

RETHINKING THE THOUGHT OF JAMALUDDIN AL-AFGHANI: INTELLECTUAL LEGACY FOR ISLAMIC REFORM IN THE MODERN MUSLIM WORLD

Nagib Romadhony

UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten
242631110.nagibromadhony@uinbanten.ac.id

Masbuang

UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten
242631110.masbuang@uinbanten.ac.id

Sholahuddin Al Ayubi

UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten
Sholahuddin.alayubbi@uinbanten.ac.id

Andi Rosa

UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten
Andi.rosa@uinbanten.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the relevance of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's rationalist and Pan-Islamist thought in addressing the challenges of Islamic reform in the modern Muslim world. The background of the research is rooted in the need for Muslims to overcome intellectual stagnation, colonial subjugation, and geopolitical fragmentation through a rational and inclusive paradigm. This research employs a qualitative approach using library research methods, with descriptive-interpretative analysis of al-Afghani's works and related secondary literature. The findings reveal that al-Afghani placed rationality at the core of theological and socio-political reform, rejecting blind imitation (taqlid) and fatalism, while emphasizing ijtihad and education. His Pan-Islamist ideas served as a strategic foundation for the global revival of the Muslim ummah, transcending ethnic and national boundaries. His thought inspired later reformers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida in shaping a modern, critical, and progressive Islam. Al-Afghani's intellectual legacy remains highly relevant in confronting contemporary issues such as extremism, authoritarianism, and identity crises within the Muslim world.

Keywords: Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Islamic rationalism, Pan-Islamism, Islamic reform, modern Muslim world.

Introduction

The relevance of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's thought in the context of Islamic reform in the modern Muslim world is a highly significant topic for scholarly discussion. Islamic reform requires a strong, inclusive, and contextual intellectual foundation in the era of globalization. Al-Afghani's ideas not only inspired the intellectual awakening of Muslims but also challenged stagnation and offered political, social, and religious reform concepts. Moreover, his thought

serves as a bridge between classical Islamic traditions and contemporary realities, thereby enriching modern Islamic discourse and fostering a critical response to the challenges of colonialism, modernization, and secularization.(Ulya, 2019)

Ibrahim Nasbi's research explores the concept of Pan-Islamism in al-Afghani's thought and his role in resisting colonialism. Nasbi also highlights the rational theological dimension of al-Afghani's ideas in responding to challenges to Islamic creed in the modern age.(Nasbi, 2019) In 2020, a study by Arbi explored al-Afghani's efforts to build Muslim solidarity and strengthen the political identity of modern Islam.(Arbi Mulya Sirait, 2020) Meanwhile, Dimas's research examines the influence of al-Afghani's thought on the Islamic modernist movement in Indonesia, particularly in the aspects of revitalizing solidarity and communal identity.(Mahardika, 2023)

Furthermore, Melani's research delves into the relationship between theological reform and the Pan-Islamism promoted by al-Afghani, highlighting his resistance to fatalism and his efforts to modernize religious thought.(Sari & Khairanisa, 2024) Khairiyanto examines the concept of Islamic modernization through al-Afghani's initiatives for the revival of the Muslim ummah.(Khairiyanto, 2020) Finally, Taufik emphasizes the contribution of al-Afghani's thought on Islamic education and its relevance in addressing the challenges of sustainable development and social justice.(Taufik Marwina Hakim, 2024)

Although many studies have examined al-Afghani's political and educational thought, there remain several aspects that have not been explored comprehensively:

- a) The lack of studies highlighting the relevance of al-Afghani's theological thought as a solution to contemporary issues such as sustainable development. The scarcity of research on the concrete application of Pan-Islamic values within the context of the modern nation-state.
- b) There has been no in-depth discussion on the relationship between al-Afghani's theological reform and the strengthening of millennial Muslim identity.
- c) The role of al-Afghani in the transition of Muslim societies from fatalism to rationality has not been sufficiently explored.
- d) The integration of al-Afghani's thought into the development of a knowledge-based society remains a rarely discussed topic.
- e) Critical studies on the influence of al-Afghani's ideas on the formulation of modern Islamic policy strategies are still very limited.(Kemper, 2024)

