

Article

Modernity, Its Crisis and Islamic Revivalism

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Abstract: Modernity is a global condition of an ongoing socio-cultural, economic, and political transformation of human experience, with tradition or religion having no significant role to play. It is the gradual decline of the role of religion in modernity through the implementation of the principles of secularism which has, according to Islamic revivalists, plunged the world into crisis or *jahiliyya* (unGodliness). Revivalists and sociologists such as Anthony Giddens (1991) call it the “crisis of modernity”. In response, many Islamic revivalist movements have emerged to address this condition. The Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979 gave a boost to many existing Islamic revivalist movements and inspired many to appear anew. The phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism is a religious transformative response to the crisis of modernity—i.e., the inability of secularism and the process of secularization to fulfill the promise of delivering a model of perfect global order. Contemporary Islamic revivalism is not anti-modernity but against secularism and is thus an attempt to steer modernity out of its crisis through a comprehensive and robust process of Islamization—the widespread introduction of Islamic rituals, practices, socio-cultural and economic processes, and institutional developments to the pattern of modern everyday living—and transforming modernity from *dar al-harb* (abode of war) to *dar al-Islam* (abode of peace). The paper argues that contemporary Islamic revivalism is a complex heterogeneous global phenomenon seeking to steer modernity out of its prevailing crisis through finding in Islam the universal blueprint of life. It further argues that Islamic revivalism is not anti-modernity but is a religious based reaction against the negative consequences of modernity, particularly against secularism, and carving out a space for itself in modernity.

Keywords: crisis of modernity; Islamic revivalism; Islamization of modernity; modernity; rationality; revivalism; secularism



Citation: Ali, Jan A.. 2023.

Modernity, Its Crisis and Islamic

Revivalism. *Religions* 14: 15.

[https://doi.org/10.3390/](https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010015)

[rel14010015](https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010015)

Academic Editor: Enzo Pace

Received: 4 November 2022

Revised: 12 December 2022

Accepted: 13 December 2022

Published: 22 December 2022



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1. Introduction

The Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979 was a milestone event in our recent history that inspired a new Islamic activism across the globe as a response to the ongoing socio-religious, economic, and political predicaments in many parts of the Muslim world. Islamic activism or Islamic revivalism is not a new phenomenon and “The past history of Islamic societies contains many examples of reform and revival movements that developed as a response to changing political and economic conditions” (Lapidus 1997, p. 1). The trends of Islamic revivalism can be traced back all the way to one of the greatest Muslim caliphs—Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (680–720)—a “pious and respected caliph who attempted to preserve the integrity of the Muslim Umayyad caliphate (661–750) by emphasizing religion and a return to the original principles of the Islamic faith” (The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2022). Of course, the Revolution did not solve the problems within the Muslim world, however, it re-energized the prevailing Islamic revivalist movements (Aqababae and Razaghi 2022) and paved the way for many new ones to emerge around the world, producing the phenomenon which came to be known as the contemporary Islamic revivalism (Ali 2012a). It is a religiously motivated transformative response to what is usually called, particularly in sociology, the crisis of modernity (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; Bauman and Bordonni 2014; Ali and Sahib 2022) or what Lapidus explains as a collection of Islamic revival movements

who must “be understood as a reaction against modernity” (Lapidus 1997, p. 1) or what Minardi sees as Islamic movements which are “generally dissatisfied with the ongoing conditions . . . [who want] to make radical changes in the system of government and society” (Minardi 2018, p. 250). From the perspective of Islamic revivalists, the crisis of modernity is global but its impact on the Muslim world, particularly since colonialism which dismantled the Muslim world and plunged it into what Haddad (1986) calls the socio-economic and political crisis of the Muslim world, is ongoing. Thus, Islamic revivalism is a response to the decline of the Muslim world as well as the crisis that plagues the world. Drawing largely on Islamic scriptures—Qur’an and *hadiths* (compilation of books of Prophetic Traditions) and the *shari’ah* (Islamic law)—contemporary Islamic revivalism seeks to transform what is seen by Islamic revivalists as the crisis-ridden modernity or a *jahiliyya*-saturated modern world (Ali 2012b) through concrete religious actions and religiously informed policies and initiate structural reforms to mitigate and eventually overcome the crisis. Constituted by ideologically and methodologically diverse revivalist movements, contemporary Islamic revivalism is a complex multidimensional and multifaceted reality. Internally diverse with a number of very different streams within itself or, as Arjomand asserts, there is a “variety in Islamic [revivalism]” (Arjomand 2004, p. 11), it pervades the entire globe with varying intensity and extent. Diverse they may be, but what brings them together is their collective grievances about the plight of Muslims in Muslim societies and Islam as their proposed solution for Muslim socio-economic and political malaise. They are united in their collective actions rooted in Islamic symbols and identities seeking to establish an Islamic state through political reform and action, “promoting the ideologies of Sharia law and jurisprudence” (Aqababae and Razaghi 2022, p. 249), and Islamize society by popularizing and institutionalizing Islamic legal principles, Islamic norms and Islamic ethico-moral values (Ismail 2004). Their “goal is to adapt Islamic principles, values, and institutions to the modern world while recognizing the importance of Islam as a cultural frame of reference” (Maghraoui 2006, p. 6) and to “advocate for the interests of Islam and Muslims . . . [and] revitalize Islamic teachings and principles not only in the private sphere but also in public (Munabari et al. 2022, p. 5).

Members of Islamic revivalist movements are not anti-modernity; they are generally opposed to Western philosophy, primarily secular nationalism, material capitalism, socialism, communism, and Westernism (Onapajo 2012). In addition, they find secularism to be the most abhorrent feature of modernity (Aqababae and Razaghi 2022) and, therefore strive towards its removal (Ali 2012b). Ali states that:

Islamic revivalism is a defensive reaction to modernity and a response to unfavorable conditions that exists in it. This does not mean Islamic revivalism is against modernization per se, but rather it is anti-Westernization and anti-secularization. (p. 70)

Dessouki (1982) finds contemporary Islamic revivalism to be a defensive reaction to secular modernity, particularly Western secularism and for Aqababae and Razaghi it is a response to “the New World Order, Western democracy, humanism, secularism, and feminism” (Aqababae and Razaghi 2022, p. 250). These scholars highlight that contemporary Islamic revivalism is a defensive reaction to modernity and is against secularism more specifically.

For Islamic revivalists, secularism, both as an idea and practice, concentrates on “this-worldly” realm in contrast to the sacred and “other-worldly” domain and separates religion from civic affairs and sees the state diminishing the values and roles of religious institutions in the temporal affairs of the nation-state (Asad 2003). They point to some cases in the Muslim world to demonstrate that secular Western hegemony in Egypt, for example, and “colonised, submissive and servile Islam that accepts its confinement to the private sphere” (Soage 2008, p. 27) such as that of Kemalist Turkey has produced a serious decline of “true Islam” (Mulcaire 2016). Contrary to the promises of secular modernity, many Muslim societies experience ongoing widespread socio-cultural, economic, and political discontents (Esposito 1983; Onapajo 2012; Munabari et al. 2022) and there is a

holding back on investment in employment opportunities, education and the economy and an endless Western exploitation of non-Western countries (Bukarti 2020). They consider this to be the bane of modernity and the chief cause of its crisis (Ali 2012b). Removing secularism from modernity and replacing it with Islam as a complete way of life in which religion and state are intertwined is, therefore, their priority (Al-Banna 1999d). Similarly for Muslims in general, for them also, Islam founded on the teachings of the Qur'an and the lifestyle of Prophet Muhammad is the perfect blueprint for the way individuals should be in the society. In light of the prevailing Muslim situation, one of the great pioneers of Islamic revivalism, Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949), argued that "This required the *ummah's* purification of its existing beliefs and practices, which, al-Banna stressed, must be facilitated through the gradual establishment of a creed-correcting, reform-inducing Islamic state that fully implements the *Shari'ah*" (Mulcaire 2016, p. 1). Al-Banna's revivalism of Islam is rooted in his commitment to Islam being a "perfect" (Al-Banna 1999c, p. 59) "all-embracing system" (Al-Banna 1999d, p. 87) that "covers all aspects of this world and the next one" (Al-Banna 1999b, p. 173). For Al-Banna, together religion and the world is an "all-pervading system" (Al-Banna 1999a, p. 2) of Islam which "should control all matters in life" (Al-Banna 1999b, p. 175). Far from being restricted to the domestic sphere and mere personal spiritual rituals and practices, Al-Banna asserted that "Islam is an ideology and worship, country and nation, religion as well as government, action as well as spirituality and Holy Qur'an as well as sword" (1999b, p. 173).

