

## **Revival of Islamic Civilization: Strategies for the Development of Muslim Society in the Thought of Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi**

### **Kebangkitan Tamadun Islam: Strategi Pembangunan Masyarakat Islam dalam Pemikiran Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi**

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#### **Abstract**

This study attempts at analysing Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's suggestions towards a revival of Islamic civilization as an alternative to the Western civilization. It is based on library research and is qualitative in nature as it basically focuses on textual analysis. Moreover, the major approaches are descriptive, analytical and evaluative. This study found that Nadwi believed in the capacities of Islamic civilization to be revived if the existing challenges are overcome. For him, despite its tremendous breakthroughs in the fields of science and technology, Western civilization is bound to fail due to its moral decline. Therefore, it is only an Islamic civilization which is overtaken by the Western civilization should lead the humanity. In light of his argument, this study explores the strategies provided by Nadwi for the development of Muslim society as a revival of Islamic civilization. It focuses on three basic domains, namely, intellectual, political, and institutional aspects of reform.

**Keywords:** Western civilization, Muslim leadership, *Ijtihad*, *Jihad*, Intellectual reform, Political reform, Institutional reform.

#### **Abstrak**

Kajian ini cuba menganalisis cadangan Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi ke arah kebangkitan tamadun Islam sebagai alternatif kepada tamadun Barat. Ia berdasarkan penyelidikan perpustakaan dan sifat kualitatif di mana ia pada dasarnya memberi tumpuan kepada analisis tekstual. Selain itu, pendekatan utama adalah deskriptif, analisis dan penilaian. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa Nadwi percaya kepada keupayaan tamadun Islam untuk dihidupkan semula jika cabaran sedia ada dapat diatasi. Baginya, walaupun kejayaannya yang luar biasa dalam bidang sains dan teknologi, tamadun Barat sebenarnya gagal kerana kemerosotan moralnya. Oleh itu, Nadwi menegaskan bahawa hanyalah tamadun Islam yang harus memimpin manusia. Kajian ini meneroka hujah Nadwi tentang strategi untuk pembangunan masyarakat Islam sebagai usaha ke

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arah kebangkitan semula tamadun Islam. Ia memberi tumpuan kepada tiga domain asas, iaitu, intelektual, politik, dan aspek institusi pembaharuan.

**Kata Kunci:** Tamadun Barat, kepimpinan Islam, *Ijtihad*, *Jihad*, Pembaharuan intelektual, pembaharuan politik, pembaharuan Institusi

**Introduction**

Islamic civilization began with the advent of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him (p.b.u.h) and his *da'wah* activities. It gradually disseminated and built a well-grounded foundation during the lifetime of the Prophet. After the demise of the Prophet, Islamic civilization continued to flourish under the leadership of his companions and successors. The seventh to thirteenth centuries were very historic and glorious period of Islamic civilization. During this span of time the Islamic world advanced in the arts and sciences and influenced other segments of the world. Unfortunately, the Muslim world could not maintain the chain of its consecutive strides. After the reign of rightly *khilafa*, the leadership of *Umayyad* and *Abbasid* dynasties could not meet the anticipated requirements needed for the leadership of the Muslim *ummah*. Muslim leadership became more focused on the political and administrative issues rather than religious duties, and religious scholars and their opinions were not valued duly. Gradually, religious scholars became victims of stagnation and intellectual sterility and decline appeared in the Islamic civilization.

Although it was hard to find the exact time frame to determine the starting point of the fall of Islamic civilization, Nadwi believed that the decline could begin with the rise of Arab imperialism<sup>1</sup>. Since that time, Islamic civilization experienced many ups and downs, but the remarkable decline was noticed after Western dominance over the Muslim world started to increase since the eighteenth century and took on more definite shape in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Muslim world receive various challenges in political, economic, social and intellectual domains. Under the influence of the Western civilization, the Muslim world started to move back towards backwardness. Therefore, it was necessary to bring changes in all socio-cultural, political, public as well as private grounds in the views of Nadwi.

