



Contents lists available at ASJP (Algerian Scientific Journal Platform)

Academic Review of social and human studies

journal homepage: www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/PresentationRevue/552



The Low Performance of the Present-Day Muslim World and the Application of Ibn Khaldoun's Theory of Development

الأداء المتردي للعالم الإسلامي في الوقت الحالي وتطبيق نظرية ابن خلدون لتنميته

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Article info:

Abstract

Article history:

Received :17-10-2022

Accepted : 07-06-2023

Key words:

Ibn Khaldoun,

Theory of Development,

Muslim countries.

It has been known that ethic values play a crucial role in the development of countries and the evolvement of their civilizations. In addition to those spiritual values, there are other factors which co-work to assure the continuousness of the existence of that civilization. These latter are all related to society, economy, politics, and history. Through this paper, we intend to deal with Ibn Khaldoun's multidisciplinary and dynamic theory of development. In fact, this theory argues that the development or decline of an economy or society does not depend only upon one factor, but rather on the interaction of different factors such as moral, social, economic, political and historical factors over a long period of time. One of these factors acts as the trigger mechanism and, if the others respond in the same direction, development or decline grows gradually through a chain reaction until it becomes difficult to distinguish the cause from the effect. Then, we are going to try to apply this theory to Muslim countries to explain the reason behind their low performance.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ملخص

إنّ للأخلاق دور عظيم في رقي الأمم وازدهار حضاراتها وإضافة إلى القيم الروحية هناك بعض العوامل التي تسهم في الإبقاء على استمرارية وجود هذه الحضارات التي ترتبط بالمجالات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والسياسية والتاريخية. من خلال هذه الورقة البحثية سنحاول أن نسلط الضوء على نظرية ابن خلدون متعددة المجالات والتي تدعو إلى التطور بصورة مستمرة. وينبني فحوى هذه النظرية على أن تقدم أو سقوط الاقتصاد أو المجتمع لا يعتمد على عامل واحد بل يستند إلى اسهام عوامل مجتمعة ألا وهي العوامل الأخلاقية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية والسياسية والتاريخية عبر مدة طويلة من الزمن. لذلك فإنه يمكن لأي عامل من هذه العوامل أن يعمل كمثير ميكانيكي يتحكم في البقية، فإذا كانت استجابة بقية العوامل في ذات الاتجاه سواء كان تقدما أو تقهقرا أدى ذلك إلى رد فعل تسلسلي إلى درجة تداخل العوامل وعدم القدرة على التفريق بين السبب والنتيجة. ولذلك فإننا سنسلك المنهج الاستقرائي لنرى مدى فاعلية هذه النظرية حتى نتمكن من شرح أسباب تقهقرهم وتراجع أدائهم وإنجازاتهم.

ابن خلدون،
نظرية التقدم،
البلدان الإسلامية.

1. Introduction

Ibn khaldoun constructed a model that could help explain the rise and fall of civilizations or the development and decline of economies, both of which are interdependent phenomena in his model. Ibn Khaldoun was well aware that the reverberation could not be dreamed of without first drawing lessons from history and determining the factors that had led the Muslim civilization to bloom out of unpretentious beginnings and to decline after that. The model that he developed is powerful enough to enable us to answer some of the most crucial questions that Development Economics needs to answer questions about why the Muslim World rose rapidly and continued to rise for several centuries, and why it collapses after that to the extent that it lost its vitality, and did not only become largely colonized but is also unable to respond successfully to the challenges that it is now faced with?

2. Ibn Khaldun's Multidisciplinary and Dynamic Theory of Development

Many scholars have emphasized different indoor and outdoor factors that led to the degeneration of Muslims, especially after the 12th century. Some of the most important factors are moral degeneration, loss of dynamism and drive in Islam particularly after the rise of determination and severity; retrograde in intellectual and scientific activity; internal rebels and schism in addition to external infestations and war which desolated and weakened the country, created financial imbalances and insecurity and instability of life and property, and reduced exploitations and development; retrograde in agriculture, crafts and trade; devastation and loss of mines and precious metals; and natural disasters and catastrophes like pest and the languishing of the economy. Muslims were unable to analyze freely all these factors, and to develop and implement a proper strategy for effectively offsetting their counteractive effects at least in the long run. The main concern of Ibn Khaldun's theory is to knit all these factors together, as an interrelated chain of events, into a philosophy of development to show how most

of them were activated in order to control the primary cause.