As far as Islamic revivalists are concerned the "modern society rewards them with material gain and consumer goods but robs their soul" (Dorraj 1999, p. 227). They "consider that in the final analysis modernism produced by reason without God has not succeeded in creating values" (Kepel 1994, p. 4). Islamic revivalists view modernity to be in need of saving and to achieve that, it must be transformed or, what is often described in the literature, to be Islamized (Jung 2016). Islamization of modernity, from a contemporary Islamic revivalism perspective, will involve the removal of secularism as an idea and practice and replaced it with Islam as both religion and state and a dominant and widespread force pervading the entire pattern of modern everyday living. From their viewpoint, the world must shift towards the religion of Islam with a return of the individual to Muslim values, dress codes, Islamic legal code, and a feeling of a universal Islamic identity and a sense of community and belonging (Dorraj 1999; Al-Banna 2009). It is an all-encompassing process of increasing the influence of Islam in all spheres of life and state policy and practice including instilling a sense of community based on Islamic values and the reordering of society according to Islamic scriptural teachings (Rahman 2021).

This is a conceptual paper which seeks to sociologically address the question why contemporary Islamic revivalism is a growing phenomenon in secular modernity particularly when the prediction by secularism that by religion being forced away from the public sphere and into the private sphere, it would overtime die out. The aim of the paper, therefore, is to review the current state of knowledge of contemporary Islamic revivalism and to then contribute to the broadening of the scope of our understanding of and develop a sociologically logical insight into the phenomenon. What is important about this paper is that it provides a logical and detailed sociological insight into the contemporary phenomenon of Islamic revivalism by using the crisis of modernity as an analytical tool, that is, identifying the determinants and consequences of the crisis of modernity. In doing so, I propose to examine in some detail three key concepts, namely modernity, crisis of modernity, and Islamic revivalism, and then move to demonstrate that modernity's failure to deliver on its promises has evoked a response from concerned and activist Muslims who have coalesced into groups or movements resulting in the creation of a global phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism. I posit that these movements claim that modernity's failure to fulfill its promise is because secularism as a key component of modernity is by nature a destructive force that has led modernity into a crisis. Thus, my argument is as follows. The contemporary Islamic revivalism is a global phenomenon which is internally diverse and is a religiously based attempt by Islamic revivalists to steer modernity out of

its crisis through finding in Islam the universal blueprint of life. Islamic revivalists are not anti-modernity but are a collective revolt against the cultural and social dislocations of modernity and strive to carve out a space for themselves in modernity. Islamic revivalist movements collectively are “a response to the conditions of modernity—to the centralization of state power and the development of capitalist economies—and a cultural expression of modernity” (Lapidus 1997, p. 1). Islamic revivalists seek to achieve this by planning to remove secularism from modernity and replace it with Islam through an all-encompassing process of Islamization—a culture building process which enables Muslims to Islamically redefine and reorient themselves to changes in their surrounding world. Islamic revivalist movements are reactive in that secular impact and a perceived cultural threat play a critical role in their ideological development, political struggle, and the remaking of the modern world. Re-introducing Islam to Muslims—proselytization—is one among many ways Islamic revivalists claim they can actively contribute to reordering modernity. Furthermore, they seek to create ways and opportunities by employing other revivalism means such as education in all spheres of life to make Islam flourish, and whenever and wherever possible build a theocracy, an Islamic state constitutionally based and operated in full light of *shari’ah* as the guiding principle reflecting the Will of Allah.

2. Modernity

The term modernity was first coined, according to Martinelli, in circa fifth century because:

It was used in an antinomic sense compared to antiquus, particularly by St Augustine to contrast the new Christian era with pagan antiquity. More generally, it was used as a means of describing and legitimizing new institutions, new legal rules, or new scholarly assumptions. (Martinelli 2005, p. 5)

However, Hunt (2008) disputes this, noting that the term modernity was first coined in the 1620s and Ossewaarde (2017) asserts that the term was first coined by Charles Baudelaire in 1864. Based on this, it is not clear when exactly the term modernity was coined but it is reasonably safe to infer based on the literature on modernity (Pascocoe et al. 2015; Berman 2010; Wagner 2008, 2012; Bauman 2006) that by the late seventeenth century the term had entered common usage in the context of the squabble of the Ancients and the Moderns within the French Academy, debating about the superiority of the “Modern culture” over the “Classical culture” (Græco–Roman) (Lewis 2007). The historical epoch following the Renaissance or the Age of Reason, in which the achievements in various fields in variety of forms were made that could not be matched by the achievements of the antiquity, is when modernity as a concept and a phenomenon became part of the European lexicon and life (Gay 1998; Everdell 1997).

The root of modernity is the late Latin adjective modernus (modern) which is a derivation from the adverb modo meaning “at present” or “at this moment” or “now” (Demir and Acar 1992). It is closely associated with the spread of individual subjectivity, the rise of rationalization, rapid development in science and technology, the emergence of bureaucracy and growth of urbanization, the rise of nation-states, the development of capitalism, and a decline in emphasis on religious worldviews. Modernity accounts for the transition in the society from feudalism to a modern system. For instance, modern societies usually have capitalist economies, a democratic political system, a stratified social structure, and uses technology and machinery to enable mass production. Scholars differ in their articulations as to when this process started and when exactly the societies in the West became modern. Abercrombie and his colleagues note that:

There is disagreement about the periodization . . . of modernity, some writers associating it with the appearance and spread of capitalism from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, some with the religious changes of the fifteenth century onwards which provided the basis for rationalization, others with the onset of industrialization in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and still others with cultural transformations at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of

the twentieth century which coincide with modernism (Abercrombie et al. 1994, p. 270)

There are numerous definitions and explanations of modernity and varying versions of its history, with scholars attempting to address the question regarding modernity in many ways without a convergence in answers. As a distinct global phenomenon or condition of social existence, modernity is founded on a new form of human self-consciousness in which:

Human rationality will pre-dominate, subordinating irrationality, custom, and superstition, with the efficacy to plan for and attain progressive improvement in all social institutions through the free exercise of will. Humans have the ability to understand nature as it is—real, solid, and lawfully dependable—which diminishes dependence on theological or transcendental concepts. (A. Berman 1994, p. 2)

Wagner offers further elucidation on the concept of modernity suggesting that:

Modernity is the belief in the freedom of the human being—natural and inalienable, as many philosophers presumed—and in the human capacity to reason, combined with the intelligibility of the world, that is, its amenability to human reason. In a first step towards concreteness, this basic commitment translates into the principles of individual and collective self-determination and in the expectation of everincreasing mastery of nature and ever more reasonable interaction between human beings. (Wagner 2012, p. 4)

Modernity is not modernism or modernization (Hunter 2008; Demir and Acar 1992) and, I would like to suggest, it is best understood as a global phenomenon or condition of social existence in which a hastened and socially compelling process of conceptual transformation forms the central component rather than as the description of a specific epoch or process (Bendix 1967). In other words, it is a novel form of human existence with different constitutions of the domestic and global domains and a sharp separation between traditional community and modern society. It also includes a new cultural formation in which new social relations under a free market economy called capitalism and attitudinal transformation under the processes of secularization, liberalization, modernization, and industrialization materialized. In this conceptualization of modernity, the condition of social existence is constantly different to all past forms of human experience. This is, from a sociological point of view, a more palatable conceptualization of modernity because it enables us to understand modernity as a social reality in which human social life undergoes constant transformation and cultural, economic and political processes are in an endless motion (Maxwell 2020).

Armed with new scientific forces, technological innovations, industrial development, and rationality, modernity is pro-secular and anti-sacred phenomenon that draws the modern individual far away from the sacred to the profane. With its inventions in science and technology, acceleration in economic transformation and urbanization, creation of the nation-states, the democratization of societies, and the bestowal of equal rights to citizens; modernity is a complex forward looking global system.

Modernity rejects anything “old” or “traditional” and renders “new” a criterion for truth making with de-sacralization of knowledge as one of its key features (Lash and Friedman 1992; Martinelli 2005). It is a broad array of interrelated social and cultural phenomena as well as the subjective experience of the conditions produced by them and their continuing effect on cultural values, institutional processes, economic developments, and political activities in the society (Asad 2003). It is not an abstract idea but a system within which exists a collection of diverse tangible attitudes prominent among which is that for everything in existence there must be a cause and a reason and that nothing happens by chance or supernaturally (Soyan 1993; Brugger and Hannan 1983).

