Arab thinker and reformer *Muhammad 'Abduh* focus on the religious reforms he initiated. Very few studies discuss his vision of modernization through educational, social, and political reforms. *Muhammad 'Abduh* understood that these reforms were necessary to create a civil society based on a new form of urbanism (*madaniyah*). This article examines how *Muhammad 'Abduh* bridged the gap between secular modernists and religious traditionalists by reinterpreting Islamic doctrine with a contemporary outlook. *Muhammad 'Abduh* established an Islamic renewal movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to eliminate intellectual stagnation and promote rational thinking at both the theological and theoretical "historical" levels [2, 3].

The research aims to establish the ideology of reform and historical criticism depending on reading through the heritage of *Muhammad 'Abduh* while looking into the issue of intellectual compatibility, the flow of the ideas, and the change of the philosophy to link the movement of the ideological construction influence on the historical text from one side and the development of their reform vision and how their ideology has differed among the reform issues and Islam history on the other side. The reform vision of *Muhammad 'Abduh* in religious sciences and the events in the history of Islam differs from the beginning formation of *Muhammad 'Abduh* with his teacher *Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī*, then his ideology and intellectual path changes during his second interval with his student *Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā*.

## 2. The Source Structure that Forms the Ideology of Muhammad 'Abduh

*Muhammad 'Abduh* (born 1849, Nile Delta area, Egypt—died July 11, 1905, near Alexandria) was a religious scholar, jurist, and liberal reformer, who led the late 19th-century movement in Egypt and other Muslim countries to revitalize Islamic teachings and institutions in the modern world. As *mufī* (Islamic legal counselor) for Egypt, he effected reforms in Islamic law, administration, and higher education and, although resisted by conservatives, broke the rigidity of Muslim ritual, dogma, and family ties. His writings included the "Treatise on the Oneness of God" and a commentary on the *Qur'ān* [4].

Al-Azhar was the dream of any young man from a rural area as it offered great opportunities for social advancement. However, its teaching was obsolete, based mainly on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and grammar; the dominant method was that of literal commentary (*sharh*). *Muhammad 'Abduh* pursued his studies at al-Azhar for 12 years and received his highest degree in 1877. During his studies, he came into contact with *Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī* (On the rather obscure life of al-Afghani, one can consult the biography published by Homa Pakdaman titled *Djamal ed-Din Assad Abadi did Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī*, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1969) [5].

*Muhammad 'Abduh* is one of the symbols of the modern mental reform school, this school in its essence is the same as the mental school in the West, they both agree on one result, though there may be some differences, that result is "developing religion and thought to cope with the contemporary civilization", the founder of this school is *Al-Sayyid Aḥmad Khān al-Hindāwī* [6], *Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī* was the first to set the features of this school, then it was established by his student *Muhammad 'Abduh* [7].

When reading in the heritage of *Muhammad 'Abduh*, it may be noticed that he doesn't belong to the school of *Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī*, but belongs to the school of *Rifā'ah al-Ṭahṭāwī* concerning reform; this result is built panoramically as circles lead to one another, *Muhammad 'Abduh* is a student of Sheikh *Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl* who was contemporary to *Aḥmad Bik 'Ubayd*, who was one of those close to *Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, consequently, *'Abduh* belongs to the school of *Al-Ṭahṭāwī*, and this is a problem that confuses some, this research deals with this problem through discussing the source structure that helped to form the intellectual side of *'Abduh* and they are defined in the following points:

- 1) *'Abduh* wasn't from the close students of *Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl*, whose close students were Professor "*Aḥmad Taymūr Bāshā*", "*Sheikh Aḥmad Abū Khaṭwah*", "*Sheikh Muḥammad al-Mahdī*", "*Sheikh 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najjār*" "*Sheikh Ḥasan Maṣṣūr*" and "*Sheikh Muḥammad al-Khudarī* [8-10], but *Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl*'s interest in maths, philosophy, and politics [11], may influence partly in the formation of *'Abduh*

ideology.

