



# Islamic Identity in Light of Contemporary Intellectual Challenges

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### **ABSTRACT**

The human being is linked ontologically with his identity and sees that he is worthless without it. Therefore, the question of identity at an age of contemporary and accelerating intellectual challenges is one of the essential questions that preoccupy the world. This study is concerned with the issue of Islamic identity in light of these challenges and it is divided into three topics. In the first, the Islamic identity and its characteristics are defined while the most prominent features of the contemporary intellectual challenges are presented in the second. The third topic tackles the effects of these challenges on the Islamic identity.

The study concludes that Islamic identity is based on many components such as belief, language, values, history, etc., and is concerned with divinity as a source, the non-separation between the religious and worldly affairs, collectivism, and moderation. On the other hand, contemporary intellectual challenges are characterized by materialism, utilitarianism, complexity, nihilism, decisiveness, aggressiveness, western centralism, racism, humanism and scientism. Alike they are featured by exploiting several means to spread out through them such as states, international organizations, lobbies, social media platforms, foreign schools and universities, and the media. They have had negative effects on Islamic identity such as the absence of the spiritual and faith dimension, weakness of Arabic language, family disintegration, the predominance of individualism over collectivism, and obstructing the Islamic da`wa (call). In order to reduce these influences, it is necessary to realize the challenges and to understand reality, strengthen belonging to Islam, enhance Arabic language, increase da`wa activity, and intensify communication and social solidarity among Muslims.

**Keywords:** Islamic identity, contemporary intellectual challenges, globalization, orientalism, physical, relativity, utilitarianism, feminism, Western centralism.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and prayers and peace be upon the master of the messengers, Muhammad, his family, and all his companions, and to proceed:

The issue of identity is one of the important and vital issues experienced by a person throughout their lives as they practice their daily routines while adhering to this identity that is linked to them existentially. Humans deal with their counterparts in identity in the first place, hence, and based on its parties, identity is divided into the self-identity versus the identity of the others.

The topic of identity is a broad one as it deals with definition and people's knowing of each other. The definition of identity represents the preliminary stage, while acquaintance is an advanced stage that involves participation and interaction between two parties or more. Allah Almighty created peoples with different and varied identities in order to know and be acquainted with each other as the Almighty says: {O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.} (Al-Hujurat: 13). The importance of identity in the life of humans is evident through their need to communicate and be acquainted with each other and exchange advantages and interests. It covers everything related to a person, including even the psychological aspect. It is often the case that impressions on an identity are created based on the previous ideas on an identity, for it can be presupposed that certain persons belonging to a specific identity as featured by having a sense of humor, and those belonging to another are characterized by being easy to anger.

The issue of identity is a sensitive one as a person sees it a part of their selves and not just an identification card or passports that they carry on travel, or a CV that they present to get a job, but rather much more than that. Every person, whoever they are, and whatever religion or belief they embrace, are keen to preserve their identity so as to preserve themselves, especially since one's identity either affects other identities, or is affected

by them. Moreover, as long as it is linked to the person's self, it is influenced by the strength and weakness of that person himself. Thus, the strong identity derives its strength from its members, and vice versa, and when a person socializes and be in contact with others, their identity is affected either negatively or positively. This effect is normal, except that the danger arises when the level of mixing between identities goes too far and becomes a state of dissolution and fusion that one identity replaces the other, as is the case with many identities that underwent this throughout human history.

Undoubtedly, in light of the intellectual challenges that the world is witnessing today, issues of identity occupy a wide area of heated debates among global cultural elites, and Muslims are not outside the circle of this discussion. Like other identities of the world, the Islamic identity is facing the impact of the triumphant identity, i.e. the western civilization's identity and serious intellectual challenges that affect the essence of this Islamic identity have arisen.

Accordingly, it has been necessary to follow them up and explore their depths due to the great importance of this topic in the reality of Muslims and their future generations so that the complete loss of Islamic identity that happened to Muslims in Andalusia may not recur. Hence, since these contemporary intellectual challenges would have serious impact on our Islamic identity, the idea of conducting the present research was born.

### Research Importance

The importance of the research lies the following points:

- Keeping up with the research on the Islamic identity due to the emergence of intellectual challenges in the world recently, especially since much of what was written about the Islamic identity dates back to the past decades.
- Islamic libraries need to address this concern because it relates to an important issue of relevance to Muslim affairs, which is identity.
- Alerting Islamic awareness of the seriousness of the issue of the Islamic identity in light of the contemporary intellectual challenges in order to create a Muslim generation, aware of the surrounding dangers and capable of contributing in shielding it.

### Research Problem:

The research problem lies in answering the following main question: How has the Islamic identity been affected in light of contemporary intellectual challenges? In addition, it endeavours to answer a package of sub-questions including: What are the components and characteristics of the Islamic identity? What are the characteristics of contemporary intellectual challenges? What are the means of their spread? What are the negative effects of contemporary intellectual challenges on Islamic identity? and What are the ways to minimize them?

### Research Aims

The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Introducing the Islamic identity, its components, and its characteristics.
- Highlighting the features of contemporary intellectual challenges and the means through which they can spread out.
- Illustrating the effects of contemporary intellectual challenges on the Islamic identity, and how to minimize them.

