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A Critical Reassessment of the Foundations of Islamic Social Sciences and Its Implications for the Future

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ABSTRACT

The establishment of Islamic social sciences has been justified by diverse epistemological, cultural, social, and civilizational arguments. After several decades of theoretical and institutional efforts, however, the central question is no longer merely why Islamic social sciences are necessary, but how their initial foundations can guide their future development. This study aims to reconstruct the principal rationales underlying the formation of Islamic social sciences and derive their contemporary and strategic implications for the future of this field. The study employs a documentary and library-based approach for data collection and adopts a qualitative methodology for data analysis. Thematic analysis was selected as the main analytical method, following the three-stage framework of King and Horrocks (year to be confirmed), comprising basic, organizing, and global themes. Through systematic examination of books and scholarly works addressing the necessity and foundations of Islamic social sciences, 58 basic themes were identified and organized into 14 organizing themes and seven global themes. These themes concern the historical foundation of modern science; the value-laden character of Western science; the marginalization of competing epistemic systems; the inability of existing social sciences to meet the needs of Islamic societies; Islam's need for knowledge compatible with its worldview and ends; the independent identity of religious science; and religious science as a means of overcoming intellectual stagnation and civilizational passivity. The study then reassesses these foundations under contemporary conditions and derives their strategic implications for the future. The findings indicate that the future agenda of Islamic social sciences requires epistemic independence, methodological development, theorization, problem orientation, and institutional and civilizational capacity building.

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Introduction

Islamic social sciences have, over the past several decades, become one of the important arenas of epistemic dialogue between the Islamic tradition and modern social sciences. The emergence of this intellectual movement was rooted in a set of epistemological, cultural, social, and civilizational concerns and questions that prompted Muslim thinkers to reflect on the adequacy and effectiveness of existing social sciences for Islamic societies. After several decades have passed since these concerns were first raised, Islamic social sciences are no longer merely an emerging idea or a project at the stage of establishing its necessity. During this period, numerous works have been produced on the possibility, foundations, methodology, theory, and function of religious science and Islamic social sciences, and efforts have been made to develop this intellectual movement in educational, research, and institutional domains. Accordingly, the present situation differs from the circumstances in which the initial arguments for establishing Islamic social sciences were advanced. This development raises a fundamental question for researchers: What should now be done with the reasons and motivations that, at the outset, justified the necessity of this project?

In fact, the repetition of the initial arguments, although still important for the historical reconstruction and defense of the foundations of this movement, cannot by itself address the questions confronting its present stage. If the critique of modern social sciences was one of the initial reasons for the emergence of Islamic social sciences, merely reiterating such critiques today cannot substitute for the production of independent knowledge; if the inadequacy of existing social sciences in addressing the needs of Islamic societies was one of the foundations for their establishment, it is now necessary to ask precisely what those needs are and to what extent Islamic social sciences have succeeded in producing theories and knowledge for understanding and addressing them; and if the ultimate aim of this project was civilizational renewal and liberation from epistemological stagnation, the criterion for realizing this aim can no longer be merely the volume of works produced, but rather the ability of this body of knowledge to solve problems and build scientific and civilizational capacity.

From this perspective, the present problem is not to reiterate the reasons for the necessity of Islamic social sciences, but rather to critically reassess these reasons and transform them into resources for charting the path forward. First, the present study uses thematic analysis to reconstruct the set of motivations and foundations articulated in the literature on the formation of Islamic social sciences and formulates them into seven global themes. It then examines each of these themes from three perspectives: first, the original foundation and the problem that was articulated at the time the project emerged; second, a reconsideration of that problem under contemporary epistemological and social conditions; and third, their strategic implications for the continuation and development of Islamic social sciences. Accordingly, this study moves from the "Why Establish?" to the "How to Sustain?"

On this basis, the main research question is formulated as follows: What implications do the initial foundations and motivations underlying the formation of Islamic social sciences have for the continuation and development of this project under contemporary conditions? The first sub-

question concerns the reconstruction and classification of these foundations, while the second addresses how they can be transformed into strategic principles and priorities for the future. From this perspective, the ultimate aim of this studt is not merely to demonstrate the necessity of Islamic social sciences, but rather to clarify how the initial necessity of this project can be transformed into a sustainable, problem-oriented, and civilization-building scientific program.

This reconceptualization of the problem moves the study beyond a merely descriptive study of the "reasons for establishment" and transforms it into an effort to address a question of transition: If Islamic social sciences faced the problem of "demonstrating necessity" at the stage of establishment, they now face the problem of "demonstrating effectiveness" at the stage of maturity. It is through this transition that a reassessment of the foundations of the past can become a guide for the future.

Literature Review and Research Gap

The literature on Islamic social sciences and the Islamization of knowledge encompasses several interconnected strands, including foundational approaches to Islamization, methodological proposals for developing Islamic social sciences, debates on the possibility and necessity of Islamic social sciences, and critical assessments of the project's theoretical and practical achievements.

The first strand addresses the epistemological and civilizational foundations of Islamization. Alatas (1993) and Al-Faruqi (1983) offer influential formulations of the project, emphasizing the need to reconsider modern knowledge in light of Islamic intellectual principles and worldview. Their works provide important foundations for understanding the motivations behind the emergence of Islamic social sciences. Alatas (1995), however, critically examines the sacralization of social sciences, raising questions about the conceptual clarity and implications of attempts to reconstruct social science from a religious perspective. Together, these contributions establish an important debate concerning the foundations, objectives, and intellectual challenges of Islamization.

A second strand concerns the methodology and theoretical development of Islamic social sciences. Arif (1987) discusses methodological issues in paradigm building, while Safi (1993) examines the development of the Islamization project and its methodological requirements. These studies emphasize that the project requires more than a critique of existing knowledge: it also needs coherent methodological frameworks and systematic knowledge production. Nevertheless, their main focus is methodological formulation rather than the systematic reassessment of the original arguments for establishing Islamic social sciences and their implications for the project's future.

A third strand is particularly evident in Iranian scholarship on Islamic social sciences. Golshani (2001), Hasani (2006), Dadjou (2015), and Movahed Abtahi (2013) address different dimensions of the debate, including the relationship between science and religion, the epistemological foundations of Islamic social sciences, and arguments concerning their possibility and necessity. Parsania (2006) examines the relationship between tradition, ideology, and science, while KhanMohammadi (2022) explores Islamic sociology and alternative paradigms. Malkawi (2018)

and Sajedi (2023) also contribute to discussions of Islamization and its broader intellectual and civilizational significance. This body of literature provides resources for understanding the diverse arguments advanced in support of Islamic social sciences, ranging from epistemological and worldview-based considerations to social and civilizational concerns.