In sociology, the term “modernity” has been used to explain the rise of industrial civilization in Europe which produced a new conception of society and the social changes

occurring by differentiating the “traditional” from the “modern” or the “old” from the “new”. In the works of classic sociologists, namely Marx, Weber, and Durkheim “modernity” meant a new experience of the world. For Marx, modernity was intimately associated with the emergence of capitalism and the revolutionary bourgeoisie, which facilitated the extraordinary expansion of productive forces and the creation of the global market (Morrison 2006). In Weber’s work, modernity meant increased rationality where a traditional worldview was replaced with a rational way of thinking, explaining modernity’s close connection with the processes of rationalization and disenchantment of the world (Symonds 2015). Durkheim had a different view about modernity which, for him, was a new form of thinking that would transform the way individuals functioned in society and was basically driven by industrialism accompanied by the new scientific forces (Seidman 1985; Parsons 1972). Given these descriptions, it can be said that modernity is a reconstituted world made possible by people themselves with the new sense of self through their active and conscious intervention in the reconstitution process. The new world is the modern society, which is experienced as a social construction, that is, an experience that makes people feel an exciting sense of freedom and makes them think of unlimited possibilities and an open future (Bickel 2018).

One very important fact in this account of social transformation and its impact on social relations and processes are the ideas of “freedom” and “autonomy” and thus the birth of the new “individual”—the emergence of subjectivity and individuality through a new sense of self. Individual interests have assumed greater importance than the collective interest of a community which was considered as an important contributing source to the development of personal identity (Tobera 2001). This idea of the “individual” or “self” contrasts the traditional individual with the modern one and, as we will see later on, Islamic revivalists find this particularly problematic. The sociological explanation of this difference is based on changes in the understanding of the human experience, social relations, the human relationship with the environment and the supernatural, the changes in economic and political relationships, and population growth and its transformation under the process of industrialization.

Industrialization involved more than just the development of the new means of production of goods and services. In fact, it involved the centralization and coordination of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and drawing large numbers of individuals from rural communities and farming areas to work in urban centers (M. Berman 1982). The result was both positive and negative. On the one hand, the new urban workers were able to earn an income by selling their labor and feeling liberated and on the other hand, there was the uprooting of relatively stable populations, the breakup of social bonds, and feeling of alienation. Whatever way liberation and alienation were interpreted and experienced in overall scheme of things they inevitably involved a physical as well as psychological separation from the rural, agrarian, and family-based community (Lash and Friedman 1992). This meant that the established social bonds and networks that provided the source of social identity were slowly diminishing in the lived experiences of the new urban dwellers. Alienation from the traditional mode of living and its forms of identity meant that the alienated individual was suddenly under the influence of new set of values and processes. The alienated individual was undergoing a series of social transformations linked to modernity which facilitated the formation of new social relations and networks and political identities (Featherstone et al. 1995; Anani 2016; Ataman 2015).

The separation from traditional, rural, and family-based community meant the disappearance of historic values, age-old securities, and a departure from relying on established forms of social authority—religion or theology, tradition, and seniority. With regards to religion specifically, this separation manifested itself in secularization—the liberal separation of church and state into private and public spheres (M. Berman 1982; Toulmin 1990; Hafez 2011). The new urbanites liberated from being governed by theology and religion as forms of social authority and from the old traditional mode of living were now presented with new opportunities, new sources of wealth, and freedom to remake themselves and to

re-create their world. However, the conditions under which this occurred were of not their own choosing and the social transformations associated with modernity including the processes of industrialization and urbanization were taking place independent of individual input (Featherstone et al. 1995). Although these shifts created new possibilities, individuals were not instigators in this but captives because individuals were now part of something much bigger than themselves. They were, in fact, part of a new social world—society which had an impersonal structure with attributes or principles of its own. The ‘free association of free human beings’ in a hierarchically structured society leads to disaffection and commodification, human beings relate to one another as objects, the institutional mediation of the church between the faithful and God is eliminated, and a rationalized conduct of life is imposed on the citizens (Dahrendorff 1964; Bauman 2006).

With this, modernity promised to transform life by positively bringing about easily produced wealth, improved education and health, and better living conditions all through an advanced socio-economic system, widespread scientific and technological advancements, profound innovation, and good governance. Modernity, it seemed, delivered on its promise as there seemed to exist the material plenty, intellectual fulfilment, and social emancipation. Also, the development in individual subjectivity, the increase in scientific explanation and rationalization of things (Brush 1988), the emergence of bureaucracy, rapid urbanization, the rise of nation-states, and accelerated financial exchange and communication all seem to point to a successful modernity.

However, this promise of modernity and its numerous benefits have neither been fully fulfilled nor universal as we will see in some detail in “The Crisis of Modernity” section below. This is the key claim of Islamic revivalists and thus their grievances. We still have today the world divided into First World (developed, capitalist, industrial countries), Second World (communist-socialist and less industrialized countries), and Third World (underdeveloped agricultural countries). There are still people in wealthy countries such as USA and the UK who are undereducated or uneducated and homeless (Finley 2003; Kennedy 1997), there are areas, for instance in Sudan, where there is no running water and electricity, and poverty in some countries such as Somalia due to collapse of the economy and Yemen due to militant conflict remains rampant (Assessment Capacities Project 2017; Bukarti 2020).

Alongside this, there are number of other dark sides of modernity identified by sociologists and other social scientists (Alexander 2013; Conrad 2012; Eisenstadt 2003; Maxwell 2020; Tobera 2001). The technological development achieved in the military saw the dropping of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II and the subsequent nuclear arms race in the post-war period are evidence of the danger human mismanagement of technologies pose. Stalin’s Great Purges and the Holocaust are another example of modernity’s rational thinking and rational organization of social order leading to social exclusion and human extermination. Not to mention the environmental crises such as rising air pollution, industrial waste, and declining biodiversity and climate change resulting from industrial development.

Then, there are psychological and moral hazards of modern life, namely alienation, marginalization, feeling of rootlessness and hopelessness, loss of social bonds and shared values, hedonism, suffering of discrimination and injustice, absence of opportunity and future, and frustration and disenchantment of the world (Tobera 2001; Ali 2012b). Since there are people who suffer from one or a combination of these factors, it raises serious questions not only about the promise of modernity but modernity itself. Does modernity in pursuit of civilizing and development lapses into dehumanization of humanity as an inevitable outcome? Does it humanize as well as dehumanize? Is crisis innate to modernity? Thus, Scambler (1996) characterizes modernity as a failed project which has been unable to fulfil the principles of the Enlightenment. He asserts:

Two types of critique calling for the abandonment of the project have been pre-eminent of late. The first focuses on the undeniable failure of the project to honour its promise, most evidently concerning the rational construction of the

good society. And the second points to philosophical flaws in the explication of reason on which the project of modernity is founded. There is truth in both. (Scambler 1996, p. 568)

For those who suffer the negative consequences of modernity, modernity is an instrument of dehumanization and is in crisis and, as such, it evokes a reaction in them. Islamic revivalists are one example who we will see later are reactionaries religiously responding to modernity and its various pursuits. Islamic revivalists or Islamic revivalist movements are generally neither anti-modernity nor seek its destruction but reactionaries responding to what I would like to call the “crisis of modernity” demonstrating that Islam and modernity are mutually compatible, and it is not about choosing one or the other but about Islam inserting itself in modernity or carving out a space in it for itself.

From the perspective of Islamic revivalists, modernity itself needs to be reformed or remade. In other words, it needs to be transformed by progressively removing secularism and systematically inserting Islam into modernity to save it from self-destruction. For them, modernity, which is falling apart, does not need to be returned to a pastoral primitiveness but step-by-step must be replaced by a new pattern of life—Islam. They want Islam to facilitate individual self-actualization along with heightened community values, greater satisfaction and enchantment, which will put in motion a process of personalization of humanity and existential experience (Ali and Sahib 2022). The contemporary Islamic revivalism, which is constituted by Islamic revivalist movements, therefore, as inept, political and apolitical, splintered as is, is not merely a romantic activism of sort or a “phase” but a real, genuine, and a long-term endeavor to gradually and definitely transform (replace secularism with Islam) modernity. Although contemporary Islamic revivalism is made up of movements with divergent ideologies, distinct methodologies, and varying directions, they are all in one way or another not totally satisfied with modernity and look up to Islam for greater level of satisfaction, salvation and solution (Ali 2012a). The principal source of their dissatisfaction is secularism, which they consider to be the bane of modernity. They claim that once secularism is replaced with Islam, the crisis-ridden *jahiliyya*-saturated modernity will be permanently healed; there will be no crisis of modernity. So, what exactly is secularism? I address this question in some depth in the following section.