2.1. Multidisciplinary and Dynamic

Ibn Khaldoun mentioned the relation between these factors in the *Muqaddimah* which literally means "introduction" and accentuated the first volume of a seven-volume history, called *Kitab al-Ibar* or the "Book of Lessons [of History]". In this book Ibn Khaldoun attempted to use a cause and effect relationship in order to explain the different events of history and to derive the principles that lie behind the rise and fall of a state (*dawlah*) or civilization (*umran*). Despite the fact that Ibn Khaldoun benefited in this design from the contributions made by his predecessors and contemporaries in the Muslim world, the *Muqaddimah* is very rich in a great deal of his own ingenious and farsighted analysis. His stark model is concentrated to an intrinsic extent, even though not fully, in the following advice prolonged by him to the sovereign:

- The strength of the sovereign (*al-mulk*) does not materialize except through the implementation of the *Shariah*.

- The *Shariah* cannot be implemented except by the sovereign (*al-mulk*).

- The sovereign cannot gain strength except through the people (*al-rijal*).

- The people cannot be sustained except by wealth (*al-mal*).

- Wealth cannot be acquired except through development (*al-imarah*).

- Development cannot be attained except through justice (*al-adl*).

- Justice is the criterion (*al-mizan*) by which God will evaluate mankind.

- The sovereign is charged with the responsibility of actualizing justice (*Muqaddimah* (M): 39; Rosenthal's translation (R): vol. 1, 80).

The whole *Muqaddimah* is an elaboration of this advice which consists of, in Ibn Khaldun's own words: "eight wise principles (*kalimat hikamiyyah*)

of political wisdom, each one dovetailed with the other for mutual strength, in such a circular manner that the beginning or the end is indistinguishable” (M: 403; R: I. 82).

The strength of Ibn Khaldoun’s analysis is based upon its multidisciplinary and dynamic character which links all important socio-economic and political variables, including the sovereign or political authority, beliefs and rules of behaviour or the *Shariah*, people, wealth or stock of resources, development and justice, in a circular and interrelated manner, each influencing the others and in turn being influenced by the others. Since the operation of this cycle takes place in his model through a chain reaction over a long period of three generations or almost 120 years, a dimension of dynamism gets introduced into the whole analysis and helps explain how political moral, institutional, social, economic, demographic and economic factors interact with each other over time to lead to the development and decline, or the rise and fall, of an economy or civilization. In a long-term analysis of this kind, here none of the variables is assumed to remain constant. One of the variables acts as the trigger mechanism. If the other sectors react in the same direction the distinction between the cause and the effect will be difficult if not impossible through time and the decay spreads to other sectors. If the other sectors do not react in the same direction, then the decay in one sector may not spread to the others and either the decaying sector may be reformed over time or the decline of the civilization may be much slower.

2.2. The Role of the Human Being

The crucial element of Ibn Khaldoun’s analysis is the human being (Rosenthal, 1967, p. 19) as the ascension and collapse of civilizations is closely related to the wealth or misadventure of the people. This is, in turn, dependent not just on economic variables but also on the closely interrelated role of moral, institutional, psychological, political, social and demographic factors through a process of circular causation extending over a long period

of history (M: 39 and 287; R: I. 80 and II. 105).

This emphasis on the human being is in keeping with the Qur’anic teaching which states that: “God does not change the condition of a people until they change their own inner-selves” (13:11) and that “Corruption has appeared everywhere because of what people have done” (30:41, italics added). These two verses and others emphasize the role of human beings themselves in their rise and fall. This was the mission of all the messengers of God (especially Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad) because they came to this world to reform human beings and the institutions that affect their behaviour.

2.3. The Role of Development and Justice

Development and justice become the most crucial links in the chain of causation if human beings are the centre of the analysis. Development is essential because unless there is a tangible improvement in the well-being of the people, they will not be motivated to do their best (M: 287; R: II. 109).