Critical reassessments further indicate that the project's stated objectives cannot be assumed to follow automatically from its theoretical foundations. Alatas (1995) questions the conceptualization of Islamic social sciences, while Paya (2022) critically evaluates whether the approaches adopted by prominent proponents of Islamization are adequate to achieve their intended objectives.

Taken together, these studies address the foundations, possibility, methodology, and criticism of Islamic social sciences. This study builds on this literature but focuses on a distinct question: how can the initial arguments justifying the establishment of Islamic social sciences be systematically reconstructed and reassessed under contemporary conditions? Through thematic analysis, it organizes these arguments into overarching themes and examines their implications for future development. Its contribution lies in connecting the historical rationales of the project to a strategic agenda emphasizing epistemic independence, methodological development, theory production, problem-oriented research, and institutional and civilizational capacity building. Thus, rather than merely reiterating the necessity of Islamic social sciences, this study examines how their original justifications can inform the transition from establishing necessity to demonstrating effectiveness.

Methodology

This study employs a documentary and library-based approach for data collection. The primary sources examined include books and scholarly articles authored by proponents of Islamic social sciences, particularly those who have explicitly discussed the motivations, rationales, and justifications for engaging with this field in the introductory sections of their works.

For data analysis, a qualitative methodology was adopted, given its superiority over quantitative approaches in providing depth of understanding and facilitating access to the meanings and concepts embedded within textual sources. As King and Horrocks (2010, pp. 14–15) observe:

Although the differences between qualitative and quantitative research often receive considerable attention, it is undeniable that both paradigms share a common objective. The aim of research is the expansion of knowledge in a manner that enables us to know more.

Considering the objective of this study, namely to develop a theoretical formulation of the various reasons, motivations, and necessities underlying the pursuit of Islamic social sciences, thematic analysis was selected as the most appropriate qualitative research method.

Thematic analysis is a widely used approach for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. It enables researchers to organize diverse and scattered data sources and present them in a coherent, systematic, and richly descriptive manner. As Ghasemi (2021, p. 377)

notes, thematic analysis is a method for the "identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns" in such data.

This study follows the three-stage thematic analysis framework proposed by King and Horrocks (2010), which comprises basic themes, organizing themes, and global themes. Additional analytical techniques, including code classification, data matrix construction, and thematic network analysis, were employed throughout the research process (Abedi Jafari et al., 2011).

Through a comprehensive examination of the writings and scholarly works of advocates of Islamic social sciences, 58 basic themes were identified. In the second stage of analysis, these themes were grouped into 14 organizing themes. Finally, seven global themes emerged, each representing a major rationale underlying the necessity of establishing Islamic social sciences.

Findings

Reconstructing the Foundations and Motivations Underlying the Formation of Islamic Social Sciences

This study identifies seven global themes through the application of thematic analysis. The first theme presents a historical comparison, while the second and third themes focus on the internal critiques of modern Western science. The following three themes examine the distinctive identity and epistemic needs of Islamic societies and Islam itself. Finally, the seventh theme adopts an instrumental perspective, conceiving Islamic social sciences as a means of liberating the Muslim world from intellectual and civilizational stagnation.

1. The Absence of a Historical Foundation for Modern Science

One of the most important considerations in analyzing the relationship between modern science and religion is the absence of a historical foundation for the alleged conflict between them. Prior to the emergence of modern Western civilization, science and religion were not regarded as two competing forces; rather, they were, in many respects, viewed as complementary and mutually reinforcing. As Hossein Sozanchi (2010, p. 1) argues, "before the advent of modern Western civilization, science and religion were never recognized as rival currents." Instead, this opposition is the product of a specific historical trajectory that began with the Renaissance and ultimately culminated in the formation of modern civilization and the rise of modernity. Within this historical process, science gradually sought to occupy the position formerly held by religion, presenting itself as the main source of knowledge and the principal framework for interpreting the world.

The separation of science from religion and the claim that science could replace religion are relatively recent phenomena, confined largely to the past few centuries rather than constituting an inherent feature of science or the historical tradition of civilizations. As Charles Townes likewise emphasizes, throughout most of Western history, "science and religion maintained a close relationship," and their separation emerged primarily during and after the Enlightenment, alongside the rapid development of the empirical method (Townes, 2006, p. 67). Although this separation originated within modern Western societies, it did not remain confined to the West.

These developments did not remain confined to Europe. Across the Muslim world, the adoption of modern Western educational models, often introduced through direct or indirect colonial intervention, gave rise to two competing educational systems: a traditional system grounded in Islamic theology and a modern system established under the authority of the modern state and based on secular principles. As Sozanchi (2010, p. 3) argues, the intellectual tension that evolved gradually over several centuries in the West emerged within many Muslim societies within only a few decades. Consequently, what was regarded in the West as a solution to contemporary social challenges became, in the Islamic world, a source of new intellectual, cultural, and civilizational conflicts.

Furthermore, a careful reading of Bertrand Russell's analysis suggests that the conflict between science and religion is not merely an inevitable historical process, but rather a phenomenon rooted in specific historical and social conditions. Russell (2017, p. 11) writes: "There has always been an unending conflict between science and religion, a conflict that, except in recent years, has generally resulted in the triumph of science." Nevertheless, even this statement suggests that the emergence and predominance of such a conflict constitute a relatively recent phenomenon in the civilizational history of humanity.

Accordingly, one of the central arguments for the necessity of establishing Islamic social sciences is the recognition that modern science, contrary to its own claims, is neither value-neutral nor historically unconditioned. Rather, it emerged from the distinctive historical and philosophical circumstances of the modern West and does not rest upon a stable civilizational foundation within the broader history of humanity. Having developed within the context of a conflict with religion and upon a secular conception of reality, modern science cannot, without a critical examination of its underlying assumptions, be regarded as a neutral epistemic instrument capable of serving the civilizational and spiritual objectives of Islamic societies.

2. The Value-Laden Nature of Western Science

One of the central claims of modern science is its commitment to objectivity and value neutrality in the discovery, collection, and evaluation of scientific knowledge. Contrary to this claim, however, modern science is fundamentally grounded in a particular system of values and metaphysical and philosophical presuppositions that are deeply rooted in the distinctive history and culture of Europe. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1996) argues, "modern physics is not a universal science but a Western science," because its foundations belong to a specific philosophical and value system associated with a particular period of European history, rather than with the universal history of humankind. Nevertheless, the modern West has consistently sought to present modern science as a body of knowledge that transcends both time and place, thereby endowing it with a universal and transhistorical character.