### Previous Studies, and the Most Important Scientific Additions to it

The subject of the present study has received many research works, and the methods of addressing it have varied, but these studies were looked at by the researcher because they interrelate in some aspects with the present study, and differ in other aspects:

- The first study - Mahrous Bassiouni's study: It consists of an introduction, a preface, three topics, and a conclusion. In this previous study, the impact of globalization in the field of Aqeeda, then in heritage and finally in Arabic language is investigated. The problem of the study is focused on the role of globalization in changing the Islamic identity by showing its negative effects such as the consecration of utilitarianism, materialism, and selfishness, and explaining the invasion by globalization of Muslim youth. It also involves demonstrating the impact on their identity, which is the basis of their existence. Yet, in spite of the great value of the study, it differs with the present study in terms of its perspective of the subject. Besides, unlike the present study, it focuses on the effects of globalization on Islamic identity, especially in terms of the Aqeeda, heritage, and linguistic components, while the current study has a more comprehensive view of it, as globalization is a means of spreading out these contemporary intellectual challenges.
- The second study - Hassan Hassan's study: It includes an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. In its content, the Islamic identity, its importance, and its characteristics are defined. Then it moves to explaining the contemporary challenges that affect this identity, such as globalization and the effects of

intellectual invasion, and emphasizes the nation's responsibility to preserve its identity. In light of contemporary challenges, it touches on the reality of Islamic identity, and the methods of obliterating it, and stressed adherence to identity to face these challenges. The approach to addressing the issue is different from that of the present study.

- The third study - Kamal Hamed's study: It is focused on the concept of Islamic identity, and the challenges it is exposed to. In its findings, the study concludes that educational requirements supporting Islamic identity are not sufficiently available. So it provides several recommendations, including: purifying the curricula in Arab countries from the effects of intellectual invasion. The study deals with the general framework of the subject in five chapters including: the concept of Islamic identity, its sources, manifestations, components, some of the challenges it faces, ways to confront these challenges educationally and the field procedures and their interpretations. The study differs from the present one in its methodology as it relies on field procedures to reach results. As for the present study, it does not adopt the same procedures, rather it sometimes uses induction, and other times deduction wherever it is required.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research follows the descriptive and inductive approach to identify the reality of Islamic identity, then the experimental approach and linking it to the contemporary intellectual challenges that affect it. Then the means to face the contemporary intellectual challenges are identified.

### Research Plan

The study is divided into an introduction, three topics, every topic subsumes two sections, and a conclusion, and can be explained as follows:

- The first topic: Islamic identity, its concept, components, and characteristics.
- The second topic: the characteristics of contemporary intellectual challenges, and the means of their spread.
- The third topic: the negative effects of contemporary intellectual challenges, and ways to minimize them.

### The first Topic: Islamic Identity: Its Concept, Components, and Characteristics.

#### Section 1 - Definition of Islamic Identity:

Many definitions of Islamic identity, from the linguistic and terminological point of view, were presented, and this concept consists of two terms that need to be deconstructed, then re-structured and defined. The first of these two terms is the term identity itself which when defined, the problem of the presence of multiple and different definitions arises which can be attributed to the variability of perspective in terms of which the term is considered. Every specialist in a specific field of knowledge would present his vision of identity based on his specialty view. Psychologists, for example, define identity from a psychological angle that is related to personality growth and its evolution. Whereas sociologists would define it based on its role in society, political scientists based on its establishment of political unity, and link it to citizenship, and religious scholars would look at from a religious perspective that separates between the believers of one religion and those who do not believe in it. Philosophers are the most prominent among scholars in the recurrent visiting of the issue of identity, and every one of them gives his opinion in the quest for providing a definition of identity. However, the researcher limits himself to providing the most common and acceptable definitions in the academic circles.

#### First: Identity linguistically and idiomatically

Huwyah (identity) is a verbal noun derived from the third person singular pronoun, huwa "he". Al-Farabi defined the identity of a thing as: "its specificity, its personification, its unique and unparalleled existence", and this definition is well suited to our research away from the other controversial definitions.

#### Second: Islamism linguistically and idiomatically

Islamiyah (Islamism) is a synthetic verbal noun derived from the noun "Islam", a verbal noun derived from the quadrilateral verb aslam (embraced Islam), and the linguistic meanings of Islam revolve around submission, utter obedience, defectlessness, tranquility, purity, peacefulness, and sincerity. Babiker defines Islam as: "It is submission, subservience and utter compliance and obedience to Allah Almighty in what He commands and prohibits, and surrender to the Lord sincerely in all of that" Majdi Baslom defines it as: "The religion of Allah Almighty and His approach that He sent His messengers and prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him with, that requires showing submission to Allah, and showing respect to His Sharia by following His approach. In general, the concept of Islam does not deviate from the above definitions. The Islamic identity is a combination of the two aforementioned terms, and Muhammad Emara defines it as: "the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors that distinguish the Islamic society from other societies".

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that the Islamic identity is a set of components and characteristics that characterize Muslims in all aspects of their lives, and make them distinct from others.

## **The second section - The Components of Islamic Identity**

The Islamic identity consists of a number of components that bind all Muslims together with one bond, and infringement on any of these components is an infringement on all of them. Contemporary intellectual challenges may affect one of these components, several components, or all of them at once, according to the type of challenge. These components are arranged according to their importance and some of them are investigated in isolation even though they may require study in combination with another component, yet highlighting and distinguishing them is the aim behind this and as follows:

### **First: The Aqeeda (Creed) Component**

This component represents the cornerstone of Islamic identity, and all the other components are linked, in one way or another, with it. It subsumes within it all the beliefs, laws, and rulings that Allah Almighty stipulated in His glorious Book, and what was authenticated by the prophet, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, in his purified Sunnah. Muslims comply with this component as it is derived from a divine source, independent of other beliefs, its suitability for human instinct, and its non-opposition to the mind. Aqeeda has faced fierce campaigns since the blessed era of early Islam up to the present day, such as mocking, underestimating, and disrupting it, and undermining its victorious advocates of the Islamic faith in the face of false and deviant beliefs. Besides, this component gets the largest share of the attacks of contemporary intellectual challenges, and their systematic targeting of the Islamic faith.

It is necessary to emphasize the point that those who adhere to the Islamic Aqeeda system will survive on the Day of Resurrection, and whoever rebels against it will perish as violating this system constitutes a form of disbelief, polytheism in some cases and a great sin. Indeed, Islam is seen as the true religion in the sight of Allah and no other religion is accepted by Him as Allah Almighty says: **{the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who were given the Scripture did not differ except after knowledge had come to them - out of jealous animosity between themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the verses of Allah, then indeed, Allah is swift in [taking] account..}** [Al Imran: 19].