3. Secularism Explained

Secular refers to the worldly realm and secularism is understood to be a system or ideology that places heavy emphasis on this-worldly rather than the other-worldly realm based on the creed that there should be a realm of knowledge, ideals, and actions that is free from religious influence and directives, thus, what is often called, politically speaking, the “separation of church and state”. Taylor (2007) defines secularism as a humanist mindset with a total focus on this world in pursuit of an ideal human gratification deemed to be achievable by no assistance from God or transcendental force but by mere human effort. Secularism denotes full engagement in socio-cultural, economic, and political life without ever encountering God. It is “a variety of utilitarian social ethics and sought human improvement through reason, science, and social organization” (Monshipouri 1998, p. 10). Wu notes that secularism advocates “that religion and state should be separated from one another” (Wu 2018, p. 59). In other words, religion is not being a part of both private and public life and there is no reference to religion when it comes to making decisions, to designing and developing socio-economic, cultural and political policies, to shaping and living life, and to ordering social relationships, and exclusive reliance is put on human reason to make sense of the world. Keddie says that secularism “is, the belief that religious institutions and values should play no role in the temporal affairs of the nation-state” (Keddie 2003, pp. 14–15). She goes on to say that in the last few hundred years, many scholars and writers in the West have described secularism “as a one-way street toward modernization” and in the contemporary social science works she noticed that “secularism is often interpreted as a natural concomitant of the spread of science, education, and

technology all of which seem to undermine the need for religious explanations of the world and, ultimately, for powerful organized religions in modern society” (Keddie 2003, p. 16).

Secularism separates religious institutions from state institutions and religion is not permitted to dominate the public sphere. Monshipouri asserts that:

In the twentieth century, secularism is generally known as an ideology that advocates the eradication of religious influences in political, social, and educational institutions. As a worldview, secularism has generally emphasized separation between the religious and political spheres. (1998, p. 11)

As a result, the social, cultural, economic, and political institutions throughout the modern society are removed from the influence and control of religion. A decline is witnessed in religious influence over government, institutions, ideas, and behavior, and increasing state control of both public and private spheres. Secularism enables the liberation from religious control of all vital spheres of civil society and nonreligious institutions such as education, social welfare, law, and forums for the expression of belief and action. There is an increase in the outgrowth of conviction in the supernatural, the privileging this-worldly considerations and bringing an end to religious doctrinal influence on the vital processes in modern society namely legislation and education. This entire process marginalizes and pushes religion away from the public realm to the private sphere, making it practically ineffective, particularly the religion of Islam, which is a complete way of life practiced in private sphere as well as in the public domain (Esposito 1988).

Secularism is linked to secularity and secularization. Whilst secularity is often described as a condition in which religion is absent from certain specific areas of society such as the public sphere and the state and may be the outcome of the interaction among various social factors or caused by the need of political intervention, secularization, however, is a complex process of separating religion from politics and where the overarching and the transcendent religious system is rendered insignificant and is marginal in a functionally differentiated progressive society (Riesebrodt 2007). The consideration that Islam is a complete and comprehensive way of life is critical for Islamic revivalists who argue that it is this kind of religion which is needed to transform modernity and resolve its crisis but noxious secularism obstinately stands in its way. By nature, secularism is a destructive force according to Islamic revivalists and is the principal cause of modernity’s crisis and its removal, therefore, is necessary. Islamic revivalism is the process through which revivalists propose to accomplish this and overcome the crisis of modernity. Let’s turn our attention to modernity’s crisis and learn more about it.

4. The Crisis of Modernity

There is no doubt that modernity has:

led to many positive outcomes but . . . [it has] also stimulated threat and crisis, uncertainty and risky behaviour. Human kind has managed to control many natural processes successfully and yet of all the biological species, *homo sapiens* is one of the most threatened with extinction due to its destructive tendencies (e.g., the drive towards incessant economic growth). (Tobera 2001, p. 1)

The crisis of modernity which is a complex, multifaceted, and unfolding phenomenon is certainly worthy of a robust sociological analysis. I want to concentrate not so much on how modernity articulates anew the age-long developmental problems of humanity, problems linked with the process of transformation brought about by individuals themselves as well as produced by nature which often occurs suddenly and takes us by surprise and therefore form a critical part of social dynamics, but instead on the problems of modernity facing humankind today. This is critical for our understanding of the emergence of Islamic revivalism as a global phenomenon. Islamic revivalism is a responsive phenomenon which faces diverse complex interaction with modernity and Muslims. The responsive factors of Islamic revivalism strive to develop a sustainable solution to the crisis of modernity which is socially efficient and psychologically conducive to the wellbeing of the global population.

Modernity has always been seen as the antithesis of conservatism, stagnation, underdevelopment, orthodoxy, religion, and all-things old, in short, the opposite of the progressive, developed, civilized, and industrialized world. However, many contemporary debates not only give us a different perspective on modernity, they, in fact are challenging modernity's claims arguing that modern features such as capitalism and nationalism have generated a toxic mixture of disenchantment, pomposity, and developmental unsustainability and directing us towards the preservation of cultural specificities (Chiozza 2002; Nabholz 2007) and "dialogical transcendence" (Duara 2015) to re-enchant modernity. Thus, instead of embedding my analysis of the crisis of modernity in a traditional context of modernist epistemology and philosophical ontology, I have opted to transform the conceptual ground by looking at the sociological reality of modernity and socio-economic and sociological explanations for the crisis. Therefore, in this section I intend to offer a sociological description of the crisis as a backdrop to better understand the emergence of contemporary Islamic revivalism. I will elaborate on the concept of contemporary Islamic revivalism in the next section but, in passing, note here that it is a reaction to the negative consequences or crisis of modernity. Contemporary Islamic revivalism sees that the acceleration of social, cultural, economic, and political connections over the last several decades has produced a persistent drive for resource and territorial expansions and material capitalism and secularism are driving people apart and into a state of disenchantment with multiplier negative effects—crime, divorce, drug addiction, depression, poverty, health issues, and so on. Islam's re-emergence on the backs of Islamic revivalist movements is to assert its pre-eminence on the international stage and address the crisis of modernity. Islamic revivalists such as the *Tablighis* (members of the Tabligh Jama'at) claim to be involved in turning modernity as a *dar al-harb* (abode of war) to *dar al-Islam* (abode of peace). Some such as the *Tablighis* claim to be working at the micro level through reforming nominal Muslims through their preaching model that involves members going on *khuruj* (preaching tour), knocking on doors of fellow Muslims and inviting them to their public lectures and learning and remembrance circles (Ali 2012a) and returning them to the "true path" and some such as *Tahriris* (members of Hizb ut-Tahrir) claim to be working at the macro level planning and striving towards establishing the caliphate (Islamic state) in their overall journey and endeavor (Ali and Orofino 2018).

To start, we must ask what is meant by the "crisis of modernity". The crisis of modernity is associated with the idea that there is an ill-conceived thinking about and around modernity that ultimately leads to a crisis, that is, with some exceptions, there is a general state of existential disenchantment in the modern world (Everdell 1997). Before 1900, there was a general confidence in Europe (allegedly original home of modernity) among its population that European technology, innovation, science, logic, and rationality will lead the European continent and the world to ongoing progress, prosperity and a blissful life for all (Heraclides and Dialla 2015). However, by 1900 there was a shift in European attitude when many from upper- and middle-class groups began to feel dissatisfied with and apprehensive about the European civilization and began to question its doctrine, claims, promises and direction (Outram 1997). To their dismay, they realized that the promise of modernity to create an everlasting utopia, the megalopolis of humanity, will never be achieved. They found themselves feeling that there was something fundamentally deficient in European civilization and started feeling doubts about Western culture and anxieties began to emerge about some of the ideas in sciences and humanities which were further compounded by World War I (Pagden 1993). These and many other factors were collectively characterized as the "crisis of modernity". All of this resulted in new yet darker ways of understanding humanity where many started doubting the existence of progress and began thinking that reason and science does not necessarily lead to progress, prosperity, civility, and good life (Alexander 2013).

In recent times the crisis of modernity manifests itself in high levels of meaninglessness, de-rootedness, futurelessness, hopelessness, depravity, and material and spiritual deprivation. There is evidence of rampant social injustice, acute immorality, political cor-

ruption and the despotism, and intellectual crisis (Girling 1997). Many individuals find that there is a serious destruction of nature and many problems associated with human induced climate change (Shiva 1994), that there is a prevalence of large scale conflict/wars, that economic inequality is unrelenting, that homelessness and poverty is pervasive, that there is an absence of government and corporate accountability and transparency, that corruption is widespread, that there is a dearth of food and water security, that the lack of education is growing, that human wellbeing is declining, that the lack of economic opportunity and unemployment is worsening, and injustice and discrimination are on the rise (Loudenback and Jackson 2018; Duara 2015). Ali (2020, p. 81) asserts that “The last several decades have seen the world experience deindustrialisation, the decline of the nation-state, falling productivity, growing unemployment, poverty, marginalization, inequality, violence, and the expansion of neoliberal political economies.” This is compounded by meaninglessness afflicting life, people “waiting without hope”—the pervasiveness of bleakness and hopelessness, the individuating conditions of modern life bringing people apart, and modern men and women are caught up in a perpetual “tension of existence” (Etzioni 1975).