- 2) *Hasan al-Ṭawīl* did not mention that he was educated at the hands of *Aḥmad Bik 'Ubayd al-Ṭaḥṭāwī*, but he was a student of: "Sheikh *Hasan al-'Adawī al-Ḥamzāwī*", "Sheikh *al-burhān al-Saqqā*", "Sheikh *Muḥammad al-Ushmūnī*", "Sheikh *Aḥmad Sharaf ālmrsfī*", "Sheikh *'Abd al-Hādī Najā al-Abyārī*", "Sheikh *al'nbāby*", "Sheikh *Muḥammad 'Ulaysh*" [11].
- 3) *Hasan al-Ṭawīl* didn't join the faculty of *Al-Alsun* which was established by *Rifā'ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī*, but when he joined it, it was a translation house not an intellectual house as *Al-Azhar* institution, it was all that *Aḥmad Bik 'Ubayd al-Ṭaḥṭāwī* was the one that employed him as a translator in *Jihadi* court, because his mastery in language, only. When he examined him, he said: "... you're a precious diamond that was hidden from us" [12], he means here what is related to translation not thought, because *Aḥmad Bik 'Ubayd* was a translator and wasn't known as a thinker or something like that.
- 4) *Aḥmad Amīn*, one of the symbols of the modern rational school, mentioned that '*Abduh* grew in Egypt noticing the teachings of *Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb* surrounded him, teachings which dates back to the era of the messenger, to *Ibn Taymīyah*, then to *Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb*, '*Abduh* greatest hope was to do a good deed for the Muslims, his diligence and research led him to two basics that *Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb* set up his teachings upon: fighting heresies and polytheisms, and he began *Ijtihad* and reformist renaissance" [6], The reform of *Muḥammad 'Abduh* in Egypt was similar to The one of *al-Sayyid Aḥmad Khān al-Hindāwī* in terms of education, discipline and dealing with religion in tolerance and ease [7], *Muḥammad 'Abduh* has met Sheikh *Sufī Darwīsh Khidr* his uncle to his father who had the most important influence in changing his life path, Sheikh *Darwīsh* was influenced by the *Senussi* teachings which agrees with *al-Wahhābīyah* in calling for returning back to the mere origin of Islam and purify it of the heresies and superstitious [13].
- 5) The reform that *Muḥammad 'Abduh* went on wasn't heresy, but he was preceded by sheik *Ḥasan al-'Aṭṭār* [14], and he was one of the prominent teachers of *Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī*, and he was the one who prepared *Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī*'s thought to accept the modern sciences [14] and sent him abroad [15], so how do we relate '*Abduh* to *Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī* school, not *Al-'Aṭṭār*'s or what followed *Al-'Aṭṭār*?
- 6) *Al-Afghānī* had a reform vision of injustice (in the fields of education and politics [16], his educational vision depends on the mind, and it was identical to *Al-Mu'tazilah*, he had some interpretations of some verses of The Holy Quran, such as his interpretation of the verse: (Oh, you who have believed, do not consume usury multiplied) (*Al-Imran*:130), he said: that reasonable usury is illegal as long as it isn't doubled,

Also, the verse: (And if you fear that you will not do justice, then marry one) {*Al-Nisa*:3}, he said that it isn't illegal to marry more than one because there's a fear of doing injustice [17], *Muḥammad 'Abduh* was similar to him in this educational views [18]. So, *Al-Afghānī* and '*Muḥammad Muḥammad 'Abduh*'s vision is to raise the minds to show the people that Islam calls for research and reflection [19, 20], some even said: that *Muḥammad 'Abduh* is one of the most prominent students of *Al-Afghānī* in his educational vision. But for the political vision, it's *Sa'd Zaghlūl* [21]. '*Muḥammad 'Abduh*'s ideology in political reform was different from *Al-Afghānī*'s. He believed that radical reform is from the inside, but *al-Afghānī* believed in revolutionary reform [20].

The source structure that formed '*Muḥammad 'Abduh* ideology, is the aforementioned school, the prevailing atmosphere among scholars in this age, is a preoccupation with science, thought, and culture, the similarity of '*Muḥammad 'Abduh* reform vision with others, is a similarity in the view, not the conclusion text to demonstrate the idea, there can't be an identical similarity between two without any influence, the effect here is by the surrounding environment that has the same thoughts and visions.