Modern science, therefore, cannot be understood as a neutral instrument for discovering reality. Rather, it embodies a worldview that is intrinsically linked to the "secular outlook" and the "distinctive anthropological and ontological presuppositions" of the modern West. Hasani (2006, p. 12) explicitly argues that the main critique of Western science concerns "the value system" that

it both presupposes and disseminates. This value system is not merely detached from Islam; in many respects, it stands in direct opposition to the epistemological and ethical foundations of the Islamic worldview. Accordingly, modern science came into conflict with alternative worldviews, most notably the Islamic worldview. Whereas Islamic thought recognizes revelation and divine inspiration as legitimate sources of knowledge, the modern West, particularly from the Enlightenment onward (the late seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century), progressively excluded religion from the public sphere and replaced it with positivistic science as the dominant authority for understanding reality. Significantly, this transition was justified precisely through the claim that empirical science is objective, value neutral, and universally applicable.

From a historical perspective, modern science developed through a process that systematically marginalized alternative systems of knowledge, particularly religious understandings of nature. Rather than treating these traditions as legitimate modes of knowing, the emerging scientific paradigm reduced them to the status of "poetry, myth, or superstition" and excluded them from the recognized domain of knowledge about the natural world (Hasani, 2006, p. 13). This transformation was not merely a scientific or theoretical development; it also constituted an epistemic and political project aimed at establishing the dominance of a particular discourse of knowledge while subordinating competing sources of truth and authority.

Within this context, accepting Western science without critically examining its philosophical and axiological foundations amounts to accepting the full range of its intellectual, social, and ethical implications. As Hasani (2006, p. 16) argues, "the complete adoption of Western science is possible only through the adoption of its worldview"; consequently, its implications for the Islamic understanding of reality would be profoundly detrimental. Modern science has not only failed, by itself, to secure comprehensive human flourishing in its moral and spiritual dimensions, but has also been accompanied in many instances by widespread psychological, ethical, and social crises. From this perspective, such crises are understood as the natural consequence of a scientific paradigm originally constructed upon the exclusion of God, the sacred, and the teleological nature of existence (Hasani, 2006, p. 9).

In addition, even among some Muslim intellectuals, it has been acknowledged that the existing human sciences are characterized by deficiencies, flaws, and inherent limitations (Malekian, as cited in Hasani, 2006, p. 180). This admission indicates that the conceptual and value-laden structure of modern human sciences requires fundamental reconsideration and reconstruction. Consequently, the development of Islamic social sciences becomes necessary as an intellectual project aimed at addressing these epistemological and normative shortcomings. Golshani (2001) likewise emphasizes that neglecting the philosophical and value commitments embedded within contemporary science inevitably reproduces the very crises experienced by modern Western societies. As he argues, a society may achieve remarkable scientific and technological success in practice, yet simultaneously encounter profound ethical, psychological, and social problems similar to those confronting contemporary Western civilization (p. 9).

Moreover, in the Western tradition, science has functioned not only as an instrument of knowledge but also as a tool of social engineering. As Hubert Knoblauch (2011, p. 47) observes, during the Enlightenment, "science was an instrument for designing society," rather than a merely theoretical or value neutral activity. Consequently, Western social sciences were founded not only upon a materialist worldview and radical empiricism (positivism), but their objectives have also been largely incompatible with Islamic ideals, particularly the objectives of the Islamic Revolution (Office of Cooperation between the Hawzah and the University, 1984, p. 127).

In light of the foregoing discussion, it becomes evident that modern science, especially in the field of the social sciences, is embedded with values and presuppositions that have transformed it into an instrument of cultural and intellectual domination. This reality renders the establishment of Islamic social sciences not merely justifiable, but imperative, since within the Islamic framework, science cannot remain indifferent to revelation, ethics, and the ultimate purpose of human existence.

3. The Assault of Western Science on Alternative Systems of Knowledge

One of the fundamental reasons for the necessity of establishing Islamic social sciences is the hegemonic orientation of modern Western science toward other systems of knowledge, particularly religious and monotheistic epistemic traditions. Contrary to its claim of value neutrality, modern Western science is not neutral in practice; rather, by denying and marginalizing competing epistemic traditions, it has pursued a systematic project of eliminating and excluding alternative forms of knowledge.

In this regard, Hasani (2006, p. 13), drawing upon critical analyses of modern science, argues that "by denying the claims of the Abrahamic traditions regarding the knowledge of nature, modern science has contributed to the creation of a condition in which this ethical heritage is undergoing an increasing process of disintegration." This implies that, by rejecting the epistemic authority of revelation and tradition, modern science has effectively undermined those systems of knowledge that, for centuries, served as the main sources of human understanding and spiritual guidance.

This approach has had particularly significant consequences for Islam. Hasani further cautions that Muslims should not assume that this condition is unique to the Christian world or that it has no impact on Islamic societies (Hasani, 2006, p. 13). The reality is that, with the transfer of Western science into the Muslim world, a form of implicit secularism was also transmitted to these societies, giving rise, according to a number of scholars, to a crisis of identity and an epistemic dualism within the intellectual consciousness of Muslim scholars and students (Golshani, 2001, p. 9).

At the same time, although modern science ostensibly claims to be value neutral, in practice it has marginalized religion. In this regard, Hasani observes that "four centuries after the emergence of modern science, it is religion—not science—that has been pushed to the margins" (Hasani, 2006, p. 14). Such a perspective has reduced religion from a legitimate source of knowledge to a domain confined primarily to ethics and personal or otherworldly affairs. Golshani describes this phenomenon as the "restriction of religion to ethical and eschatological matters" and regards it as

one of the main consequences of replacing religious knowledge with secular science in Muslim societies (Golshani, 2001, pp. 34–35).

Furthermore, the modern educational system in many Islamic societies was established within the framework of the objectives and programs of colonial domination. Ayatollah Khamenei (2021) explicitly states that "the university in our country was established during the period of Western domination … and in accordance with the plans of the colonial West." This dependent institutional structure transformed modern science into not only an instrument for the production of knowledge but also a vehicle for cultural and epistemic influence. Taha Jabir al-Alwani likewise refers to a group of thinkers who regard the realm of knowledge as an ongoing battlefield in which the West wages a continuous intellectual war against other nations (Al-Alwani, 1994, p. 17). Such a sharp civilizational confrontation is particularly evident in the tradition of Orientalist scholarship.

Within the field of Islamic studies, the epistemic dominance of the West has found another expression in Orientalism and the scholarship of Western Orientalists. As Nasr (1994, p. 352) observes, "for nearly two centuries, most Western Orientalists have attacked Islam while attempting to teach Muslims how to understand their own religion." This hegemonic and epistemically colonial approach represents an effort to define Islam from the perspective of Western civilization rather than to understand it from within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

In sum, modern Western science has not remained neutral toward religious systems of knowledge. Through strategies of exclusion, reduction, and substitution, it has contributed to the erosion of traditional epistemic traditions and the emergence of an identity crisis within Muslim societies. This condition underscores the necessity of rethinking the foundations of the human and social sciences and of establishing forms of knowledge that are compatible with the monotheistic worldview and the civilizational values of Islam.