Nadwi strongly believe that Muslims can bring changes, challenge the West and compete for the world domination. To him, Muslims

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<sup>1</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Madha Khasira al-alam bi inhitat al-Muslimin* (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1982, p. 119.

are responsible for guiding and leading other nations towards the way of success<sup>2</sup>. Nadwi was very optimistic in this regard since his understanding was developed based on Islamic worldview that Islam honoured Muslims with such characteristics due to their attachment with Islam. Moreover, there are *Qur'anic* verses that proclaim the uniqueness and superiority of Muslims and Islam;

*“Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam” [Quran 3:19]*

*“You are the best nation produced as an example for mankind” [Quran 3: 110]*

*“And whoever desire other than Islam as a religion, never will it be accepted from Him, and he, in the hereafter, will be among the losers” [Quran 3: 85]*

*“And thus, We have made you a just community that you will be witness over the people and the Messenger will be witness over you”[Quran 2: 143]*

Based on those verses, the status of Muslims is promoted and their superiority on any other religion, nation or ideology are justified. However, in order to maintain this superiority, Muslims are required to be guided in accordance with *shari'ah*, otherwise, they would decline. As a matter of fact, Muslims over the world are already in decline and in order to retain their lofty status, Nadwi suggested the reformation and reconstruction of the Muslim society. This paper will explore his views of reformation which could be categorized into intellectual, political and institutional domains<sup>3</sup>

### **1. Intellectual Aspect of Reform**

In the intellectual aspect of reform, Nadwi focused on the role on Muslim intellectuals in response to various challenges posed by the West. He observed two types of intellectuals; the first group consists of secular Muslim intellectuals with Western orientation, and the second group maintained their traditional orientation. He acknowledged the contributions of both groups to the reformation of Muslim society in their

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Miftah, Mukerrem, “Islamic Civilization between Crisis and Revival: A Comparative Appraisal of the Works of Abul Hassan al-Nadwi and Ali Allawi” in *Islamic Perspective* (Centre for Sociological Studies, 2016), vol. 16, p. 115

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own ways<sup>4</sup>, however, he criticized them in approach. Nadwi claimed that the first group of intellectuals advocated the project of westernization in the name of reformation and modernization of Muslim society at one side, and the gradual disappearance of religious and spiritual identities at another side. He disapproved their approach in acclaiming the Western values and theories as yardstick of modernization; and disregarded Islamic values and traditions. On the other hand, Nadwi criticized the second group of Muslim intellectuals whom he regarded as contributing to the problem of intellectual stagnation among the Muslims. Nadwi claimed that the approach of this traditional scholars who rejected all other values and traditions outside Islam was irrelevant to address the modern issues and problems in contemporary society.

Another intellectual problem among the Muslim scholars, according to Nadwi, was a heavy reliance on the works of orientalism. They regarded the works of orientalists as authentic sources of references and even included in the syllabus of many Eastern universities. Orientalists' works, therefore, secured an important place and were considered as high value in knowledge. The massive acceptance of their works in the academia as well as scholarly circles clearly portray that they are successful in this regard. Nadwi wrote;

“Their works are treated, generally, as the last word in line. Books, for instance, by Nicholson, Hitti, Carl Brockleman and Schacht are regarded as unique and have been prescribed for study in the department of Arabic and Islamic studies of almost all the better-known universities of the East. In the same way, the Encyclopaedia of Islam compiled by Western orientalists, which has several reprints in Europe and America and among whose contributions a handful of Muslims are also included, is rated as the most complete and authoritative epitome of knowledge on subjects relating to Islam and Muslims”<sup>5</sup>

Although Nadwi acknowledged some orientalists who maintained neutrality and academic professionalism in their research, he cautioned about other orientalists who misinterpreted the facts of Islam and portrayed the erroneous mistakes of Arabic language, grammar, translation

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<sup>4</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Western Civilization, Islam and Muslims* (India: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1979), p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 182.

and different textual as well as historical context of *Qur'anic* texts and *hadith*<sup>6</sup>. In doing so, they tried to present Islam as outdated religion which has lost its relevance and no longer compatible with the modern age<sup>7</sup>, while giving credits to Western values and religious theories as an alternative. Nadwi argued that most orientalist's writings aimed at countering Islam and its cultural heritage and legacy. In terms of their objectives, the orientalist's have political, economic, and religious motives over the Muslims. Nadwi claimed that orientalism has a relation with evangelization since its advocates were mainly from the people of church or Jews. On the other hand, the orientalist's also played a major role in colonialism of Muslim countries. They served the West by providing the necessary data of history, heritage, and culture of the Muslim world.