### **Second: The Linguistic Component**

Every identity has a tongue with which to speak, and Arabic is the tongue of the Islamic identity, as it is the language of the Qur'an. Allah Almighty says: **{We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an, so that you might understand it}**. [Joseph: 2]. Understanding Islamic religion can only be achieved by mastering the Arabic language, without which the Muslim does not understand what is meant by the words of Allah and the Sunnah of His prophet, may Allah's prayers and peace be upon him. For this reason Arabic has received great attention from Muslims throughout various Islamic eras. Perhaps there is no language known to humans has received as much attention as Arabic did due to its close association with religion, and there is no doubt that weakening it diminishes the value of Muslim identity and weakens it. Moreover, Arabic is the title of Islamic identity and one of its doors. Mohammad Al-Ghazali stated the prestigious status of Arabic when he described it as: "the language of the immortal message that must occupy a senior position among its speakers and among all people, for Allah, by choosing this language to be the vehicle of His revelations that remain over time, has exalted its value and distinguished it above all other languages." The first signs of danger threatening any identity appear by weakening the language, and using other languages instead of it. Keeping away from Arabic and underacting to learn it is, in fact, moving away from Islam, and this explains why cultural invasion begins first with targeting the language, and killing it among its speakers. Therefore, the issue of language will remain an issue of identity, civilizational existence, and human presence.

### **Third: The Value Component**

Every nation has moral values and principles that it adheres to, considers them part of its identity, inherits them generation after generation, and preserves them by passing them over from parents to children. These values and principles represent strict rules that are difficult to break as they have a collective effect, moral obligation, and drive one to do an act or abstain from it. Islam came with an integrated system of values and morals that the Holy Qur'an focused on, preserved the common values among human beings, and provided more added values to the Muslim to be more committed to them. Among these values are: being honest, as the believer does not lie. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: {Beware of lying, for lying leads to immorality, and immorality leads to Hell}. Allah commands justice even with the staunchest of opponents. The Almighty said: {Oh! O you who have believed, be upright for God, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incriminate you so that you will not be just. Be just, He is more enduring. It is for piety, and fear God. Indeed, God is Aware of what you do ([Al-Ma'idah: 8])}. Islam contains a large system of values that call for abandoning hypocrisy, backbiting, gossip, and useless arguments, and urged to remove harm from the way of Muslims, upholding ties of kinship, sponsoring orphans, visiting the sick, and linking these values to reckoning and punishment. Hence, whoever applies them, he will have the great reward on the Day of Resurrection.

#### **Fourth: The Historical Component**

History, the events, and the prominent people who are symbols and role models it contains, represent a living record in the memory of nations. In the historical record of Islam, there is a long list of personalities associated with the conscience and life of a Muslim from his birth until his death. At the top of the list is the master of those of the old and of the later times, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, his brothers the prophets, peace be upon them, his pure family, his good companions, and their followers until the Day of Judgment. In addition there are great articulated events that do not leave the memory of Muslims. These events, among others include the invasions by the Prophet, peace be upon him, the Islamic conquests, the fall of Baghdad at the hands of the Mongols, the Crusades, the conquest of Constantinople, the fall of Andalusia, colonialism, and others. A Muslim does not accept that his awareness concerning these personalities and events be distorted, as defaming them is a violation of his identity and these personalities and events are an integral part of his identity. In fact each identity is linked to certain symbols, and the head of the Islamic identity is Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who is the role model for this nation. Then the Muslim follows the example of the righteous predecessors of this nation, as they contributed to the formation and preservation of this identity, and defaming these role models exposes the Islamic identity to danger, and agitate Muslims' anger.

#### **Fifth: The Geographical Component**

The geographical component is closely linked with the aforementioned historical component, and one may ask what is the relationship of geography to identity? Every identity in the world spreads in a geographical area on the surface of earth, and this geography definitely affects identity. So, the closer the geography is for the members of a certain identity, the less the difference between them will be, and the farther away it is, the differences between them will appear. This state of affairs was in ancient times, yet today, the world has become a small and open village and virtual geography has come to control identity more than physical geography. So you may find a Muslim in the Arabian Peninsula, the cradle of Islam, influenced by the West, even if he did not travel to the western countries, due to globalization's elimination of geographical barriers. Hence, maintaining geographical interconnections between Muslims is so important that when a Muslim is afflicted by some trouble in the East, it will be felt by his Muslim brother in the West. Consequently, the latter feels his pain, and thus the bonds of belonging to the Islamic identity deepen, unity among Muslims is strengthened, and the Islamic zeal is entrenched in all Muslim countries alike. Neglecting one Islamic country and weakening it is enough to lead to all Muslim countries being swallowed, and this will result in a great corruption affecting the identity of Muslims. Such was the case with foreign colonialism that swallowed Andalusia, and then began, little by little, to eat away at Islamic geography.

#### **The Third Section - The Characteristics of Islamic Identity**

The Islamic identity has many characteristics that are specific to it and distinguish it from other identities, the most important of which are:

##### **First: The Divine Characteristic**

The Islamic identity differs from other man-made human identities in that it is divinely sourced. Allah Almighty called Muslims with this identity, as He said in His glorious Book: "He named you Muslims before" [Al-Hajj: 78]. This explains why the Islamic identity is distinguished by being attributed to Islam, unlike other identities that are usually attributed to people, such as the Christian identity in relation to Christ, or to geography, such as the Western identity, or to races, such as the Slavic identity. The divine characteristic represents the basic source and the constant and eternal reference that other identities lack, as they are a human product. As for the Islamic identity, it proceeds according to the Quran and the Sunnah, it is not an identity devoid of reference nor controlled by human desires.