To notice the change of *Muḥammad 'Abduh* intellectual path, we must differentiate between his first part of life with *al-Afghānī*, and his second part of life with his student *Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā*, '*Abduh* has transferred a lot from *Al-Afghānī* and he said at the beginning of his treatise: "Our instructor *Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī* clarifies and gave us lots of comprehensives and I called the treatise *alwradāt fī Sirr al-Tajalliyāt* [22], then we find *Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā* transfer what indicates '*Muḥammad 'Abduh* retreats in his thoughts [23], and he says in the footnote of his book *al-Wāridāt*: "I know that he-may God bless him-has retreated about lots of these theories that he wrote down in this treatise, then it appeared to him that it wasn't invalid, of them: Everything that is based on estimating the knowing of the almighty God compared to the knowing of his creation, and we will mention some of them" [22, 24], this is an evidence that *Muḥammad 'Abduh* retreated for some of his concepts, also his interpretation to the verse 32 of *Al-Imran*: (Whenever Zakariyya enters the sanctuary, he finds provision with her." (*Al-Imran*:37), he said, it's a miracle, Mariam had a sanctuary for praying, Zakariyya used to pledge her worshipping, he sees a dignity for her that she had fruits in the off-season." [24].

### 3. The Reformist Ideology of Muḥammad 'Abduh

In the opening lines of his treatise on monotheism (1898), *Muḥammad 'Abduh* notes that the word *tawhid* in its original meaning refers to "the belief that God is one and has no

partner (*la sharika lah*)” (Abduh 1994: 17). This is the fundamental pillar of Islam, which every Muslim acknowledges through the Shahada: *La ilaha illa Allah*. So important was the concept that an entire theology was named after it: the main aim of monotheism is in fact “to prove the oneness of God in himself and the act of creation” [25].

‘Muhammad ‘Abduh’s vision of reform and renewal went beyond the reforming of religious institutions like *Al-Azhar*, to be a greater center for reform in fundamentals, branches, jurisprudence, Sufism theology and interpretation, with the practice of *Ijtihad* in a form that he set to two determiners:

- 1) The first determiner: the need should be the basis of renewal, and it should be suitable and compatible with the Holy Quran and Sunnah.
- 2) The second determiner: is the assurance of the necessity of renewal and work on this with gradual reform, ‘Abduh has clarified for *Muhammad Rashid Ridā* on their first meeting that he works for religious reform on two parallel sides, which are the line of doctrinal, jurisprudential, and intellectual reform, and the side institutions’ reform which he outlined in three items: *Al-Azhar*, endowments, and the Sharia courts [17].
- 3) The reformist vision of *Muhammad ‘Abduh* relied on the concept that reason is the base of knowledge, and everything that contradicts reason, should be rejected. Consequently, *Muhammad ‘Abduh* denied all the narrations that contradicted reason, so he interpreted the verses of the Holy Quran and the sayings of *Muhammad ‘Abduh* the prophet, which is a modern vision of *Al-Muatazila* Ideology, that’s called the issue of “improvement and ugliness”, which means that everything that reason agrees with, is acceptable, and what it disagrees with, should be interpreted or rejected [26, 27, 28], then he started interpreting the Quran in a rational approach, he implemented his instructor *Al-Afghani*’s approach, that even the enlightened Christians gathered by the Masjid’s door to listen to him [24], he also mentioned that the religion is received by minds from the missionaries and warners [29] on the contrary this is solidness that shouldn’t be related to Islam [30], he considered the Quran as a book for religious sciences, not the universe’s sciences, he wanted to imitate the messengers who ask the people to use their senses and minds [27], this can be clarified through the following:
- 4) The first part of the fourth verse of Surat Al-Fil: (striking them with stones from Sijjil) (Al-Fil:4), it’s the story of *Abrhh al-Habashī* who wanted to destroy the *Al-Ka’bah*, so God sent them Papal birds that threw his army with stones from Sijjil, the army perished, ‘Abduh interpreted that Sijjil stones here are “smallpox and measles” [31], this interpretation was criticized by many [32].
- 5) He dealt with The prophet *Muhammad ‘Abduh*’s life and rejected the hadith of “the prophet’s childhood and chest

shattering”; that *Gabriel* or some angels shattered the prophet’s chest and took out the clot of Satan’s luck from his heart then they washed his heart in a golden basin with *Zamzam* water, then they returned the heart in the prophet’s chest [33], he said: this hadith contradicted the Quranic verse; (you have no authority over my servants) [Al-Hijr:42], so, how God said that the Satan has no authority over the believers of God, then he touches the prophet *Muhammad ‘Abduh*, and he added, “this hadith is speculative news because it’s a single narration” [31].