In the view of Nadwi, the scenario of heavy reliance on orientalist's works was due to the problem of stagnation of thought among the Muslim intellectuals as well as their failure in safeguarding the Islamic legacy. Therefore, Nadwi suggested that the duty of research on issues related to Islam and Muslims should be primarily dominated by Muslim scholars. Muslim scholars should focus meticulously on the topics emphasized by orientalist's and refute their allegations against Islam. In doing so, Nadwi marked the core qualities which are needed by Muslim scholars, namely, the originality of thought, analytical power, critical understanding and professionalism in works<sup>8</sup>. It is the task of Muslim scholars to scrutinize the works of orientalist's including their references and findings to bring forth the truth in the limelight. One of the examples of orientalist's prominent works which attacked Islam was written by David Samuel Margoliouth. Margoliouth who has been found depicting Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) as a superstitious, idolater, craven, immoral and even a false Prophet whom the main aim was to gain absolute power and personal distinction. As regards to the *Qur'an*, Margoliouth has been found depicting the Prophet's experiences during its reception as epileptic fits. He provided all evidence to those allegations; and it is at this juncture that those allegations should be refuted by Muslim scholars through intellectual debate which requires profundity of knowledge, intellectual depth and mastery on the scholarship in Islamic studies. By presenting the true facts of Islam without any element of bias, it will

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<sup>6</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Madha Khasira al-alam bi inhitat al-Muslimin*, p. 237

<sup>7</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Western Civilization, Islam and Muslims*, p. 180

<sup>8</sup> Ali Zafar, Mohammad, "Seyyed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's Approach to Western Civilization", *AL-ADWA Multilingual Research Journal for Islamic Social Sciences*, 27, 37 (20112): 20.

avoid the propagation of orientalist to present defective representation of Islam and tarnish its image.

## **2. Political Aspect of Reform**

Nadwi marked the role of political leaders and rulers as a very significant force of Muslim *ummah*. Muslim rulers after the era of first four caliphs could not maintain moral and spiritual lines like their predecessors. The political power and monarchism became the primary attention of the rulers in general. The role of the *ulama*' or religious scholars were confined to a limited scope depending on the choices of the rulers. This very distance between political leaders and religious scholars made the politics and its subordinate institutions fraught with corruptions and misguidance, immoralities, and lavishness in life. This scenario subsequently affects the societal life in a massive manner, leading ultimately to a separation of religious rule from politics and state affairs. This scenario continued over the decades. Thus, Nadwi observed that breakdown in the leadership of the *ummah* which was established by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and carried by the companions was one of the contributing factors for the gradual decline of Islamic civilization<sup>9</sup>.

In his work *Western Civilization, Islam and Muslims*, Nadwi examined the role of political leaders of different Muslim countries like Tunisia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yaman, Turkey, Iran, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, Indonesia, and Egypt with domination of the West. He argued that those political leaders supported the project of westernization in the name of reform; at the same time reinforced the Western ideologies of capitalism, socialism, and nationalism. Nadwi highlighted the experience of the political crisis of the Muslim world and mentioned few figures whom he considered misguided and greatly responsible for importing the Western ideologies to the Muslim societies. He wrote;

“Hourri Boumedienne’s anti-Islamic reforms in Algeria; the nationalism, socialism and dictatorship of Nasser in Egypt; secularization, whole sell modernization and westernization in Turkey under Ataturk, and to so some extent, of Iran under Reza Shah Pahlavi; and nationalism, secularism and anti-Islam sentiment in Indonesia under Soekarno and

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<sup>9</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Madha Khasira al-alam bi inhitat al-Muslimin*, pp. 122-123

in Tunisia under Bourguiba”<sup>10</sup>.