4. The Inability of Modern Social Sciences to Address the Needs of Islamic Societies

One of the main arguments for establishing Islamic social sciences is the inability of prevailing social sciences to respond adequately to the genuine needs of Islamic societies. These disciplines, having largely developed upon the epistemological foundations and conceptual framework of Western civilization, are fundamentally incompatible with the Islamic worldview and the cultural and moral structures of Muslim communities. In this regard, Khosrow Bagheri, drawing upon the thought of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, argues that Western social sciences, because they are imbued with concepts and categories derived from Western civilization, are incapable of providing Muslims with authentic knowledge (Bagheri, as cited in Hasani, 2006, p. 98).

According to this perspective, modern science, having been cultivated within a secular and humanistic intellectual framework, is incapable of addressing the distinctive problems and challenges of Islamic societies, which are rooted in their own monotheistic, ethical, and historical foundations. Consequently, an uncritical reliance on these disciplines cannot provide the basis for authentic development and genuine progress within Muslim societies; rather, it may further deepen their crises of cultural identity and civilizational self-understanding.

To substantiate the claim that mainstream Western social sciences are incapable of adequately addressing the needs of Islamic societies, it is first necessary to examine their historical origins and socio-intellectual context. Modern Western sciences emerged from specific philosophical and social transformations in European history, including the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the rise of empiricism. These disciplines were developed primarily in response to distinctly Western problems, such as the conflict between the Church and scientific inquiry, political and economic crises, and the demands of industrialization. Consequently, both the questions they pose and the epistemological and methodological frameworks they employ are grounded in a secular and anthropocentric worldview. From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, Hubert Knoblauch (2011, p. 160) argues that modern Western civilization lacks a coherent utopian vision and instead relies upon continual change and rational instrumentalism directed toward an indeterminate future. Drawing on Karl Mannheim, he observes that liberal thought pursues a formally defined goal whose realization depends upon the widest possible use of rational means, while its intellectual character is shaped by secular education and the historical experience of prolonged exclusion from power. Within this framework, it is unsurprising that sciences produced within a particular civilizational experience cannot fully or authentically respond to the concerns of societies whose social order is founded upon revelation, divine unity, and religious values.

Therefore, the challenge is not merely one of cultural difference but of epistemic orientation: theories generated to solve the historical problems of modern Europe cannot automatically function as universal solutions for Islamic societies without critical reconstruction.

5. Islam Requires a Science Appropriate to Its Own Foundations

One of the central issues in the relationship between religion and knowledge is the necessity of producing a form of science that is compatible with Islam, a science that not only remains consistent with the principles of tawḥīd and the Islamic worldview but is also capable of realizing the objectives of religion in both individual and social life. Mirbaqeri, head of the Academy of Islamic Sciences, regards the purpose of establishing this institution, grounded in the theory of Islamic science, as the comprehensive realization of Islam in practical life. In other words, the theory of Islamic science is conceived as an instrument for actualizing Islam in everyday life. As he states, “This perspective seeks the concrete function and active presence of religion in the sphere of social life, and the realization of this objective necessitates the existence of Islamic science” (Mirbaqeri, as cited in Hasani, 2006, p. 133).

Some scholars with a critical perspective, such as Mostafa Malekian, likewise emphasize that many concepts and conclusions within the Western human sciences are in conflict with the teachings of the Qur’an and the Hadith, and that these conflicts cannot be ignored (Malekian, as cited in Hasani, 2006, p. 180). This tension demonstrates that the mere adoption of the prevailing Western social sciences, without reconstructing their conceptual and foundational assumptions, cannot adequately address the needs of an Islamic society.

Among the numerous arguments advanced to demonstrate the necessity of Islamic science, some are grounded not in the deficiencies of existing sciences but in the comprehensive guardianship of

religion over all dimensions of the believer's life. In a philosophical and epistemological line of reasoning, Mirbaqeri regards thinking as an act of the will and argues that, since religion governs the sphere of human volition, thought itself must likewise be guided by religion. From this perspective, the science that emerges from such a mode of thought will offer a distinctive understanding of the world that differs fundamentally from secular science (Movahed Abtahi, 2013). Accordingly, Islamic society requires a science that is compatible with its own worldview and civilizational foundations.

In addition to its epistemological dimension, the civilizational role of Islamic science also merits attention. As Dadjou (2015, p. 675) puts it, "The most important role of religious science is in civilization-building and the establishment of government." In other words, Islamic science plays a role not merely at the theoretical level, but also in institution building, social organization, and the design of models of governance. Therefore, Islamic science should be understood in close connection with the project of civilization building.

In the process of achieving such a science, reflection on the historical experience of the West can also be instructive. Muhammad Iqbal Lahori (n.d., p. 12) believed that it was necessary to examine what Europe had learned in the course of modernity and how these lessons could contribute to the renewal of religious thought and the understanding of God in Islam. In this light, Iqbal draws attention to the distinction between the modernization of thought and theology in the West and in the Muslim world, and considers the use of Western experience beneficial. However, as Fathi Hasan Malkawi reminds us, no nation begins its knowledge and achievements from scratch. Rather, it draws upon the accumulated reservoirs of knowledge and intellectual resources of other peoples, but ultimately produces knowledge in accordance with its own intellectual structure and disposition:

But this does not mean overlooking the fact that every nation imparts the imprint of its cultural and intellectual character to the knowledge it adopts … so that, in the end, it reimprints whatever achievements it produces with its new intellectual character. (Malkawi, 2018)

Therefore, the appropriation of scientific knowledge, while avoiding imitation, should take place in accordance with indigenous intellectual and civilizational foundations.

Another important reason for establishing Islamic social sciences is attention to the normative dimension of the social sciences. According to Ahmad Vaezi (as cited in KhanMohammadi, 2022, pp. 18–19), the social sciences do not merely seek to describe and explain; rather, they are also concerned with "the desirable form of society in policymaking, education, ethics, and other domains." On this basis, every intellectual system requires a scientific foundation consistent with its own values in order to address questions such as justice, the ideal human being, legitimate institutions, and the relationship between religion and politics. Consequently, religious sources can play a fundamental role in producing Islamic social sciences compatible with the objectives of Islamic civilization.

Thus, from epistemological, foundational, civilizational, and normative perspectives alike, it can be concluded that, to fully realize itself in the sphere of social life, Islam requires a form of

science commensurate with its monotheistic, ethical, and civilizational structure. Such a science, while understanding historical conditions and civilizational exigencies, draws on the experiences of other nations as well as on religious sources and divine objectives.