As a response to the aforementioned research gaps, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the relevance of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's rational theology in addressing the challenges of sustainable development and the transformation of contemporary Muslim identity. The research seeks to identify, reflect upon, and evaluate al-Afghani's intellectual contributions by employing Bloom's taxonomy through activities of analyzing, critiquing, and

formulating a new operational synthesis for the context of contemporary Muslim societies.(Sari & Khairanisa, 2024)

This study is grounded in the argument that al-Afghani's rational theology and Pan-Islamism hold significant potential as paradigms for solving ummatic problems, going beyond classical narratives of politics and education. It aims to qualitatively demonstrate how al-Afghani's intellectual legacy can contribute meaningfully to the strengthening of identity, revitalization of solidarity, and construction of a progressive Islamic scientific framework in the global era. Accordingly, the study's primary contribution is expected to be the development of Islamic knowledge grounded in rationality and responsiveness to the challenges of modern society.(Chandra, 2017)

Method

1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, as it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's thought and its relevance in the context of modern Islamic reform. This approach is chosen to comprehensively and reflectively interpret the narratives, historical context, and intellectual meaning embedded in al-Afghani's works.

2. Type of Research

This research is a library study (library research). This method is selected due to the need to explore both primary and secondary literature related to al-Afghani's thought, including books, journal articles, biographical writings, and historical documents. The operational steps involve identifying, collecting, and organizing literature sources from physical libraries and online databases.

3. Sources and Data Collection Process

The primary data sources consist of al-Afghani's original writings and analytical works by contemporary scholars and researchers. Data collection is carried out through desk review, involving the critical examination of relevant digital literature, academic journals, books, and online archives. This process ensures the validity and comprehensiveness of the references used.

4. Data Analysis Technique

Data is analyzed using a descriptive-interpretative qualitative approach. The process includes identifying key themes, categorizing ideas, interpreting texts, and synthesizing findings to gain a deep understanding of al-Afghani's intellectual legacy. All data is critically examined to generate logical and contextual arguments aligned with the research objectives.

Findings and Discussion

A. Characteristics of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's Thought

Jamaluddin al-Afghani's thought prominently emphasizes rationalism as the key to Islamic reform in confronting decline and Western domination. He insisted that Muslims must purify their intellect from superstitions, myths, and innovations (*bid'ah*) that hinder intellectual and social progress. Al-Afghani argued that Islam, in its essence, is not in conflict with reason and science; rather, religion should be understood rationally and scientifically in order to remain relevant in the context of modern developments. (Thariq Azhar, 2022)

Al-Afghani also rejected blind imitation (*taqlid*) and advocated for the reopening of the gates of *ijtihad*. In his view, Muslims must be capable of using critical reasoning to interpret religious teachings in accordance with contemporary contexts, without losing the core values of Islam. This rational approach is essential for Islam to serve as both a spiritual and intellectual force in the struggle against colonialism and Western dominance. (Arbi Mulya Sirait, 2020)

In addition, al-Afghani's thought integrates modernity and tradition, wherein the theological aspects of Islam must be purified from irrational dogmas. He observed that the progress of Western civilization was rooted in the development of science and technology; thus, Muslims must also advance in science and technology, grounded in Islamic ethical and moral principles guided by rationality. Through this approach, al-Afghani established himself as both a moderate reformer and a fundamentalist, striving to revive Islamic intellectual and political spirit in a revolutionary manner yet based on critical and scientific reasoning. (Putra et al., 2022)

In short, rationalism in Islam, according to al-Afghani, is the foundation for the revival of the ummah through a reform of thought that prioritizes logic, scientific knowledge, and theological renewal. This enables Islam to become a resilient internal force in confronting the challenges of modernity and Western colonialism. (Nasbi, 2019)