According to Nadwi, due to the above-mentioned types of leaders, their efforts of reform were not succeeded, and the Muslim *ummah* legged behind to a great extent and received political and cultural serfdom of the West. Nadwi argued that although some of the countries are no longer under the direct Western colonial political power and secured their political freedom, but still, they are not free from the Western cultural and intellectual assaults which affect them morally and intellectually. The admiration and adaptation of Western culture in the Muslim countries as well as the advocacy for the Western ideologies of secularism, nationalism and capitalism by the Muslim leaders are clear examples of cultural serfdom of the West. Nadwi characterized India, Pakistan, and some other Arab countries as examples<sup>11</sup>. Freedom in these countries is limited to changing the administrative affairs without changing the mind settings<sup>12</sup>. The Muslim leaders deviated from the right path of Islamic traditions and failed to reform the Muslim societies.

Nadwi believed that a modern political leadership is misguided and misleading the generations due to their own moral and spiritual problem, particularly the ignorance of strengthening faith and relationship with God. They failed to provide solutions to the problems of the masses and detached them. The Muslim world, according to Nadwi, is suffering from the lack of true qualified leadership who can understand the demands of the masses and respond them accordingly. He said;

“If I were asked to name a greatest problem facing the world of Islam today, I would unhesitatingly declare that it consists of the lack of intellectual rapport between the leaders and the masses of these countries which has created a mental cleavage and class struggle and given rise to a shattering unrest”<sup>13</sup>.

In view to the above problem, Nadwi urged Muslims to generate the leaders of multidimensional prowess to meet the demands of the *ummah* in very despairing situations and to face the variant challenges posed

<sup>10</sup> Miftah, Mukerrem, “Islamic Civilization between Crisis and Revival: A Comparative Appraisal of the Works of Abul Hassan al-Nadwi and Ali Allawi” in *Islamic Perspective*, vol. 16, p. 131

<sup>11</sup> Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi, *Speaking Plainly to the West* (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1979) pp. 45-46

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp. 75-76

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by the West over the Muslim world. Nadwi believed that the victory of the Muslims is conditioned with the emergence of leaders who can face the challenges of the West through spiritual and material means. For Nadwi, leaders are not born rather they are made, therefore, it is the duty of the *ummah* to take steps in preparing the qualified leaders who could shoulder the responsibilities of the *ummah*, reviving the nations and leading them towards the spiritual and material progress.

In the journey of reviving nations and leading towards the progress, Nadwi believed that leaders are required to synthesize between two different types of knowledge; knowledge that could be traced from revelations of God to the prophets for enlightening human society, and the experiences and ideas that have developed in different nations and civilizations over the decades passed to the later generations. Indeed, revealed knowledge will infuse the sound motivations, ethical and moral definitions of life and lead towards a successful objective of life. On the contrary, experiences and ideas of civilization would contribute to have an easy, comfortable, and progressed lifestyle through its means and tools. For Nadwi, among the required qualities of leaders is the prudence and aptitude to analyse philosophies and theories that structure and rule this civilization. In addition, leaders should have the capacities to utilize the elements of a civilization which can help them build a better civilization based on faith and ethics on one side, and power, production and prosperity for invention and discovery on the other side<sup>14</sup>. It is crucial to note that Nadwi focused on moral and spiritual issues along with the material facts. What denotes the uniqueness of Muslims is to have a balanced view and approach. Otherwise, there remains no difference between Muslims and others.

Emphasizing on the balanced approach of the leaders, Nadwi asserted that Muslim leaders must not accept indiscriminately everything from the West and to choose only what their respective nations need and require in order to survive at the amount permissible by Islam<sup>15</sup>. This is the very crucial point where most Muslim reformists stumbled. Many surrendered to the West with a high esteem and reverence because they believed that in the domination of Western leadership where others will follow. To them, whatever presented by the West needed no scrutiny, as it holds supremacy of science and technology.