6. The Identity of Religious Science

The discussion of religious science is not merely a matter of addressing the relationship between science and religion; rather, it concerns a form of knowledge that is constituted on the foundations of the Islamic worldview and that draws upon roots distinct from those of the prevailing modern sciences. Contrary to the common view that regards Islamic sciences as an extension of the natural sciences or as a precursor to modern science, Islamic religious science possesses an independent identity, a spiritual structure, and a distinctive nature that differentiates it from other forms of scientific knowledge.

The first distinction between religious science and other forms of science lies in its ontological and epistemological roots. Hamid Parsania, emphasizing this foundation, maintains that religious science is, at its depths, connected to divine knowledge; it is a form of knowledge that arises not from sensation and experience but from the rays of God's light cast into the heart of the believer:

> *"Religious science is rooted in divine awareness and knowledge, and the term 'knowledge' in this usage also applies to the essential knowledge of God, that is, God's knowledge of His own Essence". (Parsania, 2006, pp. 66–67)*

This perspective recalls the profound words that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq taught to 'Unwan al-Basri: "Knowledge is a light that God casts into the heart of whomever He wills" (Al-Tabarsi, 1965, pp. 325–327), indicating that, in Islam, the source of true knowledge lies in connection with the source of divine light.

From this perspective, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, as manifestations of this divine knowledge, are not merely objects of knowledge but also means of attaining truth. In other words, the divine light that constitutes the primary source of knowledge is manifested in the Qur'anic verses and in the Sunnah, that is, in the sayings and actions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Ahl al-Bayt. Parsania continues: "The most important contribution of religious science to human beings is the Sunnah; the Sunnah is something that benefits from divine presence and direct witnessing and is also a means of attaining it" (Parsania, 2006, p. 67). Religious science does not merely look at the world; it also attends to the light through which the world acquires meaning.

By contrast, modern science, which developed and flourished in the West, is often devoid of any connection with spirituality and ethics and is the product of a secular and materialist view of existence. As Hasani (2006) states explicitly, Western science lacks an ethical character, and examples such as the production of bombs, environmental catastrophes, the disintegration of the family, and psychological crises are clear manifestations of this character (p. 12). Religious science

in Islam, therefore, differs from modern science not only in its ends but also in its foundations, methods, and structure.

In addition to its epistemological and ethical distinctions, religious science also possesses a civilizational and historical identity. In his works, Seyyed Hossein Nasr repeatedly emphasizes that Islamic sciences were not merely a preliminary stage leading to Western science but rather an independent scientific system with its own distinct nature, a system that, in the light of the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, examined causality, the relationships among things, the meaning of nature, and nature's ultimate purpose. He states explicitly:

> In order to fully understand the significance of Islamic sciences for Islam, as a religion, and for Islamic civilization, one must pay attention to the perspective of the Islamic sciences, which is independent of and distinct from the framework of Western philosophy of science. (Nasr, 1994, p. 122)

This scientific identity is not only spiritual but also compatible with the order of nature, human beings, and critical thought. Nasr emphasizes that Muslim scholars throughout the history of Islamic civilization were able to combine "the strongest criteria of critical thought" with faith and the Islamic worldview, without distancing themselves from religion or destroying nature (Nasr, 1994, p. 146). From his perspective, the extensive tradition of Islamic sciences is a source of pride for Muslims and a pillar of their civilizational identity, because it was able to cultivate a wide range of profound and diverse forms of knowledge without conflict with nature or spirituality.

Consequently, religious science is a form of knowledge characterized by a distinctive identity, a divine origin, an ethical orientation, a civilizational structure, and a function compatible with nature and spirituality. It is not merely an indigenous form of knowledge; rather, it represents a new horizon in the relationship between science and religion and an alternative model to modern secular science.

7. Religious Science as a Means of Liberation from Stagnation and Inertia

In recent centuries, the Islamic world has experienced a form of scientific stagnation, civilizational stagnation, and passivity in the face of Western intellectual and civilizational currents. This stagnation has weighed not only on the intellectual dimension but also on the body and soul of Muslims. For this reason, many Muslim thinkers believe that the way to liberate the Islamic world from this condition is to rethink its epistemological foundations and reconstruct knowledge on the basis of Islamic principles. As Dadjou (2015, p. 75) puts it, if the Islamic world is to free itself from this stagnation and inertia, it must "develop new initiatives in the field of its Qur'anic and religious knowledge alongside and in step with the new sciences."

One of the important reasons for the emergence of this stagnation was the narrowing of the scope of scientific inquiry in the Islamic world after the era of flourishing Islamic civilization. According to Golshani's analysis in *From Secular Science to Religious Science*, following the Mongol period, the Islamic world was not only inactive in the natural and mathematical sciences

but also remained unaware of scientific developments in other regions. The emergence of figures such as Shaykh Bahāʾī and Jamshīd al-Kāshī during this period is regarded as a limited exception (Golshani, 2001, p. 9). Furthermore, in many Islamic societies, the study of nature, which is encouraged in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, gradually fell into neglect. Consequently, the scope of Islamic scientific inquiry narrowed, thereby creating the conditions for the dominance of modern secular science.

However, what has most significantly intensified this crisis is the absence of an alternative epistemic system capable of responding to the intellectual, cultural, and civilizational requirements of Muslims. In his proposed framework for the "Islamization of Knowledge," Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1983, pp. 10–11) emphasizes that the liberation of the Muslim Ummah from its cultural, political, and economic crises is possible only through the reproduction of Islamic sciences and the establishment of an Islamic knowledge system. He also identifies the main source of these crises in an ineffective educational system that has failed to cultivate civilization-building human resources inspired by revealed sources (Al-Faruqi, 1983, p. 16).

Similarly, some scholars, such as Taha Jabir al-Alwani (1994, p. 23), emphasize that the civilizational confrontation between Islam and the West will benefit Islam only when Muslims are able to present and theorize their own civilizational alternative, one that requires a particular kind of knowledge nourished by the spirit of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and Islamic reason. Seyed Hadi Sajedi (2023, p. 13) also notes that the ultimate aim of the Islamization of knowledge is not merely to criticize Western science but rather to produce Islamic knowledge with a civilizational function and a role in the construction of the New Islamic Civilization.

Ziauddin Sardar, as cited in Stenberg (2019, pp. 73–74), presents a fundamental critique of the present condition of Islam and maintains that Islam has experienced rigidity and stagnation throughout history and has been deprived of the "oxygen of reinterpretation" for centuries. He sees the solution in a kind of "soft deconstruction," that is, a purification of the Islamic tradition from elements of rigidity, imitation, and despotism, without damaging its divine and Qur'anic foundations.

Ultimately, it can be concluded that religious science is not only a means of reconstructing Islamic civilization but also a strategic instrument for overcoming the current crisis-ridden condition of the Muslim world. If reconstructed in conjunction with the Islamic tradition and the epistemological requirements of the contemporary era, this science can help overcome the epistemological stagnation, political inertia, and civilizational passivity of Muslims.