- 6) He dealt with the prophet *Muhammad ‘Abduh* call in its first stages and said that it dealt only with rational evidence, and people should investigate the Quran in their minds [27].
- 7) He said that the Quran has mentioned the equality of man and woman, which is the basis of unity, and the preacher of affinity and sympathy with humans, depending on his interpretation of the Quranic verse: (O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both many men and women) [31].
- 8) In addition to his numerous articles in the official gazette and *Al-Urwat al-wuthqā*, ‘Muhammad ‘Abduh most important writings he included *Risālat al-tawhīd* (“Treatise on the Oneness of God”); a polemic on the superiority of Islam to Christianity in its inherent receptivity to science and civilization; and a fragmentary commentary on the *Qur’ān*, completed after his death by a disciple. In theology, *Muhammad ‘Abduh* sought to establish the harmony of reason and revelation, the freedom of the will, and the primacy of the ethical implications of religious faith over ritual and dogma. He deplored the blind acceptance of traditional doctrines and customs and asserted that a return to the pristine faith of the earliest age of Islam not only would restore the Muslims’ spiritual vitality but would provide an enlightened criterion for the assimilation of modern scientific culture.
- 9) In matters of Islamic law, which governed Muslim family relationships, ritual duties, and personal conduct, *Muhammad ‘Abduh* tried to break through the rigidities of scholastic interpretation and to promote considerations of equity, welfare, and common sense, even if this occasionally meant disregarding the literal texts of the *Qur’ān*. From his death to the present day, *Muhammad ‘Abduh* has been widely revered as the chief architect of the modern reformation of Islam [4].

For *Muhammad ‘Abduh*, the Qur’anic narrative is not part of the story as an objective description of a past event. In other words, we should not view the Qur’anic narrative as an “informational” discourse that can be described as right or wrong, but rather as a “performative” discourse whose goal is moral and practical. This idea makes it possible to



acknowledge that the Qur'anic narrative may be worthless if viewed from a historical perspective, while its value is somewhat moral. Abduh states, "There is nothing in the Qur'an that is part of history as a narrative of the past of the nations and cities we know. Rather, the Qur'an contains verses and lessons drawn from the experiences of the prophets with their people; this serves to teach God's laws (Sunan Allah) to warn those who rejected the message of Muhammad, and to console the prophet and the believers. For this reason, the Qur'an is not concerned with the details of events or their sequential order" [34].

#### 4. The Ideology of the Historical Criticism of Muḥammad 'Abduh

*Muḥammad 'Abduh*'s historical side was subjected to debate, like his intellectual and doctrinal sides [35], *Muḥammad 'Abduh*'s historical vision was according to his reformist ideology, and this can be proved through what follows:

- 1) He indicated that science may spread in times of discord, he indicated what happened twenty years after the death of the prophet, when *'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib* began to urge teaching Arabic literature and asked for setting rules for it when he realized the people's need for that, and Muslims began to feel the light of knowledge in the shade of these disputes over caliphate which spread in the countries [29].
- 2) He referred to the difference between the Umayyad's caliphate life and the right caliphs, they weren't apathetic. *Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān* created a new system for the mandate of the covenant [29] as if he hints that this pattern of change or political development was a part of the reform.
- 3) *Muḥammad 'Abduh* saw that the reform should be calm and, on the ideology (knowledge of the colonists through the historical side was through his indulging in supporting the *al-Thawrah al-'Urābiyah*, which he believed as a path of proceeding towards reform [36, 37], *'Muḥammad 'Abduh* commitment to deepening the patriotic spirit and striving for the colonists in a reformist approach depends on education and bringing up was contrary to his instructor *al-Afghānī*'s political reform ideology [20].
- 4) He referred to the nations' ideology through history to reject the oppose, he said that throughout history, nations used to refuse to submit to those who oppress them, the more they refuse it, the more they don't incline to them, at that time they despise them, and spit it out as a kernel [38].
- 5) He said that the reason for the Muslims' unity weakness in the early Islamic Eras, was the attitudes of some caliphs towards the hostiles, as *al-'Alawīyīn wāltturk* and *wālddaylam* and others, the caliphs thought that

they were enslaving them with their power and favor, to guarantee that they wouldn't revolt against them [29]. *'Muḥammad 'Abduh*'s vision here was an interpretation of the historical event in an analytical form more than an intellectual one.