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<sup>14</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Mawqif al-'alam al-Islami tijah al-hadharah al-gharbiyyah* (Lucknow: al-Majma' al-Islami al-'Ilmi, 1963), pp 113-114.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid



Therefore, Nadwi called upon the new leadership to stay away from this mindless attitude and inferiority complex, and to behave with the West simply like an associate or a fellow traveller. The West has excelled over the Muslim world on worldly aspect but missing some essential transcendental truths of life, thus, Muslims and the West can exchange the missing points<sup>16</sup>. In this sense, Nadwi suggested to exchange of culture and tradition. For him, it is very crucial in a diversified society of a global age. The mere dominance of one culture can lead to the extinction of other culture and traditions. According to him, the mere imitation of the West by leaders will not profit the West morally, unlike the mutual exchange which will transmit the spirits of faith to the Western society which Muslims are blessed with.

Nadwi emphasized on the importance of Muslim leadership for Islamic civilization and for facing the challenges of the West. To face various problems of people over the world, the Muslim leadership requires certain characteristics. Nadwi said; “such leadership needs to be realistic, noble-minded, courageous and self-denying for being successful in instilling a new life into dying frame of modern civilization and even humanity”<sup>17</sup>. He necessitated *jihad* and *ijtihad* for leaders. For him, *jihad* and *ijtihad* are two inseparable and integral parts of Muslim community and leadership, and both are missing from the regulatory forces of Muslim society and civilization<sup>18</sup>. Nadwi explained *jihad* as striving to gain Allah’s satisfaction through complete surrender and submission to His injunctions. This submission comprises two steps: individual and holistic. The first means that a person should purify his soul from all spirits that contradict with the oneness of God and submit his desires to the wish of God to achieve an elevated and sacred soul. Once the individual level is overcome, he automatically shoulders the next obligation, which is, to ponder over the betterment and salvation of fellow communities through enlightening them with the same divine spirits. Nadwi’s logical argumentation here is, one’s soul cannot proclaim its true sanctity and holiness and maintain pure loyalty towards God’s convictions if the surroundings remain ungodly. That is why it is incumbent for a Muslim to exert his endeavours in various ways for the establishment of Allah’s rulings on the earth<sup>19</sup>. Meanwhile *ijtihad*, according to Nadwi, is necessary and the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 115

<sup>17</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Islam and the World* (United Kingdom: UK Islamic Academy, 2005), p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Madha Khasira al-alam bi inhitat al-Muslimin*, p. 119

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 120

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only way left to deal with the immense changes of life since there is no more revelation and there is no more prophet after Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). *Ijtihad* should be applied by the scholars in every age to sort out the arising problems based on *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* to prove the dynamism of Islam. Nadwi claimed that the Muslim leadership is lack of the quality of *ijtihad* to handle issues in Muslims' lives<sup>20</sup>. To address modern issues which are covered by classical schools and thought, firstly; one is required to be well versed in *shari'ah* and its legal maxims, and secondly; he needs to possess the competence of applications and contextualization of *shari'ah* rulings according to the needs<sup>21</sup>. Although Nadwi argued that leaders with such attributes were no easily found in Muslim countries, he acknowledged efforts from a few Muslim leaders in various form of *jihad* and *ijtihad*. However, Nadwi observed that those efforts are very limited compared to the demands, and the limited efforts would not be strong enough to play effective rule in the face of growing challenges<sup>22</sup>.

Therefore, Nadwi stressed the need to bring dynamism in leadership, that is, to have more projects and plans to secure the coming generations with a morally uplifted and materially progressed life<sup>23</sup>. At this point, it can be observed that Nadwi's vision of perfect society is one that symbolizes a harmonious blending of spiritual and material aspects. This is in fact an intrinsic quality of Muslims which was ignored and superseded by absolute materialism. According to Nadwi, Muslims simply became defeated to the West due to spiritual apathy of the leaders who responded to the West and the Western materialism in a haphazard manner and lacked adequate plans to tackle the educational sector and administrative affairs of the country<sup>24</sup>.