Al-Afghani's thought also strongly emphasized anti-colonialism as the foundation of his political and intellectual struggle. He regarded Western colonialism as a continuation of the Crusades that must be opposed by all Muslims, regardless of time or place. For al-Afghani, colonization was a form of foreign enslavement that oppressed and degraded the dignity of the Muslim ummah, making resistance to it both a moral obligation and a strategic necessity. (Sukmanila, 2019)

Furthermore, al-Afghani promoted the concept of Pan-Islamism as a strategic response to unite Muslims ideologically and spiritually, though not necessarily through formal political unification. For him, Pan-Islamism meant a global solidarity of Muslims who share a common worldview and a unified goal to liberate themselves from colonial domination and to revive the glory of Islam. This concept asserts that the unity of the

Muslim ummah can be achieved by returning to the pure teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, and by strengthening ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood) as the foundation for revival.(Zahra & Fatimah, 2023)

Al-Afghani also emphasized that the struggle for liberation was not solely about resisting foreign powers, but also involved internal reform within the Muslim community. He criticized the misuse of religion, authoritarianism among rulers, and intellectual decline as major factors contributing to the backwardness of the ummah. Therefore, he encouraged Muslims to undergo a revolution of thought through *ijtihad*, rationality, and the renewal of knowledge in order to compete with Western powers.(Amiruddin et al., 2024)

His concept of Pan-Islamism served as a foundation for mobilizing solidarity among Muslims across the world, rejecting divisions that weakened the strength of the ummah. Thus, this movement was not only political in resisting colonialism, but also functioned as a comprehensive effort toward social and religious reform. Al-Afghani's thought went on to inspire anti-colonial and independence movements in various Muslim countries during the 19th and early 20th centuries.(Pramono & Fuad, 2024)

Jamaluddin al-Afghani firmly criticized *taqlid*, or the blind adherence to scholars' opinions and traditions, which he saw as one of the primary causes of Islamic decline. He believed that intellectual stagnation and sectarian fanaticism had shackled the ummah, halting the spirit of *ijtihad* and making it difficult for Muslims to adapt to the changing times and confront modern challenges. This attitude of *taqlid* resulted in intellectual stagnation and closed the door to rational and contextual renewal of Islamic thought.(Thariq Azhar, 2022)

Al-Afghani rejected fatalism and the uncertain mindset that relies excessively on destiny or divine decree in an absolute sense (*jabariyyah*), which leads the ummah to passively surrender without effort. He emphasized that belief in fate must be accompanied by rational effort and action, as part of the law of cause and effect. This view reflects his attempt to reopen the gates of *ijtihad* to foster creativity and competitiveness among Muslims in the modern world.(Junaidin, 2020)

In al-Afghani's thought, the stagnation of religious scholars who relied solely on texts without considering context and scientific advancement became a major obstacle to progress. Therefore, he called for a return to the original sources of the Qur'an and Hadith with a rational and critical approach, making Islamic teachings a foundation for progressive social and political reform. His perspective also included a call to purify Islamic teachings from superstition, *bid'ah*, and dogmas that constrain intellectual freedom.(Usman & Muhammad, 2023)

In conclusion, al-Afghani's critique of *taqlid* and the stagnation of the *ulama* represents an intellectual resistance to traditional conservatism that restricts reform. He believed

that the liberation of the Muslim ummah from backwardness could only be achieved through the revitalization of the spirit of *ijtihad*, free from fanaticism and grounded in rationality and scientific approaches. Therefore, al-Afghani's contribution is of great significance in pioneering a modern Islamic reform movement that is both adaptive and progressive.(Khairiyanto, 2020)

B. Al-Afghani's Intellectual Legacy in Modern Islamic History

Jamaluddin al-Afghani's thought had a profound and foundational influence on subsequent generations, particularly reformist figures such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. Al-Afghani was not only a teacher but also an intellectual companion to Muhammad Abduh, who later became a pioneer of modern Islamic thought reform in Egypt and across the broader Muslim world.(Septiana & Rofiah, 2024)