Table 1 summarizes the seven themes by tracing each from its original rationale through its contemporary reassessment to its implications for the future of Islamic social sciences:

Table 1. Foundations of Islamic Social Sciences: Contemporary Reassessment and Future Directions

Global theme	Original rationale	Contemporary reassessment	Future direction
1. Historical situatedness of modern science	The separation of science and religion emerged within a particular Western history; modern social sciences are not historically neutral.	Historical origins do not, by themselves, invalidate scientific theories. Their assumptions and explanatory value must be assessed critically.	Build epistemic independence through critical selection, reconstruction, and original theory development.
2. Value-laden nature of Western science	Social sciences reflect philosophical assumptions, values, and social ends rather than complete value neutrality.	Clarify how values shape research while preserving scientific validity and methodological rigor.	Develop value-conscious social science grounded in Islamic ethical and social ends.
3. Marginalization of alternative knowledge systems	The dominance of modern science has marginalized religious knowledge and contributed to epistemic dualism in Muslim societies.	Move beyond a simple opposition between Western and Islamic knowledge toward critical epistemic dialogue.	Activate Islamic sources as productive resources for social inquiry and theory.
4. Limited responsiveness to Islamic societies	The concepts and questions of modern social sciences arose largely from Western historical problems.	Their usefulness should be judged by how well they explain the actual problems of Islamic societies, not by their origins alone.	Pursue problem-oriented research that combines Islamic resources with critically assessed social-scientific knowledge.
5. Need for knowledge aligned with Islamic foundations	Social knowledge should serve Islam's monotheistic, ethical, and civilizational ends.	It is not enough for science to be merely compatible with Islam; Islam's positive contribution to knowledge production must be specified.	Produce valid, problem-solving social knowledge actively grounded in Islamic foundations and ends.
6. Distinct identity of religious science	Religious science has distinctive foundations, sources, ethical commitments, and purposes.	Its identity must be demonstrated in research practice, not asserted only at the theoretical level.	Develop assessable examples of Islamic social research and theory that show this distinctiveness.
7. Liberation from stagnation	Reconstructing knowledge was seen as a means to overcome scientific stagnation and civilizational passivity.	Critique and calls for revival alone do not build scientific or institutional capacity.	Invest in researchers, research networks, theory, policy applications, and institution building.

From the "Why Establish?" to the "How to Sustain?"

The seven global themes identified in this study are not examined merely to reconstruct the historical reasons for establishing Islamic social sciences; rather, each is analyzed in three stages. First, the initial foundation of each theme and the problem that motivated the formation of this project are reconstructed. Second, that foundation is reassessed in light of contemporary epistemological, social, and civilizational conditions to determine how the original problem has persisted or evolved. Third, its strategic implications for the future are derived, identifying the direction and requirements that each foundation entails for the continuation and development of Islamic social sciences. Thus, the study moves from "Why Establish?" to "How to Sustain?" and transforms the initial reasons into a basis for charting the future agenda of this field.

1. From the "Lack of a Historical Foundation for Modern Science" to Reconsidering the Epistemic Independence of Islamic Social Sciences

One of the reasons for the formation of Islamic social sciences was the view that modern science is the product of a particular historical and civilizational trajectory and cannot be regarded as inherently universal knowledge independent of the philosophical and religious contexts of its emergence. The separation of science and religion was likewise regarded as a historical and relatively recent phenomenon transferred from modern Western civilization to Islamic societies. Accordingly, modern social sciences cannot be employed as a neutral instrument for realizing the epistemic and civilizational objectives of Islamic societies without critically examining their foundations and historical context.

Today, the issue is not merely establishing the historical character of modern science or rejecting its validity, but determining the relationship between the historical context of knowledge production and its validity. The historical situatedness of a theory does not necessarily render it invalid; therefore, Islamic social sciences should be founded neither on the rejection of modern social sciences nor on the uncritical acceptance of existing theories and methods. This concern is also reflected in critical assessments of the Islamization of Knowledge project. Syed Farid Alatas (1995) argues that "the Islamization of knowledge project is still vaguely conceived as far as the social sciences are concerned and that it remains open to charges of nativism." Accordingly, the contemporary challenge is to develop a critical engagement that distinguishes the scientific achievements of modern social sciences from their philosophical and civilizational presuppositions, while avoiding both uncritical adoption and an exclusionary form of epistemic particularism.

Accordingly, the future of Islamic social sciences should move from critiquing the origins of modern social sciences toward epistemic independence through critically evaluating, selecting, reconstructing, and independently producing social knowledge. This requires clear epistemological and anthropological foundations, contextualized problem identification and theorizing, and an independent capacity to understand and explain the problems of Islamic societies. Thus, epistemic independence must move from a defensive position to an active capacity for producing social knowledge.

2. From the "Value-Laden Nature of Western Science" to Reconstructing the Relationship between Science, Values, and Ends

One of the foundations of Islamic social sciences was the critique of the claim that modern science is neutral and value-free. Modern science emerged within a particular historical and philosophical context and is shaped by ontological, anthropological, and epistemological presuppositions as well as by specific values. Accordingly, its uncritical acceptance may entail the implicit acceptance of its philosophical assumptions and social ends. From this perspective, social sciences cannot be indifferent to values, ethics, religion, and the ends of human life.

Today, the issue is not merely demonstrating the "Westernness" of social sciences but reconsidering the relationship between science, values, and ends. Although methods and findings may in some respects be distinguished from researchers' personal values, the selection of problems, concepts, theoretical frameworks, criteria of desirability, and applications of findings cannot be entirely separated from values. Therefore, Islamic social sciences must clarify where and how Islamic values enter the process of knowledge production and how value commitment can be reconciled with scientific validity.

Accordingly, the future of Islamic social sciences requires reconstructing the relationship between science and values on an Islamic basis. Islamic values should not be confined to the application of scientific findings; their relationship with problem identification, conceptualization, theorizing, the articulation of social ends, and the evaluation of findings must also be systematically clarified. Thus, Islamic social sciences should move from criticizing "value neutrality" toward developing a model of value-conscious scientific knowledge with an ethical and teleological orientation, while preserving scientific validity and methodological rigor.

3. From the "Attack of Modern Science on Competing Epistemic Systems" to Reconstructing Epistemic Dialogue

The third foundation for the formation of Islamic social sciences was the view that modern science is not merely a neutral cognitive system but has historically marginalized competing epistemic systems, particularly religious knowledge. Through the elimination or reduction of revelation, religion, and tradition in knowing reality, this epistemic dominance also extended to Islamic societies, contributing to epistemic dualism and an identity crisis. Thus, establishing Islamic social sciences was regarded as necessary to restore the legitimacy and status of religious knowledge in knowledge production.