Modernity promised individuals “the good life”, one which was to be blissful with democracy flourishing everywhere, women enjoying total freedom, rights for workers and improved living conditions for the masses assured, widespread prevalence of equality and social justice, and with technological advances the distance being annihilated making mobility fast and easy and communication become immediate and large-scale. It further pledged unlimited progress, plentiful unconditional trust in instrumental rationality, limitless trust in expert knowledge and in the transformative capacity of technical and scientific progress (Giddens 1991), and lastly the commitment to strategic planning and control of nature, institutional operations, and social processes assuring the smooth operation of the system (Taleb 2007). However, if we look around, we find that the “system” is anything but stable and we continue to wrestle with the fact that some of the chief promises of modernity remain unfulfilled. Amitai Etzioni, using America as a case study to examine “the crisis of modernity”, eloquently summarizes the situation, stating:

True, beyond doubt, that the citizenry at large is increasingly concerned with quality and not just quantity, with the human and environmental cost of progress rather than merely the statistics of GNP, with public goods (education, health, safety) and not just personal materialism. There is a genuine and widespread yearning for a quality of life ... What the overwhelming majority yearns to achieve is a life of more freedom, less alienating work, more cultivation, beauty, “quality,” sensitivity to others and openness to self, on top of and not instead of the material comforts (though not necessarily all the gadgets) and high standards of health that modernity acquired. (1975, pp. 12–13)

I acknowledge that there will be always some level of problem in the world and in individual societies, as Durkheim (1997) and Parsons (1951) point out that some level of social dysfunction in society is inevitable. However, given the scientific, technological, medical, and communication advancements and the enormous growth in instrumental rationality achieved by humans, for example, it is worrying to see that modernity is still faced by a multitude of growing problems. From war and genocide to terrorism; from nuclear holocaust to election violence; from biodiversity loss and deforestation to economic collapse and resource depletion; and from slavery and colonialism to human trafficking and child labor and abuse: humanitarian crises have appeared in all forms over the last hundred years. Take, for instance, World War I, between fifteen and twenty million deaths occurred (Mayhew 2013) and in World War II, the most deadliest military conflict in history, between seventy and eighty million people perished (Dear and Foot 2005); the Holocaust from 1941 to 1945 when Nazi Germany killed approximately six million Jews across German-occupied Europe (Bauer 2002); the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986; the Rwandan genocide and the unraveling of Congo in 1994 when Hutu and Tutsi groups wreaked havoc for hundred days in Rwanda killing around eight hundred thousand Tutsis and moderate Hutus (Powers 2011); the civil war in Liberia from 1999 to 2003 when quarter of a million people died

during the conflict destabilizing a wider region made up of Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast (Moran 2008); the hunger in Zimbabwe from 2002 to 2020 resulting from climate change with the country struggling with a series of droughts and floods since 2000 creating a string of food emergencies and the whole situation further compounded by a corrupt and deficient government (Cavanagh 2009); the Kenyan election violence in 2007 when Kenya's Electoral Commission hurriedly and impetuously declared incumbent Mwai Kibaki the winner of a close-run election and mass protest followed which turned into violence killing around one thousand two hundred people and displacing around six hundred and fifty thousand people (Johnson et al. 2014); the Syrian civil war in 2012 creating a major refugee crisis when more than five and a half million Syrians fled the country in search of shelter in nearby countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan and even taking dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean to Europe as refugees (Pearlman 2017); the Venezuela implosion from 2016 to 2017 due to years of economic mismanagement, growing authoritarianism, political turmoil, and extrajudicial killings plunging the country into hyperinflation forcing people to scavenge for food through garbage and creating a condition for increase in disease, crime, and mortality rates (López 2018); and the deforestation crisis negatively affecting natural ecosystems, biodiversity, and the climate, with the heaviest levels of deforestation taking place in tropical rainforests (Runyan and D'Odorico 2016).

In addition, the 11 September 2001 terror attacks; 2003 invasion of Iraq and Darfur genocide; 2007–2008 global financial crisis (GFC); the 2010s Arab Spring across much of the Arab world; the rise of Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020; the 10 May 2021 Israeli–Palestinian violent outbreak; the global refugee crisis; child marriage and racial discrimination; world hunger; poverty; mental health issues; global terrorism; Lebanese liquidity crisis; North Korea and weapons of mass destruction; Iran–Saudi Arabia proxy conflict; Ukrainian crisis; territorial disputes in the South China Sea; Rohingya genocide; Indo-Pakistani wars and conflicts; Uyghur genocide; financial statement fraud; corporate crime, thuggery, and failure; excess CEO-to-worker pay ratios; obstructed nationalist aspirations; unstable or illegitimate state institutions; pervasive corruption and acute economic dislocation; increase in divorce, domestic violence, suicide, drug use and trafficking; cybercrime; organization and institutional mismanagement and dysfunction; bureaucratic inefficiency; and COVID-19 pandemic continue to plague modernity.

Also, the “commodity crisis” of recent times is another example of modernity in crisis despite ever increasing industrialization and technological advancement (Bauman and Bordoni 2014). For example, the 1973 oil crisis pushed up the price of oil by nearly 300% with serious long-term effects on global politics and the global economy (Painter 2014) and Igan et al. (2022, p. 1) observe in the context of recent global situation that:

High and volatile commodity prices pose significant risks to the global economy. The effects will be felt on both inflation and growth, and will fall unevenly across countries, depending on whether they are exporters or importers of affected commodities and how higher prices affect household and corporate income. On net, higher commodity prices are likely to erode growth and lift inflation in the short term.

Socially, the 2008–2009 financial and economic crisis, produced multiple crises setting back the progress numerous states had made towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. From this, there has been continuous adverse social consequences of the crisis with widespread negative social outcomes for individuals, families, communities and societies. The impact on social progress in areas such as education and health is clearly evident. In terms of health and nutrition outcomes, this has the potential to lead to lifelong deficits for the children affected and consequently continue the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Dahrendorff 1964). “The increased levels of poverty, hunger and unemployment will continue to affect billions of people for years to come” (Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2011, p. iii).

5. Why Is Modernity in Crisis?

Scholars and experts entertain different ideas about the causes of the “crisis of modernity”. The divergence in views is illustrative of the multi-variousness of the discourse of “modernity” itself reflecting the scholarly disagreement regarding the nature of “modern society” and of modern individual including different nuances of human values, ideals, commitments or excellence. One way of addressing this question, however, is to examine the philosophical underpinnings of modernity. At a philosophical level, the crisis of modernity is the “crisis of ideas” manifesting itself in the loss of its founding ideas, ideals and beliefs in the hearts and minds of people. The project of modernity was believed to be possible and provide people with life and vitality, but this is no longer the case for many people and so they doubt the project of modernity, and this doubt has, many argue, not been removed or replaced with a better alternative and in fact has entrenched itself and turned into nihilism (Childs 2000).

Another explanation for why modernity is in crisis can be found in Auguste Comte’s (1798–1857) narrative about modernity in which he entertains the idea that industrial technology defines and makes “modernity” and is a great human achievement and progress of human civilization. In other words, industrialization and technologization are good for humanity and they make societies modern in which engineers and technocrats are the main figures who ensure that industrialization and technologization continue unabated. For Comte, if there was any crisis of modernity, it is only at the temporary revolutionary stage towards industrial and technological modernity. The revolutionary stage, Comte found, was unnecessarily prolonged by old, antiquated dogmas, and prejudices of the traditional and faith-based ancient world as well as pointless politicking that are obstacles to the inevitable industrial and technological development (Ossewaarde 2017). For him, industrialization and technologization guarantees liberation, bringing an end to chaotic politicking and revolutionary disruptions. To put it differently, according the Comtean line of thinking, there is no “crisis of modernity” as such only “obstacles” (tradition, religion, political squabbles, etc.) to progress that modernity is facing but will overcome overtime. This in itself is a crisis of modernity, that is, the denial of it all and also the attempt to remove tradition and religion in particular from modernity rather than facilitating their coexistence which Duara (2015) argues is much needed now.

In Tocqueville’s (1805–1859) narrative, which offers yet another explanation, “modernity” denotes democracy with the full provision for equality of living conditions without aristocratic or bourgeoisie privileges. The modern world is constituted by citizens, civil, and political associations who are to work cooperatively and strive for common good promoting “Liberty”, “Equality”, and “Fraternity” and thereby shaping a true democratic culture. Tocqueville found “modernity” in crisis because the modern ideals such as “Liberty”, “Equality”, and “Fraternity” have not been consistently applied in key institutions of society including in the government and instead, the political arena in particular has been used and dominated by political agitators not to bring about positive outcome for all but for vested interests (Sclove 1995). For Tocqueville, therefore, technology—one of modernity’s most cherished prizes—is not a strength and liberating force but a quandary and an instrument of human enslavement and modernity’s disenchantment.