Al-Afghani emphasized the importance of rationality, anti-colonial spirit, and Pan-Islamism principles that were continued and developed by Abduh. For instance, Muhammad Abduh adopted his mentor's critical and rational method of thinking, advocating for the purification of Islamic teachings and the integration of religion with modern science. Abduh also carried forward the reformist spirit through educational and *da'wah* activities that promoted social and theological renewal, rooting the ideas of rationality and modernity within the Islamic context.(Miswanto et al., 2023)

Meanwhile, Rashid Rida, as Abduh's student and successor in the reformist movement, expanded the ideas of al-Afghani and Abduh by focusing on the socio-political and educational aspects of the Muslim ummah. Rida actively strengthened the Islamic reform movement, utilizing mass media to disseminate ideas of Pan-Islamism and social reform grounded in the values taught by al-Afghani.(Moh Ngizudin et al., 2025)

The central legacy of al-Afghani in the thought of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida lies in the ability to synthesize authentic Islamic tradition with the rational and progressive demands of modernization. Al-Afghani inspired them to reject blind *taqlid*, promote *ijtihad*, and advocate for the independence of the Muslim ummah from colonialism and Western domination. This influence extended far beyond Egypt, reaching various parts of the Muslim world and ultimately forming the intellectual foundation for the modern Islamic reform movement across the Muslim world.(Putra et al., 2022)

Jamaluddin al-Afghani played a pivotal role in formulating and spreading the spirit of Pan-Islamism and political activism among modern Muslims. His ideas sparked a collective consciousness among the ummah to unite in confronting colonialism and creating meaningful socio-political change. Below are some of the key roles al-Afghani played in this domain:

a. Initiator and Promoter of Pan-Islamism

Al-Afghani is recognized as a pioneering figure who revived the idea of Pan-Islamism a concept of solidarity and unity among Muslims across national, ethnic, and sectarian

lines. He emphasized that the strength of the Muslim ummah would be restored if they abandoned division and adhered to the principle of ukhuwah islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood) as the foundation for revival and resistance against foreign domination. Thus, for al-Afghani, Pan-Islamism was not merely a theoretical idea, but a concrete platform for socio-political movement.(Nasbi, 2019)

b. Integrating Political Activism with Intellectual Reform

Al-Afghani traveled extensively throughout the Muslim world from Persia, India, Egypt, and Turkey to Europe. He engaged in dialogue with leaders, scholars, and the general public to raise political awareness and spread the spirit of emancipation. In his efforts, he utilized mass media such as newspapers and journals to disseminate messages of unity and resistance against Western colonialism. He taught that intellectual reform (tajdid) must go hand in hand with political struggle to achieve comprehensive progress for the ummah.(Zahra & Fatimah, 2023)

c. Inspiration for Resistance Movements and Organizations

Al-Afghani played a significant role in inspiring the emergence of reformist and resistance organizations such as Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa in Egypt, as well as political awakenings across various parts of the Muslim world. His ideas and practices in political activism became a major reference for subsequent figures and were deeply embedded in the platforms of independence movements in Muslim countries throughout Asia and Africa. His intellectual legacy also contributed to shaping a modern Islamic political identity that was both anti-colonial and inclusive.(Amiruddin et al., 2024)

d. Building a Pan-Islamic Network

Through the global networks he established, al-Afghani succeeded in connecting thinkers and activists from different countries, bridging communication across the Muslim world to strengthen solidarity and coordinate political action. His diplomatic skill and ability to mobilize transnational networks laid an important foundation for the development of Pan-Islamism as an ideology of global Islamic revival.(Arbi Mulya Sirait, 2020)

Overall, al-Afghani's intellectual legacy in fostering the spirit of Pan-Islamism and political activism laid the groundwork for a major transformation in the history of the modern Islamic movement. He not only revived the spirit of resistance against colonialism but also established the foundation for social, political, and intellectual reform among Muslims across the modern world.