- 6) He referred to the division of the Islamic unity into peoples and sects, and he found an obvious gap among the speakers which he traced throughout history and found the strongest of them was on the side of the masters of reason and philosophy against the masters of jurisprudential schools, he defined them as eras of hateful fanaticism arose from the raging partiality [39].

The separation of the Qur'anic narrative from the historical narrative was undoubtedly a useful response to the challenges posed by modern science to the sacred books. To implicitly support the *Qur'anic* narrative of this or that event as historically inaccurate is a bold position. According to *Muḥammad 'Abduh*, such a conclusion does not harm the *Qur'an* because its value is determined by its relation to its moral teachings. True, this position was not without flaws. Indeed, to admit that a "distorted" version of an event can be adopted to meet moral needs is to tolerate all forms of manipulation of history to meet needs that moralists consider legitimate. *Muḥammad 'Abduh* did not deprive himself of this, as is evident in his pamphlet *The Position of Islam and Christianity in the Face of Science and Civilization*. Like most Muslim reformers of the nineteenth century, *'Muḥammad 'Abduh*'s concern was preserving history's moral function, leaving it to professional historians to deal with its methodology.

#### 5. Results and Discussions

While most studies on the life of *Muḥammad 'Abduh*, the most prominent thinker and reformer of the nineteenth century, focus on the religious reforms he launched, very few studies discuss his vision of modernization through educational, social, and political reforms, and while these few studies also focus on the stereotypical modernist approach without referring to the source structure that shaped *Muḥammad 'Abduh* ideology, this study concludes with some important results:

- 1) *Muḥammad 'Abduh*'s reforms were necessary to create a civil society based on a new type of urbanism (*madaniyya*).
- 2) *Muḥammad 'Abduh* does not belong to the school of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani in a broad sense.
- 3) *Muḥammad 'Abduh* is considered one of the founders of Islamic modernism, primarily in Sunni Islam, but not exclusively.
- 4) *Muḥammad 'Abduh* was an Egyptian jurist, theologian, exegete, Grand Mufti of Egypt, journalist, and liberal religious reformer who played a major role in the modernization of Al-Azhar, the most important center of Islamic learning in Sunni Islam and in Islamic

activism in the entire Islamic world.

- 5) *Muhammad 'Abduh's* positions on theological issues were largely rationalist, condemning imitation, the uncritical submission to established beliefs and customs, and calling for the restoration of *ijtihad*, a critical and innovative approach to religious issues.
- 6) He believed that he should acknowledge his biblical roots while adapting to Western modes of expression and developed an approach to fundamentalist textual studies.
- 7) *Muhammad 'Abduh* was a personality whose ideas varied between religion, science, education, and politics, and a distinguished model of the political intellectual and the educated politician. He devoted his life and thought to linking Islam with progress, working on two main goals: the first: is "liberating thought from the shackles of tradition.
- 8) *Muhammad 'Abduh* focused in his reform program on three: First: proving the rational essence of Islam against traditionalists and modern opponents. Second: building the science of faith based on a modern vision. Third: reforming the educational system, especially the education system.
- 9) *Muhammad 'Abduh* launched the famous intellectual debate about reconciling heritage and modernity, an intellectual debate that would occupy the attention of Arab thought throughout the twentieth century. Especially since the events of imposing protection or colonialism on Arab countries, and then the results of the two world wars, shook the position calling for following in Europe's footsteps in everything. A wave of doubt spread in the sublime European virtues and their ability to achieve happiness. A new generation of thinkers and leaders of national liberation movements emerged, realizing the necessity of renewal and adopting the means of progress and advancement. Their intellectual production was a continuation of the project of reform, modernization, and enlightenment. It constituted a continuation of the *Muhammad 'Abduh* school, whose influence was evident even among the currents that opposed him.
- 10) *Muhammad 'Abduh* is the banner around which a very wide debate took place through the modernist ideologies he produced in contemporary Islam in Egypt and the Middle East.