##### **Second: the religious characteristic**

There is no separation between religion and the world in the Islamic identity, as Muslims belong to Islam both religiously and worldly, unlike other identities with a secular orientation that build a separating wall between the religious and the worldly. And what indicates this characteristic is the Almighty's saying: {Say: My prayer, my sacrifice, my life and my death are for God, Lord of the worlds.} [Al-An'am: 162]. The Muslim moves in the world within the domain of religion, and only a sinner disobeys it. The struggle between Islamism and secularism did not appear in Muslim countries until the rise of Western civilization and the spread out of its ideas and values throughout the world to reach Muslim countries at the end. Obviously, secularism came to obliterate and renounce the Islamic identity, and in its extremist version it reached the point that it called for a break with the nation's heritage, and its past, which represents the crown of its glory under glamorous slogans such as modernity, rationality, progress, and development.

Yet, in reality, it produced no more than worn out Western theses to be reproduced in Muslim societies. It is worth noting that banishing Islam from life led to great corruption in many Muslim societies that fell under the

rule of secular parties. So, such countries suffered much as they neither adhered to their religion nor managed to achieve development and progress according to the buzz secular slogans.

### **Third: The Otherworldly Characteristic**

The Islamic identity is not limited to this world only, rather it connects the Muslim individual to the Hereafter, and whoever embraces Islam in this world will be safe from torment in the Hereafter. Muslims, in every word and deed that comes out of them, must put Allah before their eyes, and remember that they will have a day when they will be rewarded for what they have done in the life of this world. This unique otherworldly characteristic is a distinctive mark of the Islamic identity, as a Muslim in this world remains a Muslim in the Hereafter. He is held accountable on the basis of this identity that does not end with the end of his life in this world.

Based on this, this characteristic makes the Islamic identity immortal and eternal, and links the Muslim's affiliation with the Day of Judgment when all affiliations to man-made worldly identities end except belonging to Islam as it is the only thing that remains. So a person does not benefit from their noble birth and wealth, but rather from their faith, and through it alone they will be safe. The Most High said: {Then, when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no kinship among them that Day, nor will they ask of one another.} [The Believers: 101].

### **Fourth: The Collective Characteristic**

Islamic identity constitutes a group, and Islam urges the strengthening of the collective bond, and giving priority to the interest of the group over any other individual interest that may harm the interest of this group. Islam has preached participation and interaction with society, and serving its members away from isolation, introversion, and individualistic greed produced by capitalism. Contrary to the philosophy of socialism and communism, this Islamic collective orientation does not deny the individual rights, rather Islam gives each individual their right within the framework of the group they are part of.

Accordingly, there is no conflict between individual and collective rights, except in the event that the individual interest harms the interest of the group, in which case the interest of the group takes precedence over that of the individual. The case is so because, in the final outcome, the interest of the group reverts to the individual. Additionally, relations in the Islamic community are based on the basis of brotherhood in faith and social solidarity, and the prohibition of everything that would harm society such as usury, deceitful contracts, and monopoly as opposed to liberal philosophies that created selfishness and self-love.

### **Fifth: The Moderateness Characteristic**

The Islamic identity proceeds in its dealings with other identities without access or negligence, so it benefits the upholders of other identities with the right revealed by Allah Almighty. Yet, it also benefits from the beneficial worldly aspects that others have, and does not take a rigid position towards them. This sort of moderation appears in the various areas of life, in every matter and in all affairs of Muslims. Islamic moderation aims to protect the Islamic faith, perpetuate compliance with the law and teachings of Islam, spread it easily, achieve and spread justice, preserve the Islamic civilization from distortion, and preserve the identity of the nation and its intellectual independence from the manifestations of blind imitation.

The Second Topic: The Contemporary Intellectual Challenges: Their Features and Means of Spread

The First Section - The Characteristics of Contemporary Intellectual Challenges

Contemporary intellectual challenges, in their totality, are characterized by sharing several common features. They may differ in their names, but they agree in acquiring these features which are numerous, but some of them are highlighted as follows:

#### **First: The Material and Utilitarian Attribute**

Contemporary ideas revolve around matter and utility to the extent that material side overshadowed the spiritual side, and the great ideas dominating the world became spiritually empty.

This spiritual emptiness is a result of such practices as when a person mocks themselves, spends their entire life in seeking material alone, finds pleasure in gaining it, aspires to gaining more and more of it, and their success or failure came to be measured by the amount of money gained. So, they tend to ride the most luxurious cars and purchase the most precious international brands. This lifestyle generated greed, boasting the possession of wealth and objects, an obsession with consumption with or without need, and wastefulness in buying every fashion trend. Relationships between people have become based on interest, and communication is of serious and practical nature. Human relations came to be of a profitable and utilitarian nature more than anything else, and this feature has affected even homes, eliminating the beautiful family feelings and gentle emotions. Consequently, divorce rates increased, families got polluted, and the phenomenon of aversion to childbearing and turning away from the idea of marriage emerged.

### **Second: The Complexity and Nihilism Feature**

Contemporary ideas are the essence of conflicting human ideas. The researcher needs to refer to many sources in order to understand them as they are very complex and entangled and the philosophies of the Greeks, India, Mesopotamia, and Egypt overlap in them, let alone the divine and positivist religions. This complexity produced absolute relativism in dealing with facts, established the philosophy of negation, and followed a dialectical sophisticated approach that does not seek to prove a truth. Many of the upholders of these contemporary intellectual currents ended up seeing only nihilism, meaninglessness and purposelessness in the entire existence until this pessimistic nihilistic view became a psychological and mental state haunting humans. The rise in drug addiction, moral corruption and spread of pornography and violence bears witness to this argument. Indeed, this appears more clearly in modern Western literature that reflects the predominant intellectual trend where it came to be characterized as "a pessimistic, nihilistic literature that describes human loss, intellectual and moral misery, violence, brutality, and psychological emptiness".