Jamaluddin al-Afghani holds a significant position as a pioneer of early modern Islamic thought, initiating a wave of intellectual and political renewal in the Muslim world. He is recognized as a figure who introduced revolutionary ideas such as Pan-Islamism, educational reform, and rationalism seeking to harmonize Islamic tradition with the demands of modernity.(Balkhi, 2022)

As a modernist, al-Afghani strongly criticized the decline of the Muslim ummah caused by intellectual stagnation, blind taqlid, and authoritarian leadership that stifled reform. He stressed the need to renew religious understanding through ijihad and the use of reason as a tool for interpreting Islamic teachings in a contextual and scientific manner, enabling Muslims to compete with Western advancement without losing their Islamic identity.(Korneeva, 2022)

Al-Afghani was not only a thinker but also an activist who tirelessly built networks of solidarity among Muslims to oppose colonialism. Through the idea of Pan-Islamism, he sought to unite the Islamic world as a single political and social force against Western domination a foundation that later fueled reform and resistance movements in various Muslim countries.(Hassani, 2021)

His influence was profound on later Islamic reformers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, who developed the concept of Islamic modernism based on rationality and the freedom of ijihad. Al-Afghani emerged as a central figure who paved the way for Islam's transition from traditionalism to a progressive modernism that could adapt to the dynamics of the contemporary world.(Azlan, 2022)

His works and ideas remain relevant today as a vital link in the history of modern Islamic civilization, continuing to inspire various movements of reform, education, and contemporary Islamic political activism. Al-Afghani succeeded in positioning Islam as an intellectual and political force capable of responding to the challenges of the times while preserving its spiritual values and moral foundations.

C. The Relevance of al-Afghani's Ideas in the Contemporary Muslim World

Jamaluddin al-Afghani's thought on rationalism and modernity remains highly relevant in the context of the contemporary Muslim world, particularly as an approach to confronting the challenges of extremism. Al-Afghani placed rationality at the core of Islamic reform, integrating religious teachings with scientific knowledge in a harmonious way to overcome the decline of the Muslim ummah caused by intellectual stagnation and rigid thinking.

In the modern context, Muslims face various forms of extremism rooted in rigid, textualist, and dogmatic interpretations, as well as a lack of intellectual flexibility to respond to social dynamics. Al-Afghani's emphasis on ijihad (the reinterpretation of Islamic teachings through reason) and liberation from blind taqlid offers a foundation for Muslims to develop a more open, critical, and contextual understanding of their religion.(Uddin et al., 2022)

This approach enables modern Muslims to push back against fundamentalism by strengthening the dialogue between Islamic values and modern principles such as science, democracy, and human rights. Al-Afghani also urged Muslims not to reject Western

progress outright, but rather to discern and adopt those aspects compatible with Islamic values in order to build a progressive and civilized society.(Makniyah, 2019)

Thus, al-Afghani's rationalist thought plays a strategic role in fostering a critical and inclusive mindset one that is effective in countering extremist narratives, promoting peace, and nurturing a balanced integration of spirituality and rationality in the modern Muslim world. At the same time, this approach provides a path for building a resilient Muslim community capable of facing global challenges without losing its Islamic identity.

The Pan-Islamist vision introduced by Jamaluddin al-Afghani continues to hold profound significance in the geopolitical context of the contemporary Muslim world. Amid the shifting tides of global power and the rise of multipolarity as reflected in the emergence of alliances like BRICS and the increasing involvement of Muslim-majority countries on the global stage the pursuit of unity and solidarity among Muslims remains both a formidable challenge and a strategic opportunity of immense importance.(Khiyaroh et al., 2023)

For the Muslim ummah, al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism underscores the necessity of cultivating ukhuwah islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood) as a fundamental asset to enhance political and economic strength amid global competition. Despite the diverse interests and internal political conditions of Muslim nations scattered across different regions, the core of Pan-Islamism calls them to return to Islamic values of solidarity, consultation (shura), and justice. These values are essential in overcoming fragmentation and internal disunity divisions that are often exploited by foreign powers to intervene in and destabilize the Muslim world.(Yusupova, 2022)

In today's geopolitical climate, many Muslim-majority countries find themselves as battlegrounds of conflict, foreign intervention, and global economic-political rivalries. Al-Afghani's teachings remain relevant in this context, warning that without unity and collective strength, Muslims will remain vulnerable to geopolitical marginalization. This rings especially true for Muslim countries involved in BRICS, many of which still face dependency on foreign powers for technology, economics, and education limiting their leverage within the global order.(Nazari & Noori, 2022)