## 6. Conclusion

We have seen before that many have quarreled over the recognition of *Muhammad 'Abduh's* intellectual paternity, both during his lifetime and after his death. Each group or school was keen to prove that *Muhammad 'Abduh* belonged to its camp. It must be admitted that the disputes were not only in religious circles but also in reality. Here, *Muhammad 'Abduh* did not remain a direct disciple of anyone throughout his life.

His own source and cognitive structure influenced the formation of his reform ideology. We find that he became a more systematic thinker than his teacher, and he had a more lasting influence on the Islamic mind in Egypt and the Middle East.

*Muhammad 'Abduh* rejected many of those to whom his teachings addressed him, but he continued to work beneath the surface, the unrecognized foundation of the religious ideas of the average educated Muslim.

The study has shown that *Muhammad 'Abduh's* origin was quite different from Afghani's. Afghani came from a distant place that cannot be determined with certainty and moved like a meteor from one country to another; *Muhammad 'Abduh*, on the other hand, was firmly rooted in an ordinary family in the country in which he was to carry out his main work.

In *Muhammad 'Abduh's* writings, we find traces of various Islamic influences: Sufism, Mu'tazilite theology, activism, and orthodoxy. The Epistle of Monotheism was intended to be a brief and simple statement on theological issues. In distinguishing between the essentials of religion and its non-essentials, *Muhammad 'Abduh* claimed that the main source of Muslim decline was their inability to distinguish between the essentials and the non-essentials. Revelation and reason are complementary paths to truth since reason is the faculty that enables a Muslim to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Freedom of will also depends on human knowledge or reason.

*Muhammad 'Abduh* considered Islam to be the cornerstone of private and public life and for him, the cure for the ills of Muslim societies lay in returning to true Islam by restoring its essentials in the Qur'an and Sunnah (the sayings of the Prophet) and interpreting these texts in the light of modern times.

Here it can be said that the core of the dispute is originally a mental problem that does not accept history except as a form of idealizing the figures who served the cause of religion and the nation: and because *Muhammad 'Abduh* biography written by his student Muhammad Rashid Rida was in line with the spirit, it was particularly well received by the Salafis, and some of them attributed it to him because Muhammad Rashid Rida's reform marginalized some liberal attempts that claimed to be extensions of *Muhammad 'Abduh* thought, such as: (*Qasim Amin - Ali Abdel Razek - Salama Moussa - Taha Hussein* and others). It can also be said that Muhammad Abduh deserves to be called the Egyptian reformer and defender of Islamic modernity or rational Islam that focused on addressing religious, legal, and educational reform, as *Muhammad 'Abduh* "modernity" went hand in hand with a return to the ideal past or a re-understanding of the Islamic heritage in the ideal rational form that suits the time and place, and his "rationality" was moderate due to his belief in divine transcendence that limits the scope of intellectual investigation, which led some to refer to him as having a Mu'tazilite tendency.

## 7. Recommendations

This study concludes with an important recommendation, which is to promote extensive reading about the ideology of inter-source intertextuality that shaped, influenced, and formed *Muhammad Abduh's* reformist thought. Perhaps there was a hidden secret school that influenced the intellectual intertextuality of these reformers as a whole. Perhaps the first indication of such a thing is what we presented under the title: (The source structure that helped to form the intellectual side of 'Abduh). I believe that this study will be a new gateway to many serious research articles that reveal matters that have not yet been addressed.

We can also look at the modern reformist side in the Middle East, for example in Egypt, such as the rational enlightenment movement that works to criticize the Islamic heritage through intellectual writings and special newspaper and television programs and make comparisons between these methods and the intellectual style of the reformist thinkers of the 19th century. Is there an intellectual intertextuality between them, or is there an ideological development with the passage of time and the difference in articles and scientific and research mechanisms?

## Abbreviations

ND	No Date
AD	Hijri Date
M	Gregorian Date
ED	Edition No
PT	Part
D	Date
C	Chapter
I	Issue
P	Page
PP	Pages

## Author Contributions

**Mohamed Elnakep:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

**Paolo Branca:** Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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