### **Third: The Decisiveness and Aggressiveness Characteristic**

Despite their praise of freedoms, promotion of tolerance, and claims of accepting different opinions, whatever they may be, a scrutinizing look at contemporary intellectual discourse - such as modern atheism, colonialism, and feminism - shows that it is characterized by sharpness and aggressiveness when dealing with different viewpoints. It is characterized also by a tendency of ridicule, mockery, and the use of verbal violence rather than search for facts in a serious and objective scholarly manner that ends up proving arguments. That aggression appears more clearly when Islam is present in intellectual dialogues. Islam, by its nature, confronts all false human ideas with the truth that Allah revealed to His prophet. Sharpness and aggressiveness is reflected in the behavior of the followers of these currents, so racist nationalist movements that hate all people who do not belong to their nationality emerged. Furthermore, tendencies that legitimize the use of force in dealings took over based on the social Darwinian philosophy which states that the survival is for the fittest, i.e. the strongest. Obviously, they legitimize the law of the jungle, racism and predation not sublimation, compassion and interdependence. And the bad Western colonial experience that humanity passed through is the best example on this feature, as entire peoples were exterminated, and countries were occupied for centuries and decades, their resources were plundered, and their cultural identity was tampered with.

### **Fourth: The Western Racist Central Characteristic**

The exaggerated fascination with what Western civilization has reached produced a sense of Western superiority to the extent that the West became the source of ideas and values, rather the center of the universe and humanity in everything. It has also turned into the source of principles and morals, while the others are no more than satellites revolving around it, so whoever wants to know the validity of something must resort to the West to get the answer. Thus it has become the sole reference for everything so courts and major international organizations whose influence exceeds the political, intellectual, social and cultural institutions are based in the West.

Besides, "Western centralism did not present a vision of the world only, but rather produced a political project for the world at large to follow, which purports to homogenize humanity in the future through the application of the Western model all over the world. The danger of this project lies in the fact that it logically justifies Western expansion, occupation of the world, and annihilation of civilizations. Additionally, the West today does not recognize the cultural, religious and social boundaries separating between what is Western and non-Western, and that generated Western narcissism in dealing with the other through the logic of force, domination and dictation. On this basis, international justice was lost as the strong party imposes its will on the weak parties, and considers itself the head, and the others mere subordinates.

### **Fifth: The Humanistic and Scientific Characteristic**

The discourse of contemporary intellectual movements is based on the centrality of man, and the avoidance of any mention of Allah until man replaces Allah - exalted be He above that - since Nietzsche announced His death. So man took over enacting legislations without referring to any divine source, and severed all connections with metaphysics. Man, therefore is involved today in all the discourses of contemporary intellectual movements with complete exclusion of any mention of Allah Almighty. Man alone discovers the laws and secrets of the universe, he is the source of truths, and he does not know things except through experimentation with no need for revelation and belief in the unseen (the supernatural). So attention began to be focused on man alone in his capacity as the center, contrary to religions that put Allah in the center, and everything revolves around Him.

This humanism has generated a tendency to scientism, which is the sanctification of science to the point of deification, and not resorting to any source other than it. Hence, what natural science says alone is correct, putting no limit to the limited human science no matter what level of development it has reached. This



scientism is an ideologization of science by turning it into a cosmic vision claiming capacity to know the reality of existence and the secrets of the universe without resort to any metaphysical dimension.

### **The Second Section - Means of Spreading Contemporary Intellectual Challenges:**

Contemporary intellectual challenges have many means of varying influence, through which they disseminate their discourse among Muslim youth. These means use the latest technologies, and the messages to be promoted appear in the best form so that it becomes hard to evade their influence. The most important of these means are the following:

#### **First: Countries and Organizations**

States and organizations exercise their hegemony - out of strength and material superiority - over weak states, as they try to generalize the specificity of Western identity over other identities without preserving the religious and cultural peculiarities of these identities to make the non-Western other subservient to the Western central countries. So, whoever tries to release themselves from the power of Western identity is portrayed in the ugliest forms, such as terrorism and extremism. Along the same vein, international actors are exploiting the human rights file to blackmail non-Western countries in an attempt to subjugate and dominate them under the pretext of violating the rights of minorities, not empowering women or persecuting homosexuals. In recent years, it has begun to adopt a more extreme stance, as it prompts world governments to admit sexual freedom and homosexuality as natural conditions that must be accepted throughout the world. These issues have acquired propagation all over the world, and many international bodies defend them from the standpoint of human rights detailed by Western standards, without any regard for cultural differences existing between societies and communities. Muslims are not exempt from these issues that concern them, and affect their social reality and the future of their children, as they are among the victims of these abnormal ideas being promoted worldwide.

#### **Second: Social Media Platforms**

Social media platforms occupy such a large share of people's lives that they spend a lot of time on them daily, and every person, young or old, has a page or an account on one of the social media platforms through which he interacts with people and shares his diaries with them. These platforms have a strong influence in shaping awareness. That is why every intellectual current seeks to present its ideas in this open market, and to market its goods to bring new customers to it, until everything became confused.

These platforms are distinguished from other traditional mass media by the speedy transmission of information without any temporal and spatial restrictions, as they have turned the world into a small village. Hence, with a click of a button, it is possible to follow what is happening in the far reaches of the world, and you will enjoy the subscription and follow-up of a large number of people who are active every now and then to keep yourself familiar with the latest news reported. The contents of these platforms cannot be easily controlled, as they enter homes without asking for permission of their households. The intellectual content that is anti-Islamist has become a tangible challenge, as many pages are active to shake Muslims' faith in their beliefs, spread suspicions to waver faith and take it out from the hearts of Muslim children, and seriously seek to strip them of their Islamic identity so that they become without any known identity other than atheism.

#### **Third: Foreign Schools and Universities**

Foreign schools and universities invade the Islamic world and the West managed through which to infiltrate into Muslim countries to present to their children the juice of Western values away from the teachings of Islam. These schools produced an intellectually distorted and a religiously confused generation of the sons of Muslims as they do not know which identity they belong to. They take less care of their religion because it is not taught at all, and in some cases it is taught shyly and narrowly. Similarly, their Arabic language is weakened in exchange for strengthening their mastery of foreign languages.