The crisis of modernity denotes modernity has become uncertain of its purpose. The purpose of modernity was to create a prosperous society embracing equally all human beings—men and women, black and white, poor and rich, young and old—a universal union of free and equal nations each comprising liberated citizens with equal rights. In other words, good and fulfilling life for all through collective and cooperative efforts involving individuals from all walks of life from all sections of the society. Modernity no longer believes in either the nobility or the feasibility of its own project (Strauss 1979), and it was only a matter of time before it was to find this out, because it was originally premised on an ill-conceived ideal. This discovery was of course bound to create, which it did, nihilism, hopelessness, and decline (Childs 2000). From philosophical and sociological

perspectives, these are discerned as the “crisis” of modernity. The crisis is not the same as defeat or annihilation, but degeneration from within. Drury asserts:

It is a set of ill-conceived ideas that ultimately lead to that crisis . . . the crisis of our time is the result of our loss of faith in the modern project. Western civilization [as the creator of modernity] . . . no longer believes in the nobility of its own project. It has sunk into despair and nihilism. (Drury 2005, p. 151)

Although Islamic revivalists agree with what we have discussed about modernity so far, what they find particularly troubling and most destructive about modernity and the major source of the “crisis of modernity” is secularism. From their perspective secularism is from which emanates all of modernity’s problems and leading humanity towards self-destruction.

For Islamic revivalists, whether secularism means the separation of religion and politics or confining religion to the domestic sphere or totally liquidating religion through state coercion and institutional regulation, secularism as a doctrinal framework and secularization as a process cannot be allowed to flourish any further. They seek to religiously counter and overwhelm secularism so Islam can dominate both the private as well as public domains because Islam is generally seen as a complete way of life practiced in private sphere as well as in the public domain. Their plan is to bring all vital spheres of civil society, legislation, and education under Islam by measuredly utilizing all modernity’s instrumental mechanisms including science and technology, but not secularism. Contemporary Islamic revivalism, therefore, is a process through which revivalists seek to completely embed Islam with all its rituals, practices, and institutions in modern private and public everyday living. It is not an anti-modernity phenomenon but one that seeks to employ many of modernity’s tools such as its science and technology and modern inventions in combination with Islamic worldview, principles and values to reform modernity and give it a renewed enchantment. In the following section, I discuss how contemporary Islamic revivalism proposes to achieve this.

6. Analysis: Contemporary Islamic Revivalism as a Response to the Crisis of Modernity

Contemporary Islamic revivalism is a complex multifaceted reactionary force, which using a distinct interpretive reading of Islam and armed with a huge army of members and supporters, aims to remove what it sees as the existing global predicament and remake the modern world in the image of an “authentic Islamic order”. The predicament is perceived as the result of what is considered in Islamic revivalist circles as gross discrepancy with the standards of the bona fide Islamic tradition based on the Qur’an and *hadiths* (a record of the words, actions, and the explicit and tacit approval of Prophet Muhammad). It is a significant upsurge in Islamic consciousness particularly in nominal Muslim individuals across the globe. Constituted by a suite of disparate Islamic revivalist movements, contemporary Islamic revivalism manifests itself in a multiplicity of forms as a defensive reaction to the crisis of modernity. Its hallmark is a planning for the return to Islamic origins—the basics of the faith and legal framework (*shari’ah*) as enshrined in the Qur’an and the *sunnah* (the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad) and to strengthen Islamic influence in all spheres of life. Contemporary Islamic revivalism has a defensive reactionary ideological character and represents a defensive reaction to the crisis situations prevailing in various Muslim societies as well as in other parts of the world where there is deep ongoing socio-cultural and economic disaffection, dislocation, discontent and diminished Islamic observances (Ali 2012a; Hamid 2016; Munabari et al. 2022).

As a term, contemporary Islamic revivalism is highly contested in its meaning. Scholars are yet to come up with an agreed definition of the phenomenon and this is mainly due to the fact that it is internally extremely heterogeneous constituted by movements with diverse ideologies, interpretations of Islamic scripture and law, missions, and revivalist methods. It has been examined as a form of an increased Islamic cognizance under various umbrella terms as diverse as “awakening”, “fundamentalism”, “Islamism”, “pietism”,

“radicalism”, “reassertion”, “reformation”, “reformism”, “renewal”, “resurgence”, “revitalization”, and “revivalism” (Ali 2012a). Many scholars define contemporary Islamic revivalism by basing their understanding of it on different types of revivalist movements, including their nature, ideology, method, and aims, and so Al-Gannoushi notes that:

by the Islamic movement we mean the aggregate emitted activity motivated by Islam to achieve its objectives and constant revival for so as to control and direct reality constantly. This notion takes into account that Islam is for all time and place, which makes it imperative for its message to be revived in pursuant to the variation in time and place and development in science, knowledge and art. Accordingly, the Islamic movement’s objectives, strategy and action methods will vary in correspondence to the time and place. (Al-Gannoushi 2000, p. 11)

Abu-‘Azzah remarks that:

by ‘Islamic movements’ we mean the collection of the different organizations associated with Islam; they function in the field of Islamic activism within a framework of a comprehensive vision of human life; they struggle to re-form the latter in conformance with Islamic instructions; they await the events of the Islamic peoples’ sweeping awakening both individually and collectively, through this Islamic perspective. They strive to influence every aspect of the social life so as to repair and reform it according to the Islamic principles. (Abu ‘Azzah 1989, p. 179)

Abu Al-Sa’woud asserts that what he means by Islamic movements is:

the convergence of Muslim individuals in a commission that has its own governance system. Deep in their hearts, they believe in Islam, its practices, regulations and laws. They implement the Islamic teachings in their daily lives and within the limits of their power and perception . . . [They] draw on *Shari’a* (Islamic law) and their role model for the frameworks of their lives which they accomplish via ‘structures’ they found in accommodation of their needs and the developments in their surrounding environment. (Abu Al-Sa’woud 1989, p. 354)

In this paper I rely on Ali and Sahib’s definition of Islamic revivalism, which they say is:

Muslim investment in scripture-based socio-cultural, economic and political processes, institutional development and faith renewal through systematic incorporation of scripture-defined rituals and practices and the rules of the law into the pattern of everyday living and at the same time shedding all foreign accretions in normative and ritualistic Muslim practices. The idea is to employ every peaceful means to make “good Muslims” who will work for Allah and not only represent a natural beacon of hope and light but be the re-makers of a just, successful and wholesome society. (Ali and Sahib 2022, p. 5)

There are a number of Muslim thinkers worth discussing albeit briefly and that is because they are collectively the inspiration behind contemporary Islamic revivalism. I will put these thinkers in two categories and will call one category of Muslim thinkers as modernist revivalists, thus modernists, because they prescribed modernization of Islam and the other I will call simply Islamist revivalists, thus Islamists, because their prescription was Islamization of modernity.

The modernist revivalists were thinkers such as Jamal al-Din Afghani (1838–1897) of Persia, Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) of India, and Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905) of Egypt who shot to prominence as Muslim activists, modernists, and intellectuals responding to the decline and degeneration of the Muslim world brought about by the wickedness of Western colonialism and secularism. Despite minor differences in their ideas on modernity and the reading of Islamic sources—Qur’an and *hadiths*, they stood united on the question of Western intrusion and activities in the Muslim world and agreed that Muslims should understand and practice Islam on the basis of reason as this will enrich them intellectually as well as materially and enable them to effectively meet the

changing circumstances of Muslim society. They wanted education to be the means of Muslim learning about their faith using the tool of rational thinking in contrast to *taqlid* (blind and unquestioned following of theological teachings). It was in the education they saw the solution to Muslim degeneration and the capacity to rescue Muslim societies from their decline. Through education, they also wanted to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with much of modern Western thought and values.

I call these thinkers modernists because they sought to bridge the gap between Islamic traditionalists and secular reformers. The strategy they contrived to achieve this was one of combining the internal community concerns of their time with the need to respond paradigmatically to the destruction caused by European colonialism and the challenges of modernity. Muslims continued to show internal weaknesses and the usurpation of Western colonialism which permanently damaged the local industry, changed agriculture and industrialized the economy, transformed the political processes and system, replaced key institutions such as education and judiciary with Western ones, and spread secular Western ideals and cultural values across the Muslim world (Ali 2012b; Ali and Sahib 2022).

Modernists criticized Muslim elites and rulers who opposed reform and failed to put up a fight against Western encroachment (Arjomand 2002, 2003; Ismail 2004; Ali 2012b; Ali and Sahib 2022). Harnessing political and intellectual force, they actively engaged in opposing the imperial power and worked very hard for constitutional liberties and struggled for liberation from foreign control. They presented a strong and persuasive argument for reformation by combining Islamic principles with “useful” Western institutions, values, and achievements in all areas of life—social, economic, intellectual, and political, across the Muslim World. They wanted to modernize Islam not only so it could be relevant and important in the modern world but so it could benefit from modernity.