Development in Ibn Khaldoun’s model does not refer to merely economic growth (M: 39 and 347-49; R: I. 39 and II. 243-49). It embraces all-round human development such that each variable enriches the others and is in turn enriched by the others. Economic development needs moral, social, political and demographic support. If this support is absent, then economic development may not get triggered, and if it does, it may not be sustainable. Yet development is not possible without justice. Ibn Khaldoun clearly states that:

“Do not think that injustice consists in only taking money or property from its owner without compensation or cause, even though this is what is commonly understood. Injustice is more comprehensive than this. Anyone who confiscates the property of someone or forces him to work for him, or presses an unjustified claim against him, or imposes on him a duty not required by the *Shariah*, has committed injustice. Collection of unjustified taxes is also injustice; transgression on another’s property or taking it away by force or theft constitutes injustice; denying other people

their rights is also injustice” (M: 288; R: II. 106-7). “One of the greatest injustices and the most destructive of development is the unjustified imposition of tasks on people and subjecting them to forced labour” (M: 289; R: II. 108-9). Justice is considered so important and crucial by Ibn Khaldoun for development as he has a whole section entitled “*injustice triggers the destruction of civilization*” (M: 286-90; R: II. 103-111). Justice in its comprehensive sense cannot be fully realized without *asabiyyah*, which has been differently translated as “social solidarity”, “group feeling” or “social cohesion”. It “provides protection, makes possible mutual defence as well as the settlement of claims and performance of all agreed activities” (M: 139; R: I. 284). Ibn Khaldoun has used the word, “*asabiyyah*” for what is, to a great extent, currently referred to as “social capital” or “social infrastructure” (Dasgupta and Serageldin, 2000). However, some scholars have raised objections against the use of the word “capital” for something that is abstract and cannot be possessed like physical capital by individuals (Arrow, 2000; Solow, 2000; Bowles and Gintis, 2002). Therefore, Ibn Khaldoun’s use of the expression *asabiyyah* or “social solidarity” seems to be a better alternative.

2.4. The Role of Institutions Shariah and the State

Justice necessitates certain rules of behavior called institutions in Institutional Economics and moral values in religious worldviews. They are the standards by which people interact with, and fulfill their obligations towards, each other (M: 157-58; R: I. 319-21).

On the other hand, the *Shariah* cannot play a meaningful role unless it is permeated fairly and reasonably (M: 39 and 43; R: I. 80 and 91-92). The *Shariah* can only give rules of behaviour, it cannot itself enforce them. It is the responsibility of the political authority ‘the ruler’ to ensure acquiescence through incentives and hindrances (M: 127-28; R: I. 262-63). The Prophet clearly recognized this by saying: “God restrains through the sultan (sovereign) what he cannot restrain through the Qur’an” (al-Bayhaqi, 1990, from Anas ibn Malik, vol. 5, p. 267,

no. 6612). For Ibn Khaldoun, political authority has the same relationship to a civilization as form has to matter (M: 371 and 376; R: II. 291 and 300). “It is not possible to conceive of political authority without civilization and of civilization without political authority” (M: 376; R: II. 300). Yet, Ibn Khaldoun clearly emphasizes that “good rulership is equivalent to gentleness” (M: 188; R: I. 383). “If the ruler is tyrannical and harsh in punishments . . . the people become fearful and depressed and seek to protect themselves by means of lies, tricks and dishonesty. This becomes their character trait. Their perceptions and character become corrupted . . . They may conspire to kill him” (M: 188-2; R: I. 383). While Ibn Khaldoun emphasizes the role of the state in development, he does not, in step with other classical Muslim scholars, support a totalitarian role for the state. He stands for what has now become characterized as “good governance”.

Ibn Khaldoun considers it undesirable for the state to get directly involved in economic activity (M: 281; R: II. 93). Doing so will not only hurt the people by reducing their opportunities and profits (now termed as crowding out of the private sector) but also reduce the state’s tax revenue (M: 281-83; R: II. 93-96). Thus, the state is visualized by Ibn Khaldoun as a state which ensures the prevalence of the *Shariah* and serves as an instrument for accelerating human development and well-being. The slant towards nationalization came in the thinking of some Muslim writers under the influence of socialism, and was exploited by ambitious generals and politicians in several Muslim countries to serve their own vested interest. Socialism, however, brought nothing but misery to nearly all those Muslim countries where it was imposed through military coups (Desfosses and Levesque, 1975).