Many Muslims have begun to hand over their children to these schools under the pretext that they provide a high quality education that guarantees them a better future. On the contrary, the results of these schools, in the foreseeable future, are much worse than what is expected. In fact, they are platforms for spreading alienation in Muslim societies. They do not aim to link the children of Muslims to their religion, and preserving the Islamic identity is none of its goals. This is something that does not concern them, so what is status of those who spend decades of their lives in these schools and universities with secular tendencies, especially in the majors of social sciences that deal with sensitive aspects related to issues of culture and identity? There is no harm in opening up to what others have, but without undermining the essence of Islamic identity, i.e. their faith, by weakening it, and not raising the Muslim youth according to it ..

#### **Fourth: Archaeological Exploration Expeditions**

There have been subsequent Western archaeological exploration Expeditions in some Muslim countries with a great historical depth. Islam is the major faith in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, the Levant, Egypt and Persia up to

the borders of China and Europe, and all these countries represent ancient civilizations deeply rooted in history. These expeditions entered with the virtual aim of searching for the antiquities of the ancient nations, but whoever probes the depths of these expeditions will find that their purpose is to discover the traces of the ancients to revive the fanaticism of pre-Islamic civilizations. This was achieved by reviving the Pharaonic identity in Egypt, the Sumerian in Iraq, the Syriac in Syria, the Achaemenid in Persia, and the Sabaeans in Yemen. So, these discovered archeological remains became Part of a new identity created by the West for its agents in Muslim countries.

It is worth mentioning that these antiquities had no effect on the identity of Muslims until the advent of these Western expeditions to the Islamic nations to achieve this end. Accordingly, they managed to shake Muslims' belonging to their Islamic history as it linked them to the dark ages of ignorance that were illuminated only after the rise of Islam. These expeditions' agendas were passed against the sons of Muslims who are now exchanging and using the symbols of these civilizations, and are proud of their historical connection with them more than anything else. Sometimes the matter reaches to the degree of bigotry to these ancient polytheistic nations that did not believe in the unity of God. Besides, celebrating and belonging to the Islamic identity became secondary to belonging to these defunct civilizations. Abd al-Rahman Abu Zakri says: "The misbelieved national identities were revived with the help of Western missions that came to excavate antiquities in Muslim lands.

### **Fifth: Media and Orientalism**

The West dominates the global media, and through these means it presents everything that is Western in a good light, depicts Muslims in the worst light, uses psychological tricks to alienate Muslims, and deliberately distorts their reputation by linking them to terrorism, intolerance, and everything negative. In this regard, Al-Mahjoub Bin Saeed says: "A thick veil of tribal rulings prevents [the West] from realizing the truth of Islam, its essence and its noble intentions. Therefore, awareness has grown in the Islamic world of the need to look at the issue of the distorted image of Islam in Western media very seriously, and not to consider it a marginal issue. This unfair Western media approach has consolidated the phenomenon of Islamophobia in the West, a phenomenon that represents a major dilemma for Muslims. Instead of being a means of peace between nations, Western media has become a tool for demonization and division, and for providing bad stereotypes about the identity of Islam into the Western imagination, based on spiteful Orientalist literature. Orientalism is still alive, active, and playing its role, and the Western media could not detach themselves from its theses in its dealings with Islam. The case is so because they transformed the knowledge products of Orientalism into a media material that has a dangerous impact on Muslim youth by raising doubts among them about the belief foundations of Islam.

The Third Topic: The Negative Effects of Contemporary Intellectual Challenges on Islamic Identity, and Ways to Reduce Them

### **The First Section - The Negative Effects of Contemporary Intellectual Challenges**

The negative effects of these contemporary intellectual challenges vary in their effect on the Islamic identity at the individual and collective level, as well as the extent of these effects varies from one Islamic society to another. But in general they are clearly visible, and the most important of these effects are:

#### **First: Absence of the Spiritual and Faith Dimension**

Corrupt intellectual perceptions and convictions that are built on purely material intellectual foundations without care and concern for any spiritual or faith aspect result in psychological imbalances and behavioral disturbances among humans. For this reason, the materially developed societies witness high rates of depression, aggressive behaviors, and the phenomenon of suicide.

Additionally, Western societies, after centuries of detachment from Christianity, began to import doses of Hindu and Buddhist spirituality, so many spiritual movements of this kind spread in it. Some of these are gnostic movements, promoting secret mystical ideas, as well as the practice of yoga, belief in karma, and energy therapy. While, the state of Islamic and Arab Societies which adopted secularism as a system was not much different from the state of the West, because after decades of imposing secularism on Muslims, the sons of Muslims divided into one group adhering to Islam, and another group following the example of the West and resort to modern spirituality, which came to be known by the name of "spiritual atheism

#### **Second: Weakening Arabic Language and Strengthening Foreign Languages**

When one looks at the reality of the Arabic language today, they find that it is in its worst condition that it has become the language of the elite of the elite due to the weak use of it in the general cultural domain and mixing it with dialects, and impregnating it with disgusting non-Arabic terminology. Besides, many educational institutions in Muslim countries have abandoned teaching students in Arabic altogether or in a very narrow scope within the faculties of Sharia, law, or others, and by doing this, they diminish its importance. So, what is required in this regard is adopting a balanced attitude.

For future generations of Muslims, it is unfortunate - as Ali Asaad Watfa says - that " Arabic lives in our contemporary reality between the hammer of estrangement and the anvil of alienation. Estrangement and alienation are emotional and existential states , a state between awareness and its absence, and it may be a state between fear and awe. This is the state of Arabic language among its people, estrangement abroad and alienation within." And the Muslim generations should be brought out of the state of alienation and distance from Arabic so that it can have presence in their lives and pour out of their mouths . Indeed, languages weaken when abandoned by their native speakers , and when not used until they die and disappear. Yet ,one of the merits of Arabic is that Allah preserves it from loss as it is the language of His Holy Book.