The other category, the Islamists, includes thinkers such as Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi (1903–1979) of India, Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) of Egypt, and Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949) of Egypt. Their activism, intellectual thinking, and revivalist paradigm originates from the profound crisis of the Muslim world during and after Western colonialism and imperialism. Their Islamist ideology is linked with achieving international liberation from Western hegemony and influence and the development crisis resulting from Western modernization and secularization of not only the Muslim world but the globe at large.

Within the Muslim world, Maududi, Qutb, and al-Banna sought the removal of Western-style modernization, which also involves secularization, and prescribed the path of development with Islamic characteristics. They saw Western values and the way of life decadent and inherently destructive, besieging the entire world overtime and plunged it into crisis. From their perspective, Western modernity ruins traditional structures and pattern of living, destroys the sacred, undermines age-old habits and inherited languages, and leaves the world as a composite of broken up elements in need of reconstruction rationally. To develop Muslim societies, they offered what may be called Islamic communitarianism as an alternative to capitalism and communism. For them, secularized (Godless) Western system cannot produce moral and ethical virtues, universal social justice, and shared well-being. It is scriptural Islam which is a full-proof system which can provide this according to them and, therefore, they invited Muslims towards Islamization of the modern world; it involves the re-establishment of Islamic institutions, re-invigorating Islamic socio-cultural, economic, and political processes, and realizing a true Islamic identity.

To put all this in motion, they did not want to work on building the modern nation-state with a nationalist identity, but an *ummah* (community of believers) based on Islamic faith and Islamic identity that transcends parochiality, ethnicity, and race. It “refers to the concept of the Islamic Umma . . . the Islamic government based on Islamic law—Sharia is to safeguard its existence” (Roberts 1988, p. 557). At a political level, they strongly opposed the secularist national sovereignty and nation-states and call for all Muslims to contribute to establishing an Islamic state with “divine sovereignty” where Allah exercises efficacy, universality, and control over all things. They are clearly against secularism and oppose any separation of politics and religion and advocate for the establishment of a theocratic

Islamic state where “the rule of the state must be consistent with Sharia law”, ... “the executive and legislative functions and authority must obey and assist Sharia law” (Roberts 1988, p. 557).

For them, not only the Muslim world but modernity as a global system is in crisis. This crisis, according to them, can only be resolved with Islamization of modernity. This, according to them, will bring about harmony, justice, and universal wellbeing to all citizens of the modern world; something not only many Muslims are longing for but many oppressed and demoralized around the globe are aimlessly searching for.

Contemporary Islamic revivalism occupies a prominent place, particularly in the Western imagination and Western-based scholarship about Islam as a religion. Western scholars have warned against the danger of “contemporary Islamic revivalism” directing attention to a world-wide clash between Islam and the West, which they described as a “clash of civilizations”. Samuel Huntington, for instance, have suggested that “A west at the peak of its power confronts non-west that increasingly have the desire, the will and resources to shape the world in non-western ways” and the future conflict will be between “... the west and the rest, the west and the Muslims ... ” (Huntington 1993, pp. 26 & 39). From this perspective, contemporary Islamic revivalism is simply a revival of the old religious tradition which is anti-modernity and antagonistic and intolerant Muslim attitudes toward the West and non-Muslims. It is seen to be threatening to Western interests, civil order and political security, socially conservative, and geared towards establishing a *shari’ah*-based Islamic state. The military conflicts in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Central Asia and the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers, and the bombings of civilians in Madrid, London, and Bali are seen as some of the examples of the threat Islam poses to the West (Ali and Amin 2020). The establishment of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014 is another example of the threat and concern (Ali 2018). With the downfall of the Soviet Union and the perceived elimination of communist threat, Islam, particularly in its revivalist guise, is being viewed as a new international danger (Tamim and Esposito 2000). It is considered as a wildfire spreading across the world, damaging the legitimacy of Western values and threatening the national security of Western countries and their allies.

However, not all Muslim revivalists harbor such an attitude and the support for contemporary Islamic revivalism in Muslim communities and countries, and it is not universal and unidimensional. Muslims generally and Islamic revivalists in particular differ from each other on sectarian, ideological, doctrinal, cultural, and political grounds. They also differ on many basic issues and inspired by different visions and politics and have different policies and methods to effect social transformation and improve the situation in their respective communities and societies.

The dynamics of contemporary Islamic revivalism must be understood against the ongoing dialectic of the modernization of Islam and the Islamization of modernity as it is experienced by Muslims who either materially or spiritually have become marginalized by the effects of modernity. Despite the many shades and shapes of contemporary Islamic revivalism and diversity in political attitude, Islamic revivalist movements have some commonality. These movements in different Muslim communities and Muslims societies are partly a reaction against indigenous corruption, economic stagnation and uncertainty, and the politics of tyranny and repression (Firth 1981). In the Middle East, for example, despite great economic gains made in many oil-rich countries, the benefits have not been enjoyed by all but by only elite few making material inequities and social imbalances ongoing and highly noticeable. The governments of these oil-rich countries are found to be often run by small cliques of insiders, such as the military regime of Algeria, holding the reins of power behind a civilian façade and diverting the country’s oil wealth into personal accounts (Abdelhadi 2021) or the family regime of Saudi Arabia, which benefit only a small number of the population (Momayezi 1997). Sema Genç says that, “The Islamic world in Asia and Africa is blessed with abundance of natural resources. Yet, 50% of the most impoverished people around the globe reside in the Islamic world. SubSaharan Africa is amongst the

worst hit" (2019, p. 223). The growing economic difficulties, increased unemployment, and lack of educational and occupational opportunities, have made large sections of the population disillusioned and resentful, particularly young people who constitute the vast majority of the population in many cities including in the major Middle Eastern cities such as Cairo, Tehran, and Baghdad, many of which are currently overflowing with unemployed youths (Genç 2019). Many Muslim youths who are excluded from the productive sector of the economy and shunned from the mainstream society have become the general feature of the urban space in modern cities and are the main target of the revivalist campaign (Esposito 1988; Ali and Orofino 2018). Their distress, alienation, disillusionment, and dissatisfaction with political leadership and the ideological alternatives have made them opt for Islam as a means to express their overall disenchantment (Ali 2012b).

Islamic revivalists are not only concerned with the plight of Muslims but all citizens of the world who suffer under modernity. So, when they learn about suffering being experienced by others generally they point to modernity for its failures. Failures that Genç articulates as follows:

The reality of the contemporary world separates the global human population between the small minority of people who control 99% of the world's wealth and the large base of poverty stricken people who are forced to scrap a living on less than USD 1 per day. The state of appalling poverty in the world today is a serious indictment on the global leadership. It is a shameful act that belies the so-called advancements in the field of science and technology, bioinformatics, food production and lightening speed communications. All these advancements breed abject poverty. These glittering inventions, smart technologies, brand labels and artificial intelligence controlled real estate fail to address the most basic of social evils, poverty and hunger. None of these advancements matter to over a billion people around the world who go to bed hungry each day. (2019, pp. 222–23)

Islamic revivalists say that this has occurred under modernity where the society has essentially departed from a religiously authorized blueprint of how individuals should behave and the values that should be upheld by society as a whole. Hence, in modernity, they say the ideals of the modern self, with its emphasis on self-actualization and consumption, are spiritually empty. They see that modernity is governed by reason without God and has failed to create values and reneged on its promise of a better living standard for all or what Horkheimer and Adorno say that whilst modernity may have delivered "the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy", it has also rendered the world that 'radiates disaster triumphant' (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, p. 3) or what Griffin observes in Charles Baudelaire's work that "modernity as a world . . . has lost its ordering principle and mythic centre" (Griffin 2007, p. 92) or as Jameson observes of modernity being a product of philosophical modernism criticizing that "the scientific ethos of the philosophes is dramatized as a misguided will to power and domination over nature, and their desacralizing program as the first stage in the development of a sheerly instrumentalizing worldview which will lead straight to Auschwitz" (Jameson 1998, p. 25). It is in light of this that the Islamic revivalists seek the re-establishment of tradition, that is, Islam offering a way to regain a sense of purpose, meaning, and spiritual fulfilment. Thus, in their programmatic revivalism, the remaking of modernity expresses itself as a mission to change society. Islamic revivalists believe that through the rehabilitation of the authority of religion, social institutions will once again have clear and high moral standards, politics will have a sacred expression, and the "true believers" will have a full membership in the *ummah* (Muslim community). All aspects of life will then be influenced and governed by the comprehensive implementation of the fundamentals of Islam and the *shari'ah*.