Today, this issue cannot be framed simply as an opposition between "Western science" and "Islamic knowledge." The more fundamental issue is recognizing that social knowledge production should not be confined to a single epistemic system and that dialogue among diverse sources of knowledge should be acknowledged. Reconsidering this foundation therefore requires moving beyond a defensive approach toward epistemic pluralism and critical dialogue between modern knowledge and Islamic epistemic resources. The task is not merely to restore religion to science

but to demonstrate the capacity of Islamic knowledge to contribute to describing, explaining, and understanding social reality.

Accordingly, the future of Islamic social sciences should pursue the reconstruction and activation of the epistemic capacities of Islam. This requires identifying Islamic sources of knowledge, clarifying their capacity to generate social propositions, establishing systematic dialogue with existing social sciences, and developing theories that are not merely reactive responses to Western epistemic dominance. Ultimately, the aim should be not merely to "resist a competing epistemic system," but to transform Islamic knowledge from a defensive form of knowledge into an active and generative source of social knowledge production.

4. From the "Failure to Meet the Needs of Islamic Societies" to a Problem-Oriented Approach in Islamic Social Sciences

The fourth foundation for the formation of Islamic social sciences was the inability of existing social sciences to adequately address the problems and needs of Islamic societies. Modern social sciences emerged in response to specific historical and social problems in the West; therefore, their concepts, questions, and analytical frameworks do not necessarily correspond fully to societies grounded in different monotheistic, religious, and cultural foundations. Exclusive reliance on existing social sciences may thus lead to the neglect or reduction of fundamental problems facing Islamic societies.

This foundation requires reconsideration: differences in social context do not render the achievements of existing social sciences ineffective. The central issue is that problem identification in Islamic social sciences should not be determined solely by questions and priorities developed in other contexts. The contemporary challenge is therefore not merely the "Islamization" of existing theories but the independent identification of the actual problems of Islamic societies and the assessment of whether existing concepts and theories can explain them or require modification and reconstruction. Accordingly, the success of Islamic social sciences should be assessed less by their distance from Western social sciences and more by their capacity to accurately understand reality and respond to social problems.

The main implication is the shift from theory-oriented to problem-oriented social sciences. Islamic social sciences should begin with the actual problems of Islamic societies, formulate them as scientific problems, and draw on both Islamic epistemic resources and existing social-scientific achievements. This requires a research agenda based on actual social priorities, a stronger link between research and policymaking, and theories capable of explaining and addressing problems. Thus, Islamic social sciences can move from a predominantly identity-based and defensive project toward a problem-solving and effective body of knowledge for Islamic societies.

5. From "Islam's Need for a Science Appropriate to Its Own Foundations" to Producing Social Knowledge Aligned with Islamic Ends

The fifth foundation for the formation of Islamic social sciences was the view that the realization of Islam in social life requires knowledge compatible with its monotheistic foundations, ethical values, and civilizational ends. From this perspective, science is not merely an instrument for describing reality but also contributes to policymaking, education, ethics, institution building, and civilization building. Thus, an Islamic society cannot rely solely on knowledge based on different foundations and ends. At the same time, this foundation does not reject the achievements of other societies but calls for their critical use and reconstruction in accordance with the intellectual and cultural structure of Islamic society.

Today, this foundation should not merely mean producing science that is "not incompatible with Islam." Such a definition is overly negative. Yasien Mohamed (1994), in his critique of al-Faruqi's Islamization of Knowledge project, emphasizes that the purpose of such a critique is to contribute toward "an authentic Islamic response to intellectual modernity." The key question is what Islam contributes to the production of social knowledge and at which levels this difference appears: problem identification, concepts, theories, methods, evaluative criteria, or social ends.

Accordingly, the future of Islamic social sciences should move from "science that is not incompatible with Islam" to "science actively grounded in Islamic foundations and ends." This requires clarifying the contribution of Islamic sources to social knowledge production, reconstructing necessary concepts and theories, critically engaging with global scientific achievements, and linking knowledge to the issues and civilizational objectives of Islamic society. Success should therefore be measured not merely by an Islamic name or foundation but by producing valid, problem-solving, and civilization-building social knowledge that preserves its epistemic identity and Islamic ends while drawing on human experience.

6. From the "Independent Identity of Religious Science" to Redefining the Epistemic Identity of Islamic Social Sciences

The sixth foundation for the formation of Islamic social sciences was the conviction that religious science cannot be regarded merely as a branch of modern science supplemented by religious propositions; rather, it must possess an independent identity in terms of its foundations, sources of knowledge, ends, and relationship with ethics and spirituality. Rooted in the monotheistic worldview and Islamic tradition, religious science reflects a historical experience in which knowledge production and commitment to faith and spirituality are not necessarily incompatible. Thus, establishing Islamic social sciences was an effort to recover and reconstruct a distinctive epistemic identity in contrast to the secular conception of science.

Today, this foundation requires moving beyond a merely identity-based conception. If the "independent identity of religious science" signifies only differences in foundations or the Islamic character of science, it does not clarify what difference this makes in the actual process of producing social knowledge. Contemporary reassessment must show how the monotheistic

worldview shapes problem selection, conceptions of human beings and society, conceptual formulation, theory construction, data interpretation, and the determination of social ends. At the same time, epistemic independence should not mean isolation from global knowledge; Islamic social sciences can preserve their identity while critically engaging with other scientific traditions.

Accordingly, a major future agenda is to transform the identity of religious science from a theoretical claim into a scientific identity observable in knowledge production. This requires demonstrating its distinctive foundations, concepts, theories, methods, and ends, and showing how these differences produce new explanations and responses to social problems. Thus, the field should move beyond establishing the "possibility" or "independence" of religious science toward producing concrete and competitive examples of Islamic social theory and research, making religious science a productive, distinctive, and assessable scientific identity.

7. From "Religious Science as an Instrument of Liberation" to Rebuilding Civilizational Capacity

The seventh foundation for the formation of Islamic social sciences was the conviction that the scientific stagnation and civilizational passivity of the Islamic world could not be overcome merely through limited reforms or by appropriating Western achievements; rather, they required reconstructing the epistemic system and producing knowledge suited to contemporary needs. From this perspective, religious science can overcome intellectual inertia, rebuild scientific capacity, and create the conditions for an Islamic civilizational alternative. Thus, the Islamization of Knowledge was understood not merely as a scientific project but as part of a broader project of civilizational revival.