### **Third: Family Disintegration**

The civilizational progress and technical and technological development accompanied by intellectual and cultural invasion has affected the family and its cohesion, so family disintegration has become a realistic phenomenon that cannot be denied. This had a negative effect on the family structure in terms of disintegration and weakness of family relations and disruption of normal family growth and solidarity. Additionally, it had psychological effects represented by many economic, health, social and psychological life pressures, which in turn led to the emergence of false ideas and misconceptions that led to family turmoil and disintegration. This can be attributed to lack of the guiding, leading and educational role of parents, as well as the absence of religious restraints and value structure, whose absence increased the rates of behavioural deviation and negative social phenomena.

Families disintegrated in many Islamic societies as a result of blind submission to the manifestations of Western social life and its projection on the structure of Muslim society. Ideas and theories calling for the necessity of liberating from family restrictions, under the pretext of personal freedom of action, appeared . Based on that, extremist movements calling for homosexuality or feminism or that the marriage bond is not sacred , rather it is a worthless idea and lifestyle , became active . All this caused a reduction in the role of family and dissolution of the relationships that bind its members. This was reflected in the upbringing of children and their future, and the tasks of social upbringing shifted to other institutions

### **Fourth: The Predominance of Individualism over Collectivism**

With the dominance of liberal philosophy that focuses on the individual more than anything else , the logic of "myself first" prevailed without taking into account any collective dimension, and this resulted in indifference to the weak social groups of the poor, the needy, and the homeless. So individual success became the most important issue through bringing the greatest amount of individual benefits without reflecting on societies.

This individualism, which builds a solid wall between it and collective thought, is a prominent feature of contemporary thought. In its perspective, the individual is the only one capable of understanding themselves and bringing happiness to them . They should not care about the group, as they live for themselves only, and individualism reaches a more extreme stance when it makes individuals the legislators of their own lives, so assuming the role of Allah. They assess things and concepts as good and bad without adhering to legal or even man-made rules. This individualism promotes narcissism and selfishness, and accumulates the wealth of the world in the hands of several individuals only without any beneficial collective return. It attempts in vain to isolate the individual from social influences on the grounds of freedom and rationality.

Then individualism evolved to remove man from his instinct as it gives the individual, male or female, the ability to define his sexual identity by himself, regardless of the physiological nature of their bodies . Consequently, an alienation between identity and body appeared , and generated something distorted that is difficult to describe except as an anomaly from instinct. Individualism appears clearly in the theses of homosexuality and feminism, which portrayed to the public that society and its norms are enemies and thorns in the path of freedom. Thus, the individual is granted the right to determine what is right or wrong and good or bad so as to be completely individualistic and does not follow any social norms.

### **Fifth: Obstructing the Islamic Da`wa (call)**

The enemies of this great humane religion realized early on, that military domination on Islamic countries is not enough, because it does not guarantee them support for subservience and docility. Rather, what guarantees them achieving this goal is soft change, i.e. changing minds and ideas and reshaping them according to the will of the triumphant and through his civilized model and his scientific and civil achievements . In order to achieve this , they took different paths so that the intellectual invasion and cultural annexation would bear the desired and wanted fruits for them. These paths were varied and included; directing media , misleading media discourse, and the psychological and media warfare waged for political ends against the callers to Allah Almighty. Additionally, satanizing every Islamic Da`wa orientation such that joining preachers has become hard to do , and a Muslim began to fear that he will be classified as a member of this or that group, let alone intimidation from Islam "Islamophobia", terrorism, Christianization and proselytizing, extremism in takfir, wars and political conflicts.

## **The Second Subject - Ways to Reduce These Negative Effects**

To reduce the previously mentioned negative effects, a systematic and clear-cut plan must be put in place for Muslims to follow and implement in their lives in reality. Perhaps these are the most important methods that we see that they can limit these effects:

### **First: Awareness of Challenges and Understanding Reality**

There is no doubt that awareness of the challenges has become an urgent necessity as backwardness and civilizational regression that we suffer from is due to the absence of proper awareness of the challenges imposed and the hopes aspired. Therefore, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazali complained of the nation's lack of awareness, and he said, may God have mercy on him: "A bad conscience and a disordered thought are non-Islamic qualities. Nations belong to Islam today are lacking awareness and walking with crooked steps, some may think of them as living nations, but they are fainted. Islamic life is based on fresh thought, as stupidity is a sin in our religion". In this sense, our lack of awareness as well as our ignorance of our reality is a major reason for our backwardness, as understanding reality is an authentic science on which many sciences and judgments are based. Besides, in its light crucial positions are taken, because it is a science that examines societies and the forces that dominate states and ideas aimed at wavering faith and the legitimate ways available to protect the nation and its progress at the present and future.

Based on this, Islam calls for the necessity of awareness and understanding reality in its events and developments, and fights every attempt to isolate texts from reality or isolate the reality from texts, because Islam is not a foreign or newly brought into being entity on people's lives and aspirations. Rather, Islam is life when it is based on higher values that guide and lead it, and Muslims are people when their faith, thought and morals are straight and founded on all those values and texts, and in the forefront of which is the Qur'an.

Therefore, it can be said that awareness and understanding of reality is the deep understanding of what people's lives revolve around, what directs them and what challenges they face, and what is the way to improve reality and apply judgments to it, and give it a hand little by little to correct it by Allah's law.