2.5. The Role of Wealth

The role of wealth is very important because it is deeply real and deeply related to the existence of justice and development through providing the needed resources. Its role will be effective by the role of the government and the well being of the people. Wealth does not depend on the stars

(M: 366; R: II. 282), or the existence of gold and silver mines (Desfosses and Levesque, 1975). It depends namely upon economic activities (M: 360 and 366; R: II. 271 and 282), the market (M: 403; R: II. 351), and facilities supplied by the state (M: 305; R: II. 143-4) and tools (M: 359 and 360; R: II. 270-72), which in turn depend on the “surplus left after satisfying the needs of the people” (M: 360; R: II. 272). When the activity is great, the income will increase. Higher income will contribute to larger savings and greater investment in tools (M: 360; R: II. 271-2) which will in turn contribute to greater development and wealth (M: 360; R: II. 271-2). Ibn Khaldoun focused on the role of investment by saying: “And know that wealth does not grow when hoarded and amassed in safes. It rather grows and expands when it is spent for the well-being of the people, for giving them their rights, and for removing their hardships” (M: 306; R: II. 146). This makes “the people better off, strengthens the state, makes the times prosperous, and enhances the prestige [of the state]” (M: 306; R: II. 146).

Wealth also depends on division of labour and specialization, the greater the specialization the higher will be the growth of wealth. “Individual human beings cannot by themselves satisfy all their needs. They must cooperate for this purpose in their civilization. The needs that can be satisfied by the cooperation of a group exceed many times what they can produce individually.

The decrease in income leads to a decline in tax revenues which are no longer sufficient to cover state spending. The state tends to impose more and more taxes and also tries to gain excessive control over all sources of power and wealth. The incentive to work and earn is adversely affected among the farmers and the merchants, who provide most of the tax receipts. (M: 168 and 279-82; R: I. 339-42 and II. 89-92).

2.6. The Role of the Trigger Mechanism

When a normal cause and effect relationship is not necessarily reversible, the circular and interdependent causation in human societies emphasized by Ibn Khaldoun generally tends to be so. This implies that

the trigger mechanism for the decline of a society may not necessarily be the same in all societies. In Muslim societies, with which Ibn Khaldoun was concerned, the trigger mechanism was the failure of the political authority which, unfortunately, is present in most Muslim countries until the present time, and has led to the misuse of public resources and their non-availability for the realization of justice, development and general well-being.

Ibn Khaldoun focused on the interrelated relationship of social, moral, economic, political, historical and demographic factors which are the responsible for the rise and fall of societies. However, his concept of trigger mechanism has not become fully utilized.

North claimed that “How can one prescribe policies when one doesn’t understand how economies develop?” He, therefore, considers Neoclassical Economics to be “an inappropriate tool to analyze and prescribe policies that will induce development” (North, 1994: 359). Since Ibn Khaldoun formulated a brilliant model for explaining the rise and fall of a society, Toynbee was right in declaring that in terms of “both breadth and profundity of vision as well sheer Ibn Khaldoun took some of these into account but not all. Moreover, the role of women is much greater now than in Ibn Khaldoun’s times and it may not be possible to exploit their potential unless families, society and the government all join hands.

I. The Application of Ibn Khaldoun’s Theory to Muslim Countries

3.1. The contribution of Islam

If we are to apply Ibn Khaldoun’s model to the present-day Muslim world, the main thing we should pay attention to is the way the variables mentioned previously have triggered the Muslim decline and continues to be responsible for the inferior performance of most of these countries. As far as Islam (*Shariah*) is concerned, it can never be the trigger mechanism. A number of Western scholars, including Toynbee (1935), Hitti (1958), Hodgson (1977), Baeck (1994) and Lewis (1995) have argued that Islam played a positive role in the development of Muslim societies in the past. It is only the factor of Islam which can help answer