To revive the Muslim society, Muslim leadership, according to Nadwi, should focus on three main issues. Firstly, the structure of the education system should be reorganized to become better, more creative,

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<sup>20</sup> See Mohammed Farid Ali, "Abul Hasan al-Nadwi's Approach to Renewal and Reform" in *Islam and Civilizational Renewal*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2014, p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Madha Khasira al-alam bi inhitat al-Muslimin*, p. 121.

<sup>22</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Islam and the World*, p. 14

<sup>23</sup> Mukerrem Miftah, *Islamic Civilization between Crisis and Revival: A Comparative Appraisal of the Works of Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi and Ali Allawi* in *Islamic Perspective*, Centre for Sociological Studies, vol. 16, p. 131

<sup>24</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Mawqif al-'alam al-Islami tijah al-hadharah al-gharbiyyah*, p. 17

effective and compatible with modern time<sup>25</sup>; secondly, it is necessary for the Muslim world to secure self-sufficiency in finance, commerce and industry<sup>26</sup>; and thirdly is to focus on industrial and military self-sufficiency<sup>27</sup>. Nadwi said;

“If the Muslim world really wants to rise up and make Islam once again the instrument of realizing human destiny, it can no longer afford to ignore its educational, scientific and industrial development and the organization of its military strength”<sup>28</sup>.

If Muslims fail to qualify themselves in gaining the self-reliance in the abovementioned fields and to ensure the capacity of controlling their wealth and resources, they have to surrender automatically to the West allowing them to exert its domination and influence over the administrations of Muslim world and the resources as well. That is exactly what the Muslim world has been experiencing for a long time<sup>29</sup>. Nadwi believed that the cumulative effect of these reforms could pave the way for the remaking of Islamic civilization in the years to come<sup>30</sup>. The three proposals offered to the Muslim leadership are very significant, and those are considered as the foundations of any nation or society to survive. The Muslim society will not reach as its perfection unless Muslims could achieve self-reliance on those three fields, namely, education, finance and industry, and military power. Unfortunately, Muslims are backward in those fields.

### 3. Institutional Aspect of Reform

Nadwi explored the role and contributions of various movements and universities, such as the movement of *Tabligh Jama'at* in India, *Jama'at Islami* in Pakistan, *Muslim Brotherhood* in Egypt, *Aligarh College* in India, *Zaitun College* in Tunisia, *Al-Azhar University* in Egypt and many others. He acknowledged the great role of those movements and institutions in response to the West and Western encroachment on the

<sup>25</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Islam and the World*, p. 191

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 198

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 192

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 191

<sup>29</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Madha Khasira al-alam bi inhitat al-Muslimin*, p. 236

<sup>30</sup> Mukerrem Miftah, *Islamic Civilization between Crisis and Revival: A Comparative Appraisal of the Works of Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi and Ali Allawi* in *Islamic Perspective*, Centre for Sociological Studies, vol. 16, p. 131.

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one hand, and to the irreligiosity of Muslim society on the other hand. Nadwi believed that *Tabligh Jama'at* was one of the influential institutes and movement contributed to awakening the religiosity among the Muslim folks and safeguarding them from external non-Islamic practices. In his visit to Mewat, Nadwi observed how successfully Maulana Ilyas delivered *da'wah* and was delighted to see the outputs of organizational work of *Tabligh* which resulted in religious awareness among the masses, cultural harmony and peaceful coexistence in the multicultural city of Mewat<sup>31</sup>. The special focus on Mewat is given due to its infamous record as criminals' safe house, which was changed due to the missionary efforts of *Tabligh*<sup>32</sup>. Nadwi also acknowledged the role of *Jama'at Islami* as an important institution contributing to the Muslim *ummah*. The founder Mawdudi's far reaching vision, understanding of modern intellectual thoughts and tremendous faith towards Islamic doctrines earned him the authority and confidence to criticize the Western model of society<sup>33</sup>. For Nadwi, Mawdudi's writings and the movement of *Jama'at Islami* contributed to prepare a class opposed to the Western civilization and its materialistic philosophies. However, Nadwi criticized *Jama'at Islami* by claiming that it only influences the educated class. In addition, the movement could have done much more if its political involvement happened a bit later and it would focus more on *da'wah*<sup>34</sup>. In the similar mode, Nadwi also marked the active political engagement of the leader of *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* movement or *Muslim Brotherhood* as a reason of its failure. He said;