Belonging to Islam is not similar to any other affiliation. It is not affiliation to a worldly matter such as race, color, language, clan, or intellectual sect. Rather, it is an affiliation to something that Muslims firmly believe that it is the first criterion in this world, and they will be held accountable for it in the Hereafter. To strengthen this affiliation, it must be cultivated since early childhood, and applied in relations between Muslims for how come that other standards govern relations the parties to which are Muslims? Belonging to Islam needs to rise from this lethargy in order that it is strengthened as a reality in the life of Muslims, so that they be able to carry the concerns of Islam and its fateful issues, and the supporters and defenders of religion to face these intellectual challenges. Moreover through this they become able to know the limits of the faith and its lofty principles, and endeavor to preserve it, not to obliterate it or to distance oneself from religious and moral values, which leads to obliterating the features of identity and dispersing the self." Indeed, when the sense of belonging to Islam wanes, the road is paved to the other currents to tamper with Muslims' minds, weaken their identity, and take away their true belonging to the Islamic faith and values, so their behaviors deviate, and their perceptions of life are spoiled.

### **Third: Strengthening the Arabic Language without Neglecting Other Languages**

Language has a great fundamental value in the life of every nation because it is the tool that carries ideas and conveys concepts, and it is the main element in shaping the identity of any nation. Furthermore, it is one of the most important links of communication between the people of any nation, and represents the knowledge store that builds the nation and protects its entity. In fact, The relationship between a person and his identity is revealed through their language and the degree of their mastery of it. So, Vosler says: "The national language is a spiritual home sheltering those who were deprived of their homes on the ground,". Then Let us preserve our spiritual homeland "Arabic language".

Preserving Arabic is a religious and human duty a task for which the people of the nation should cooperate honestly and sincerely to face the challenge through learning and mastering this language and ensuring its authenticity and distance from slang and foreignness.

Therefore, methodological, scientific, educational and media methods and means should be adopted to consolidate and deepen the roots of Arabic language in the various scientific, cognitive and social fields in order to preserve the identity of the nation in the face of various challenges.

### **Fourth: Increasing the Activity of the Islamic Da'wa**

The call to Allah Almighty is a great mission, and it is the task of Messenger Mohammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, and of his followers after him.

The Almighty says: "Say: This is my way. I invite to God with insight. I am and whoever follows me. Glory be to God, and I am not of the polytheists". [Yusuf: 108.] And He, Glory be to Him, says: "And who is better in

speech than one who calls to God and does righteousness and says that I am of the Muslims". [Fussilat: 33] Therefore, challenges must be faced through the following:

- Activating the Islamic call through renewing the Da`wa discourse, in accordance with the variables of contemporary reality, and consistent with the spirit of Islam and its great purposes.
- Starting with the rule "that the means of Da`wa are discretionary and not mandatory " for preachers to devise what suits them, provided that they do not clash with the legal constants.
- The necessity of coordinating between the various Da`wa bodies, by developing scholarly , systematic, balanced and studied plans, aimed at preparing preachers who are able to face the challenges and obstacles of calling to Allah.
- Supporting moderate trends in Da`wa that are characterized by conscious moderation and understanding of reality.
- Confronting Western media campaigns that aims to distort Islam, and benefiting from the mechanisms of globalization in terms of media and modern and advanced technology in advancing the Islamic Da`wa to assume its humanitarian and civilizational role.

#### **Fifth: Intensifying Communication and Social Solidarity**

Muslims in this time are in dire need to intensify communication among themselves, and to strengthen that out of concern for their unity, and for cooperation in repelling the dangers impending Islam. It is surprising that communication and contact with non-Muslims are called for in the dialogues of religions, when this communication is missing within the Islamic home . This error must be addressed and communication between Muslims must be motivated , east and west and on several levels, including:

1. Communication on the scholarly and intellectual level. Muslim scholars are entitled to be in contact with their peers in everything related to Islamic scholarly and intellectual affairs, and the nation not to be deprived of their knowledge products.

2. Communicating on the political level. Muslim leaders must stay away from any political differences, and address their problems through continuous communication and dialogue, holding fast by the rope of Allah. They have to follow this approach because political disputes are the most weakening factor of the nation, serve enemies, and do not provide any benefit to Islam, but rather it does more harm than good to Muslims.

3. Communicating on the economic level. Muslims must benefit from the bounties that Allah has bestowed upon them. As the Islamic countries are rich in resources, buying and selling and exchanging interests between Muslims strengthen the interdependence between them, make them closer to each other. Moreover, these are moral and material investment at the same time, and their benefits are great.

Forms of social solidarity in Islam vary, as it includes material and moral aspects, and its sections are many. For example, it includes the following sections : livelihood solidarity that obliges society to provide a decent living for its members, political solidarity that pertains to the relationship of the individual with the state , moral solidarity that makes society loving and sympathetic and prompts it to cooperate and show good treatment, and scientific solidarity which ensures society members the right to education where nobody is deprived of or denied to it.

#### **CONCLUSION**

All of the above is nothing but a small effort, as the subject of the study is broad, and the researcher needs to have a thorough investigation of it by following it up and keeping abreast of its developments on a continuous basis .If its details are profoundly studied, it will become obvious that each item of it deserves to be covered by an independent research paper . Yet , the present research provides a broad outline of the subject , and came up with the following results:

- Islamic identity is based on several components, including: faith, language, values and morals, history, and geography.
- Islamic identity is distinguished by the divine characteristic in its source, the religious characteristic in its view of the universe without separation between religion and life, the eschatological characteristic by linking the Muslim to afterlife, the collective characteristic, and moderation.
- Contemporary intellectual challenges are characterized by materialism, utilitarianism , absurdity, futility ,decisiveness,hostility , racial centrality , humanism, and scientism.
- Among the means of spreading contemporary intellectual challenges are : countries and organizations, modern social media platforms, foreign schools and universities, archaeological exploration missions, media and Orientalism.
- Contemporary intellectual challenges have left several negative effects on the Islamic identity, including: absence of the spiritual and faith dimension, weakness of Arabic language, family disintegration, predominance of individualism over collectivism, and obstruction of the activity of the Islamic Da`wa.
- In order to reduce the effects of negative intellectual challenges, awareness of these challenges and the understanding of reality must be raised, affiliation with Islam strengthened, Arabic language strengthened

without neglecting other languages, and the activity of the Islamic Da`wa must be increased along with an intensification of communication and social solidarity.

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