the question of why a Bedouin society, which was characterized by internecine feuds, paucity of resources, and a harsh climate, and which had hardly any of the requisites for growth, was able to develop so rapidly against all odds and stand firmly against the intellectually and materially far superior Byzantine and Sassanian empires. It started blooming in the 7th century while, according to North and Thomas (1973: 28), Western Europe “was mainly a vast wilderness” even in the 10th century. If it was not for Islam, there would not have been, in the words of Toynbee, that “extraordinary deployment of latent spiritual forces by which Islam transformed itself, and thereby transfigured its mission, in the course of six centuries” (1957, vol. 2, p. 30). Schatzmiller (1994: 405) acknowledges this by stating that “all the factors which enabled Europe to succeed were available to Islam much earlier”. As a result of this, there was all-round economic development embracing agriculture, crafts and trade. This led to a substantial rise in the incomes of all people as well as the state. There was great public support for education and research. This led to not only improvements in human skills and technological and intellectual development but also provided a favourable climate for the so called a “momentous intellectual awakening” by Hitti in which scholars of all fields of learning and faiths participated without discrimination (Hitti, 1958, p. 306; Saunders, 1966, p. 24; Lewis, 1960, p. 20). This enabled the Muslim civilization, to achieve and maintain supremacy in nearly all fields of science and technology for almost four centuries from the middle of the 8th to the middle of the 12th century. Even after the loss of the top place, substantial contributions continued to be made for at least two more centuries (Sarton, 1927, particularly vol. 1 and Book 1 of vol. 2).

3.2. Juridical Entity and Limited Liability

Kuran is certainly right in asserting that a legal entity with limited liability of shareholders is indispensable for large-scale investment. However, the seeds of both these concepts existed in the classical discussions of Islamic jurisprudence. The closest approximation to the corporate legal entity was the *bayt al-mal* (public treasury), mosque property, and *waqfs* (Al-Khafif,

1962, pp. 22–27; Udovitch, 1970, p. 99; Abdullah, n.d., pp. 235–239). Even the concept of limited liability existed in the *mudarabah* form of business organization (Chapra, 1985, pp. 255–256; Usmani, 1998, pp. 221–228), and has been extended without any difficulty to the corporation in modern times (Abdullah, n.d.: 239). It is unrealistic to expect that everything necessary for development would be specified in the Qur’an or the *Sunnah* (the Prophetic traditions). One of the most important and well-known principles of Islamic jurisprudence is that whatever is not specifically prohibited is allowed. Since very few things have been specifically prohibited, there is a great potential for the evolution of institutions needed for promoting development. This did take place in Muslim societies, as Kuran (2004: 72) has himself acknowledged by stating that: “the distinguishing economic features of classical Islamic civilization evolved over the next three centuries”.

4. The Current Position

4.1. Absence of Democracy

Six hundred years have passed since Ibn Khaldoun wrote. The overall Muslim decline has continued persistently relative to major industrial countries even though it has not been a straight line phenomenon and some Muslim countries have done better than others. The Muslim world, which is much larger and diversified now than what it was in Ibn Khaldoun’s times, has not been able until now to establish a procedure for the orderly transfer of the reins of power to the most upright and competent in the eyes of the people as desired by the Qur’an (49:13), the efficient and equitable use of public resources in accordance with the *Shariah*, and the free and fearless criticism of government policies. Only 13, or a little less than 23%, of the 57 member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) had democracy in 2002, 12 while 44, or 77%, did not. Of these 44 countries, 31 have pseudo-democracy, 5 have absolute monarchy, 3 have dictatorship and 5 are in transition (based on data given in “The Index of www.Electionworld.org”).

However, even the Muslim countries that do have democracy, have it only in a formal sense. (Besley and Burgess, 2003: 17).

4.2. Low Economic Performance

The absence of democracy has led to a number of evils such as “Freedom of the Press 2004”, (www.freedomhouse.org). The inability to criticize the government in the news media or other forums like the parliament (*shura*) contributes to poor governance, lack of transparency and unhealthy policies. It also promotes corruption and misuse of public resources for the private benefit of the rich and the powerful. Empirical studies have led to a consensus in economic literature that corruption and poor governance have substantial adverse effects on development (Kaufmann et al., 1999; Knack and Keefer, 1995; Mauro, 1995, 2004). The “Corruption Perceptions Index” for the year 2002 prepared by the Berlin-based Transparency International includes 133 countries and ranges from 10 (least corrupt) to zero (most corrupt). Only five Muslim countries are above this borderline with scores ranging from 5.2 to 6.3. Twenty-seven countries fall below this borderline. No data are available for the rest. The likelihood, however, is that most of these other countries for which no data are available may also lie below the borderline.