“...unmistakably was the most powerful Islamic movement of modern times and a fast-progressing religious endeavour. The liquidation of the Ikhwan was, without a doubt, an irreparable loss to the Arab and the larger Muslim world”<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Fi Masiratil Hayat* (Dimashq: Darul Qalam, 1987), vol 1, pp 185, 186.

<sup>32</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Al-Da'wah al-Islami fi al-Hind wa Tatawwuruha* (Lucknow, Nadwatul Ulama': Al-Majma' at Islami al-'Ilmi, 1986), p. 35

<sup>33</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Al-Sira' bayna al-fikrah al-islamiyyah wa al-fikrah al-gharbiyyah fi al-aqtar al-islamiyyah* (Western Civilization, Islam and Muslims), translated by Mohammad Asif Kidwai (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research Publications, 1979), p. 114

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 90

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 112

Nadwi considered these movements and institutions effective to contribute in social, intellectual, religious, and political aspects of Islam, at the same time these can save the *ummah* from intellectual serfdom of the West through educational reorganization, educating Muslims and preparing their minds.

Nadwi argued that Muslim leaders should reorganize the educational system of Muslim countries according to their own educational plans instead of following the plans of the West. He observed two points regarding the Muslim educational system. Firstly, the backwardness of Muslims in the field of knowledge as compared to the West. He claimed that the key reason of the Western power is their progress in empirical knowledge<sup>36</sup>, and it is undeniable fact that the Muslim world became heavily dependent on and submitted to the West in science and technology for several centuries ignoring the glorious contributions of Muslims in many fields throughout the ages. Nadwi believed that the Muslim society had enough qualified people and leaders possessed the quality to offer better and suitable educational plan combined with religion and science, spirituality and materiality. Secondly, Nadwi observed the slavish mentality of Muslim leaders to the Western pedagogy. As a result, they paid high esteem and reverence to the Western systems and ideologies and imported those ideologies to their respective societies.

For Nadwi, it is possible to stop the Western educational hegemony in the Muslim countries through a change over and a total reorientation of their current educational system. Although not simple, such daunting task is not impossible. He clarified further that the aims of the system will be structured on two main premises. Firstly, it will be wholeheartedly meant for filling up the spiritual void. Secondly, the system should reflect the aspirations of Muslims. Moreover, the new system of education must discard the theories and philosophies which lead purely and solely to materialistic end<sup>37</sup>. In this sense, Nadwi emphasized that its subject matters should contain materials to solidify holistic development of students. It should be equipped with the teachings and spirit of faith, and at the same time, modern sciences<sup>38</sup>. Through this, students will not only achieve the best ethical and moral values but also be prepared for

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<sup>36</sup> Sayed Mohammad Rabey Hasan Nadwi, *Sayed Abul Hasan Nadwi: An Eminent Scholar, Thinker, and Reformer* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P)Ltd, 2014), 107.

<sup>37</sup> Ali Zafar, Mohammad, "Seyyed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's Approach to Western Civilization", *AL-ADWA Multilingual Research Journal for Islamic Social Sciences*, 27, 37 (20112): 19.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

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intellectual outputs. This kind of education will neither guide to religious extremism or fanaticism, nor will it lead to pure sensualism. Rather it will combine optimum spirituality with material needs to produce the best response to the challenges of the time. Nadwi said;

“The educational system ought to be recognized soon in the light of harmonious blending between contemporary knowledge and need and aspirations and the basic ideals of Islam”<sup>39</sup>.