Contemporary Islamic revivalism, then, is an attempt to directly confront modernity which is considered to be producing all of the hardships and thus its crisis through material secularism. Secularism, which removes religion's influence in public and civic affairs, infuses society with Godlessness, resulting in widespread corruption and immorality,

diminished ethical standard, and general decadence (Ali and Sahib 2022). Islamic revivalists do not see the need to replace modernity, but rather seek to reform it by removing secularism and infusing it with Islamic values. In other words, contemporary Islamic revivalism is about Islamization of modernity involving the popularization of Islamic symbols, principles and institutions in the society, and collapsing the sacred and profane domains into one. It is for this reason that movements such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) strive towards the establishment of the caliphate (Islamic state) or the Tabligh Jama'at (Convey the Message of Islam Group) working at grassroots level proselytizing nominal Muslims. In a more general sense, the works undertaken by Islamic revivalist movements are resulting in greater level of Islamic observance among Muslims particularly in youths (Ali 2012b).

For the revivalists, the idea is that Islam should be the global order (Ingram 2018; Minardi 2018; Onapajo 2012). Islam, they say, is the God's prescribed complete way of life and *shari'ah* is an immutable divine law (Pall 2018; Rock-Singer 2020). They believe that Islam reinforces group norms and provides for the institution of moral sanctions for individual behavior. They argue that it provides universal goals and values that in turn offer a sense of stability and unity to the *ummah* and contribute to its security and the maintenance of social equilibrium.

All Islamic revivalist movements, despite difference between them, are involved in promoting such a cause in their own way dictated by their ideology, aims, and methods as well as by the prevailing conditions in their community or society. They seek to contribute to the transformation of modernity as part of the larger project of contemporary Islamic revivalism. Their aim is to transform modernity. One key aspect of the transformation process is to rid modernity of its secularism. In other words, to enable religions such as Islam to assume a key role in both the public life and in the private setting.

Under revivalism, Islamic growth means an increase in the number of adherents and also an escalation in spirituality and religiosity in all Muslims. Islam would become influential in other spheres of life such as economic, social, cultural, and political and seeks intervention in legislation and policy making (Nasution 2017). This is considered as a "higher form" of Islamic development particularly noticeable in the public sphere with growing display of Islamic symbols, for example, Muslim men wearing head caps and Islamic attire and women wearing *hijab* (head scarf) or *niqab* (face veil) or *burqa* (a garment which covers the hair, neck and all or part of the chest); practices, for instance, Muslims praying at work such as in city offices or manufacturing factories and eating *halal* (permissible) food in restaurants; and policies, for example, Muslim men permitted to drive taxis wearing their Islamic attire rather than taxi uniform in global cities such as Sydney and Dhaka. Also part of the process is the provision of prayer facilities and services, evening and weekend meetings, scripture teaching, and public lectures particularly in urban spaces and saturating the public sphere with all types of Islamic activities such as Muslims praying in parks and holding barbeques and symbols such as halal signs and mosques with *minaret* (a balcony from which a *muezzin* (caller to prayer) calls Muslims to prayer). Importantly, under the efforts of revivalism, the Muslim world and other parts of the world where Muslims reside have witnessed the burgeoning of mosques, Islamic schools and *shari'ah* and Islamic studies programs, Islamic banks, health centers, nursing homes, *madrassas* (Islamic seminaries), guilds and associations with similar functions (Sullivan 1994). These establishments operate in parallel with state-run organizations and institutions as some scholars say as the "nucleus of dual power"—a state within the state (Dodson and Montgomery 1981) as is the case of Jama'at-e-Islami in Bangladesh (Ali and Amin 2020). In the context of the impersonality of modern life and the penetrating force and lure of free-market neoliberalism, these communal-based establishments also offer "a new consciousness, sense of self-worth, and capacity for action among the poor people" (Levine 1988, p. 241). In enlisting in these establishments, the dispossessed and de-rooted Muslims not only find themselves being compensated for their low social status by feelings of increased piety and religious superiority but also discover their power among

overwhelming feelings of weakness and powerlessness (Ali 2012b). Through collective action, they bring hope and resolution to a crisis situation.

Islamic revivalists link otherworldly salvation to worldly transformation. They see themselves as workers of Allah, as divine instruments of righteousness, morality, and justice with a vocation for salvation and deliverance. They work towards developing a general attentiveness to Allah's guidance, provide for family members, the relatives, and the community and improve and change the qualities of personal character by developing new desires, new affections, new sources of happiness, and new purpose and goals, all in an attempt to reorder and remake society and culture more similar to Allah's Will being carried out on earth. They see themselves to be tasked with Islamizing the secular and religiously sanctioning their religious activities by overturning the separation of religion and politics. Another salient aspect of Islamic revivalist movements is their emergence as an alternative to the dominant ideology of the secular state and secular authority.

We can see from this the fact that Islamic revivalist movements as part of a larger phenomenon of contemporary Islamic revivalism are integrative movements. They are also reactive movements of political awakening and faith building involving the members in a process of redefining and reorienting themselves towards transformation in their personal lives and in their surrounding spaces. Since secularism poses a threat to Islam, the revivalists as the new guardians of their faith resort to self-defense reviving and revitalizing ever stronger ties with Islam by undergoing proselytization in their respective movements. They believe that they can become good examples for other Muslims and fellow citizens who can then try to emulate them and at this grassroots level, modernity will gradually and surely transform for the better. Through spiritual elevation and moral regeneration and the introduction of scripture-based Islamic ritual and practices, socio-economic and political processes, and institutional development they attempt to bring the *ummah* together on the basis of a new way of pursuing life in modernity. All of this is for the purpose of reenergizing Islamic teachings and rituals and attempting to make *shari'ah* and scriptural Islam (based on Qur'an and *hadiths*) a dominant mode of existence in modernity.

7. Conclusions

Modernity is a complex global phenomenon. It is an intricate composite of particular socio-economic and politico-cultural norms, attitudes and practices pervading the entire globe. Characterized by technological innovation, scientific advancement, medical discovery and inventions, predominance of rationality, the emergence of bureaucracy, rapid urbanization, the rise of nation-states, accelerated financial exchange and communication, and an expansion of secularism, that is, a decline in emphasis on religious worldviews, modernity over the ages has brought about monumental transformation in the society making the patterns of living distinct from the past and life more "modern" and "progressive". With these provisions, modernity promised humanity a life of prosperity, wellbeing, and justice.

From the viewpoint of contemporary Islamic revivalism modernity's promise came to fruition only in certain parts of the world, largely in the West and as a result Muslim world in particular was left out and is yet to enjoy modernity's promise. The unfulfilled promise of modernity is captured in the following characterization of modernity. For Bradbury and McFarlane "in the modern human condition [there is] a crisis of reality, an apocalypse of cultural community" (Bradbury and McFarlane 1991, p. 27), or for Ann-Catherine Nabholz modernity is "the disconcerting experience of rupture which is intrinsic to the concept of modernity" (p. 12), and for Adorno "its origins are more the negation of what no longer holds than a positive slogan ... the new is akin to death" (Adorno 1997, p. 21). Thus, according to Islamic revivalists, modernity's promise cannot be fulfilled universally because it's one of the key features—secularism—is a major obstacle to worldwide prosperity, wellbeing, equality, and justice and is the bane of modernity, leading it to its own crisis such as a widespread poverty and lack or absence of investments in education, employment opportunities, and the economy in many countries.

Contemporary Islamic revivalism is not anti-modernity but anti-secularism and anti-Westernism and, therefore, is a religious based response or reaction to the crisis of modernity. It is as much a reaction against modernity as is part or an expression of modernity (Lapidus 1997). It is internally a complex and diverse phenomenon. The crisis of modernity not only impacts on Muslims but affects people all around the globe. Even in the wealthiest of countries such as the United States of America and Australia, many ordinary citizens are not spared from the crisis of modernity who battle for employment, education, social justice, health care, medical service, equality of opportunity, and general contentment.

Islamic revivalists explain that the crisis of modernity is the direct outcome of choosing to desacralize the world through popularization of the principles of secularism and through the process of secularization—separating religion from politics. Material capitalism as a macro-economic and macro-cultural system and secular values have led to great prosperity and brought about substantial benefit to well-being, providing high levels of personal and political freedom and well-produced infrastructure, health, and social provisions. However, at the same time, there are growing levels of inequality not only in poor countries but most affluent nations alongside economic stagnation and constraints that have produced diminished opportunities and increased insecurity for many citizens. It has also undermined religious spirituality which is for many people a source of enlightenment, purpose, belongingness and offers a sense of psychological and social wellbeing.

From Islamic revivalist perspective this collectively characterizes the crisis of modernity and, therefore, cannot be allowed to persist and they have taken it upon themselves to save the world, for themselves and for others, from what they see as the unfolding of self-destruction and a global catastrophe through the crisis of modernity. In response, they have contrived a plan and that is to give the world what they call Islam—a complete comprehensive way of life based on Qur'an and *hadiths* (Prophetic Traditions) and governed by divine law—*shari'ah*. Islamic revivalists assert that through the reformation of key institutions in society such as the family, education, and courts, Islamization of the pattern of everyday living, and the establishment *shari'ah*-governed caliphate, modernity can be saved from self-destruction and that is what they are striving for.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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