Education, which received high priority in the early history of Islam and which was one of the causes of its rise, has not received the emphasis it needs in government budgets. Accordingly, the average adult illiteracy rate in these countries was 32% in 2002 (Islamic Development Bank, 2005, p. 13). This means that around 426 million people are illiterate and unable to contribute their full potential to development. All these countries together have only 600 universities whereas the US alone has 1975, or more than three times as many, when its population is less than one-fourth (www.universitiesworldwide). Democracy, education and development reinforced each other in the Western world. Education promoted development and development led to a rise in the demand for education, which it was possible to satisfy because of state support for it as a result of the rise in its revenue. Education and development together helped reinforce democracy.

5. The Need for Reform

The question is: where to start? While all socio-economic and political factors need to be given attention, maximum stress needs to be given to the reform of human beings, who are the main locomotive behind the rise or fall of any civilization and whom Ibn Khaldoun made the centre of his analysis. This is in keeping with the teachings of Islam as well as most major religions. They can help promote the development of their society only if their upbringing, character, ability and mental outlook are right. It is, therefore, necessary to transform the individual into a better human being. Maximum attention needs to be given to his education and socio-economic uplift. Merely a rise in literacy and income may not be sufficient. It is also necessary to raise the individuals’ moral caliber, which neoclassical economics generally tends to ignore, but which is absolutely indispensable, as Lawson (1995: 35) has rightly acknowledged: “no political or economic order can long survive except on a moral base”. Raising the moral caliber will help create the qualities of honesty, integrity and conscientiousness which are necessary for promoting development. It may, however, be difficult to raise the moral caliber unless poverty is also addressed simultaneously and justice, dignity, equality and self-respect are ensured for every individual in society. These are all interrelated and it may be difficult to bring about a sustained improvement in one without an improvement in the others.

5.1. Need for Political Reform

Reform and socio-economic uplift of human beings would, however, be relatively less difficult if the political system is also supportive. The political illegitimacy now prevailing in the Muslim world is a great stumbling block. Political reform, along with freedom of expression, honest judiciary and accountability of the power elite is, therefore, one of the dire needs of most Muslim countries. It would help reduce, with some time lag, corruption and mismanagement, and ensure the efficient use of public resources for education, health and rural as well as urban development, leading thereby to socio-economic uplift. It would also help in the introduction

of land reforms, thereby not only enabling the peasant to get a just share of his existing output but also providing him with the resources that he needs to acquire training along with better seeds, tools and fertilizers to raise his future output. The Muslim world would then be able to generate the kind of agricultural surplus needed for investment in technological, industrial and infrastructure development—the surplus that the Muslim world was able to generate in the earlier centuries and which Japan, South Korea and Taiwan were able to generate in recent history. The land reforms introduced in these countries by the Occupation Authorities helped destroy the power base of the feudal lords (Chapra, 1993: 175–77).

The crucial question, however, is how to bring about political reform in countries where illegitimacy is well-entrenched, and where the governments use all forms of repression to curb any struggle for political reform. Armed struggle has, nevertheless, to be ruled out. Armed struggle has, rarely succeeded in Muslim countries in the past, and is even less likely to succeed now, when the governments have more sophisticated means of suppressing it and of torturing and impoverishing those involved. Any effort to overthrow prevailing governments by resort to force and violence may lead to enormous losses in terms of life and property. It may also destabilize the societies, slow down development and reform, and accentuate the existing problems. The suffering of the poor and the underprivileged may be unbearably high.

5.2. The Success of Peaceful Struggle

The best strategy for political reform is peaceful and non-violent struggle, even though this may appear to be time-consuming. This brings to mind a number of questions. One of these is whether there is any hope of success through peaceful struggle. There are a number of factors that inspire one's confidence in the future. The international environment is now unfriendly towards illegitimate governments and these have been gradually falling. The international environment is also against corruption and money laundering, making it difficult to hide ill-gained wealth. Moreover, domestic pressures for the introduction of democracy are also gaining momentum in practically all Muslim

countries. The spread of education and the gradual improvement in the economic condition of the poor will help weaken the existing power structures which thrive on the illiteracy and poverty of the masses. Establishment of democratic governments, even if they are initially dominated by feudal lords, may tend to weaken the power structures over time because of the voting power of the electorate. The pressures on elected governments to fulfil their promises, may also help reduce corruption and military spending, divert more resources to education, health and development, and also make possible the introduction of land reforms. The resulting improvement in the socio-economic condition of the rural poor, which is already taking place to some extent as a result of the remittances of expatriate labour, will give rise to a broader and healthier middle class willing and able to fight for its rights democratically.