Therefore, Nadwi totally condemned the application of secularism in the educational system of Muslim countries which claims separation of religion and religious spirit from practical and public appearance, that is, contradictory to Islam.

In his proposal for restructure and reorganizing the educational system of Muslim countries, he cleared what to keep and what to discard from the existing system. Nadwi believed that leading to a new educational system does not mean to get rid of the sciences and technological knowledge of the West. This knowledge will surely be studied and emphasized with a different goals and objectives in the course of study and free from slavish mentality. Thus, not the desire of imitation; rather the vision of mastery will lead the way<sup>40</sup>. Nadwi’s vision highlighted two points; firstly, teaching and learning the Western sciences with the objectives different from the West that pursued absolute material gain. Secondly, the sciences and technologies will not be studied to serve the West; rather to overtake it, to respond to the challenges and retain the Muslim’s previous stature. The mastery of Muslims on sciences can release the *ummah* from slavish mentality towards the West, and secure independence in the intellectual discourses which is incumbent for world leadership of Islam. Nadwi argued that it is vital for Muslim to re-establish their intellectual superiority over the West to regain the world leadership of Islam<sup>41</sup>.

At the same time, Nadwi reminded the new orientation of knowledge must be based on spirit of revelation which will combine use-

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<sup>39</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Al-Sira’ bayna al-fikrah al-islamiyyah wa al-fikrah al-gharbiyyah fi al-aqtar al-islamiyyah* (Western Civilization, Islam and Muslims), translated by Mohammad Asif Kidwai, p. 32

<sup>40</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Al-Sira’ bayna al-fikrah al-islamiyyah wa al-fikrah al-gharbiyyah fi al-aqtar al-islamiyyah* (Western Civilization, Islam and Muslims), translated by Mohammad Asif Kidwai, pp. 160-161

<sup>41</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Islam and the World*, p. 192

ful materials from classical and modern theories<sup>42</sup>. Knowledge without the guidance of revelation is imperfect and misleading, since it is believed that the ultimate source of knowledge is revelation. In addition to that, there is debate among the scholars that whether knowledge which does not acknowledge the revelation is counted as knowledge or not.

### Conclusion

Nadwi's views on the strategies for the development of Muslim society and subsequently the revival of Islamic civilization has been analysed. The main themes discussed include three basic domains for reform; intellectual, political and institutional aspects. Intellectual bigrade of Muslim *ummah* should be revived from stagnation and intellectual sterility while the Muslim political leadership must be accorded with self-esteem to get rid of apologetic as well as slavish attitude towards the West. Meanwhile, institutions of Muslim countries must be reorganized and restructured based on Islamic philosophies. Nadwi regretted that the necessity of *jihad* and *ijtihad* was ignored among the scholarly circles and the whole Muslim *ummah* suffered from intellectual stagnation and sterility. As a result, Islamic civilization lost its dynamism and allowed the dominance of the Western civilization.

Despite its tremendous achievements, Western civilization lost its moral capacity as it has been missing key aspects of faith, that is, spirituality, which according to Nadwi very fundamental element to any civilization. Therefore, Western civilization cannot be the lead; it is only Islamic civilization that must lead the humanity for it is grounded on the principle of *tawhid*. Faith in God, spirituality, moral and ethical values, divine transcendental truths are conceived as key elements of this civilization, which are unescapable and cannot be ignored for the sake of human intellect and rationale. Divine facts, according to Nadwi, are always superior to human understanding. For there are enormous opportunities for the rationale and human intellect to be misguided whereas divine theories are undoubtedly sound. It is true that Islamic civilization is overtaken by the rise of Western civilization, but it has enormous capacities to be revived if the existing challenges are overcome, and it still can lead the way if the declining factors are overtaken. These factors could be summarized as moral degradation, disunity among *ummah*, backwardness in scientific knowledge and technology and so on, for he believed

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5.<sup>42</sup> Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Madha Khasira al-alam bi inhitat al-Muslimin*, pp.. 237-238

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that Islamic civilization has fundamental key of survival which is the key to faith.

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