Several decades later, the issue is no longer simply "liberation from stagnation," but how religious science can genuinely create civilizational capacity. Experience shows that criticizing Western sciences, producing literature on religious science, or emphasizing epistemic revival is insufficient by itself to overcome scientific passivity. Ali Paya (2022) similarly argues that "the methods and approaches they have adopted is not conducive to the aim they have in mind." Contemporary reassessment should therefore move from the general concept of "liberation" toward scientific and civilizational capacity building. Scientific revival should also not mean merely returning to the past; rather, it must connect the Islamic intellectual heritage with contemporary knowledge and the emerging problems of the Muslim world.

The main implication for the future is the transition from epistemic revival to civilizational capacity building. Islamic social sciences should contribute to human resource development, theory production, problem identification, policymaking, and social institution building. This requires research networks, capable researchers, stronger links between universities and social institutions, problem-oriented knowledge, and translating scientific findings into policy models. Thus, success should be measured not merely by the volume of literature on "religious science," but by the capacity to produce knowledge, solve problems, and generate intellectual and institutional capacities for the advancement of Islamic societies.

Future Agenda for Islamic Social Sciences

A reassessment of the seven global themes of Islamic social sciences shows that the key issue today is not merely establishing their necessity, but transforming these foundations into a sustainable and productive scientific project. Each foundation offers a strategic direction. Accordingly, the future agenda can be formulated at five levels.

1. Epistemological Level: From Critique to Epistemic Independence

The first priority is moving from the historical and epistemological critique of modern social sciences toward epistemic independence. Islamic social sciences should systematically clarify their relationship with Islamic sources of knowledge, particularly revelation and reason, and demonstrate their role in producing valid social knowledge. Epistemic independence should not mean isolation from global knowledge, but rather a critical and selective engagement with existing achievements.

2. Methodological Level: Translating Foundations into the Process of Knowledge Production

If Islamic social sciences possess a distinctive epistemic identity, this must be reflected in knowledge-production methods. A key item on the future agenda is clarifying the relationship between Islamic foundations and research methods, criteria of validity, explanation, and theory evaluation, without reducing methodology to mere imitation of existing social sciences or to unverifiable claims.

3. Theoretical Level: From Reconstruction to Theorization

The independent identity of religious science requires the production of social theory. Its development must move beyond criticizing Western theories and reconstructing concepts toward theorizing human beings, society, institutions, social order, social change, and civilization, grounded in Islamic foundations and possessing explanatory power and scientific competitiveness. This transition also requires attention not only to theoretical formulations but also to the purposes and practices through which knowledge is intended to achieve its ends. As Chittick (2001, p. ix) observes, “greater attention also needs to be paid to the objectives of the philosophers and to the arguments and practices that were intended to achieve these objectives.”

4. Problem-Oriented Level: From Theory-Oriented to Problem-Oriented

One of the key implications of the initial foundations is attention to the real problems of Islamic societies. Islamic social sciences should move beyond debates over Western theories and begin with concrete social problems, asking what knowledge is needed to understand and address them. This orientation is consistent with Legenhausen (2011, p. 5), who observes that “[t]he only way in which Islam can be brought into closer alignment with knowledge is if people start to do empirical work.” Accordingly, issues such as family, justice, identity, governance, demographic change, lifestyle, and emerging technology-related challenges should be prioritized in the research agenda and serve as foundations for theory and knowledge production.

5. Institutional and Civilizational Level: Transforming Knowledge into Civilizational Capacity

Ultimately, religious science can fulfill its liberating and civilization-building role only by moving from texts and theories to institutions and social practice. This institutional dimension is also supported by the historical analysis of Kalmbach (2020, p. 219), which shows that "embedding ideas in institutions such as schools is one way to spread them outside the intellectual elite." This requires researcher training, specialized scientific centers, research networks, university engagement with social institutions and policymaking, and translating scientific findings into practical models. Thus, the goal of Islamic social sciences is not merely a "theoretical alternative" to Western social sciences but the development of independent scientific capacity for understanding and addressing problems and advancing Islamic societies. This long-term orientation is consistent with Al-Attas's (1993, p. 167) warning that "[i]t is futile to attempt short-term myopic measures in providing for a solution to a problem of this magnitude."

Conclusion

This study began with a historical question: Why should Islamic social sciences be established? A reconstruction of the literature surrounding this intellectual movement demonstrated that the answer was not based on a single rationale but rather on seven interconnected foundations: the critique of the historical origins of modern science; the critique of its value-laden character; the critique of its epistemic dominance over competing systems of knowledge; the inadequacy of existing social sciences to address the needs of Islamic societies; the need for a form of science compatible with the ends of Islam; the independent identity of religious science; and its role in overcoming stagnation and contributing to civilizational revival. Despite their differences, these seven themes converge on a common point: the inadequacy of equating existing social sciences uncritically with the epistemic and civilizational needs of Islamic societies.

Yet this study does not stop at this point. Several decades after the articulation of these foundations, the central task is no longer merely to repeat the claim that modern social sciences have limitations, distinctive presuppositions, or particular biases. The contemporary question is this: What should be built for the future on the basis of this historical diagnosis? A reassessment of the seven foundations demonstrates that, under contemporary conditions, each can be transformed from a "rationale for establishment" into a "requirement for continuation": the critique of the historical origins of modern science becomes a call for epistemic independence; the critique of the value neutrality of science becomes a call to reconstruct the relationship between science, values, and ends; the critique of epistemic dominance becomes a call for epistemic pluralism and critical dialogue; the inadequacy of existing social sciences becomes a call for a problem-oriented approach; Islam's need for a science appropriate to its own foundations becomes a call for producing social knowledge aligned with Islamic ends; the independent identity of religious science becomes a call for a scientific and assessable identity; and the aspiration to overcome stagnation becomes a call for scientific and civilizational capacity building.

From this perspective, the main contribution of this study can be summarized as a paradigmatic shift: the project of Islamic social sciences must move from the stage of "defending its necessity"

to the stage of "demonstrating its capacity." This transition can be articulated at five levels: epistemic independence, methodological rigor, theorization, problem orientation, and institutional and civilizational capacity building. In this framework, epistemic independence no longer means isolation from global knowledge; methodology is no longer reduced to imitation or unverifiable claims; theorization replaces the mere repetition of existing critiques; real social problems become the starting point for knowledge production; and, ultimately, science extends beyond texts and theories into institutions, policymaking, and social practice.

Accordingly, Islamic social sciences should be assessed not by the number of books and articles produced but by their capacity to generate valid knowledge, explain social reality, address social problems, and create scientific and civilizational capacities. If the first stage of this project began with the question "Why Islamic social sciences?" then its next stage must address the question "How can Islamic social sciences become a productive, problem-solving, and civilization-building body of knowledge?" In a single formulation, at the stage of establishment Islamic social sciences were confronted with the problem of "demonstrating necessity"; at the stage of maturity, they are confronted with the problem of "demonstrating effectiveness."

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