5.3. The Role of the Help of Western World

The West can play a crucial role in the restoration of democracy in Muslim countries. It cannot, however, play this role by the use of force. Force has never worked and will never work. The use of force can only create hatred for the West and lead to a clash of civilizations which will be bad for all, but in particular for the Muslim world because it will slowdown not only its development but also the pace of badly needed socio-economic and political reforms. The best strategy for the West would be to help in the field of education and socio-economic uplift which it is capable of doing. It can also help in monitoring elections and promoting legal and institutional reform.

5.4. The Role of Islam in Playing an Important Role

Ramsey Clark, US Attorney General in the Lyndon Johnson Administration, stated that Islam “is probably the most compelling spiritual and moral force on earth today” (Clark, 1997). This implies that the revival of Islam that is now taking place in the Muslim world can be of any help in reforming and developing Muslim societies. Can it help them realize justice and socio-economic and political reform as it did in the classical period? The general consensus in the Muslim world seems to be in

favour of a positive answer. This may perhaps be because Islam is the only living reality in the Muslim world that can unite people in spite of their great diversity, and motivate them to act righteously in spite of centuries of degeneration (Etzioni, 2004). It has its own programme for comprehensive moral, social, economic and political reform which is more suitable for these countries than any programme that may be imported from abroad. Its strong stress on socioeconomic justice, accountability of the political authority, rule of law, moral values and character building, combined with its strategy of using education and dialogue for bringing about change, should prove to be a great blessing for the Muslim world. It encourages simple living, which would help reduce conspicuous consumption and thereby weaken one of the major causes of corruption and low saving and investment. It places a strong stress on family and social solidarity, which are essential for even the survival of a society, leave alone its development. Since Islamic revival has become a deeply rooted phenomenon in the Muslim world, any effort to undo Islam and transplant secularism in its place would necessitate the use of force (Richards, 2003; Etzioni, 2004).

This would demand a substantial change in the curricula of all educational institutions, including the *madrasahs*. Hofmann (1966: 86) has rightly emphasized: "I know of nothing better to propose than to urge the Muslim world to become "fundamentalist" in the original sense of the word – to go back to the real foundations of our Islamic creed, and to analyze the factors which were instrumental for the Madina, Andalus and Abbasid experiments".

5.5. Prospects for the future

Prospects for the future seem to be bright because the reversal of the tide desired by Ibn Khaldoun 600 years ago seems to be taking place now after the independence of most Muslim countries from foreign domination in the middle of the 20th century. Political illegitimacy, nevertheless, continues but is losing ground. Even the major industrial countries, with whose moral and material support it has thrived, seem to have now realized that the spread of democracy

and the socio-economic uplift of the masses is also in their own long-run interest. The writing on the horizon clearly indicates a movement in the direction of democracy, along with land reforms, a free press, a strong and independent judiciary, and the growth of effective and impartial institutions for detecting and punishing corruption and inefficiency. This will ultimately promote the use of public resources for development and well-being of the people through the elimination of illiteracy, provision of better quality education, improvement of health facilities, construction of infrastructure beyond the showpiece highways and buildings, and the development of these countries. Female education is also spreading. This will enable women to not only assert for their rights more successfully but also to ensure proper upbringing of their children and to contribute richly to the development of their societies. Democracy will force political as well as religious parties to moderate their views to make themselves acceptable to broader sectors of the population, thus increasing tolerance and reducing extremist views. Moreover, the ongoing revival of Islam may make it possible to have material advance accompanied by moral uplift, justice and social harmony, which are important for providing the needed social and ethical capital for sustained development. In other words, a number of indicators point towards the reversal of Ibn Khaldoun's cycle of circular causation from the negative to the positive direction.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

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How to cite this article according to the APA method

Ouided Sekhri (2023), The Low Performance of the Present-Day Muslim World and the Application of Ibn Khaldoun's Theory of Development, *academic review of social and human studies*, vol 15, number 02, Hassiba Ben Bouali University of Chlef, Algeria, pages: 376-385.