Furthermore, Pan-Islamism serves as a strategic ideology to revive the political spirit of the Muslim ummah enabling the development of independence and coherence among Islamic nations in the face of global political pressure. This idea calls for the revitalization of real, tangible solidarity not merely symbolic gestures so that Muslims may emerge as a globally recognized force. Pan-Islamism, therefore, is not only about spiritual unity, but also a strategic foundation for advancing the political, economic, and cultural development of the Muslim world in the modern era.(Hafez, 2023)

In short, the relevance of al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism in the contemporary Muslim world lies in its potential to inspire meaningful responses to geopolitical complexity—through

the strengthening of solidarity, self-reliance, and active Muslim participation in shaping a new global order. This becomes a crucial prerequisite for ensuring that the Muslim ummah is no longer a passive object of global domination, but an active subject shaping the future direction of Islamic politics and civilization.

Jamaluddin al-Afghani delivered sharp criticism against authoritarianism and the stagnation of religious thought, both of which he identified as major causes of the decline of the Muslim ummah in the modern era. The authoritarianism he referred to involved the dominance of religious or political power that suppresses open dialogue, freedom of thought, and the initiative of *ijtihad* among Muslims. According to al-Afghani, such leadership breeds a culture of *taqlid* (blind imitation), dulls critical thinking, and reinforces the status quo thereby stalling, or even rejecting, all efforts at reform.(Helmy, 2022)

Al-Afghani identified the stagnation of religious thought as a condition in which religious scholars and authorities prioritized conservatism and the preservation of doctrinal orthodoxy over the search for fresh and relevant interpretations aligned with the progress of the times. As a result, Islamic teachings became rigid, exclusionary, and poorly suited to respond to social demands and advances in scientific knowledge. This stagnation was further exacerbated by the monopolization of interpretive authority, which prevented the emergence of new and creative ideas from young intellectuals and broader Muslim communities.(Amiruddin et al., 2024)

As a solution, Jamaluddin al-Afghani proposed several key initiatives:

- a. Reopening the gates of *ijtihad* as a form of resistance against dogmatism and authoritarianism. This process would allow the emergence of dynamic thought capable of addressing contemporary challenges without abandoning the core values of Islam.
- b. Democratizing religious interpretation, where the hermeneutical right is not confined to religious elites alone, but is also shared by intellectual communities and the broader Muslim public. This would help prevent the centralization of interpretive authority and promote a more participatory model of religious understanding.
- c. Promoting a culture of dialogue and critical thinking as essential to rebuilding an Islamic intellectual tradition that is open, progressive, and adaptable to global social, economic, and political changes.
- d. Rejecting absolute authority, whether by the state or religious institutions, that suppresses freedom of thought and hinders the revival of rationalism within the Muslim world.

The relevance of al-Afghani's critique of authoritarianism and the stagnation of religious thought is evident in many contemporary challenges facing the Muslim world today, such as religious polarization, extreme conservatism, and resistance to innovation and social transformation. His ideas offer vital inspiration for constructing a pluralistic, inclusive, and evolving intellectual and religious ecosystem one that aligns with the times

while remaining anchored in the moral and just spirit of Islamic teachings.(Sukmanila, 2019)

D. Criticism and Limitations of Al-Afghani's Thought

Jamaluddin al-Afghani's ideas have often been subject to criticism, particularly regarding the ambiguity between the spheres of politics and religion within his reformist vision. Al-Afghani strongly emphasized the importance of political struggle as an integral part of Islamic revival especially in the context of resisting colonialism and the despotism of Muslim rulers. However, this has led to confusion between the role of religion as a source of spiritual and ethical guidance and its use in practical political activism, which is often controversial and pragmatic.(Fauzi, 2022)

According to several studies, al-Afghani intensely fused religious and political dimensions to the point where the boundaries between the two became blurred. He used religion to mobilize the masses in political struggles, while also employing political visions to reinterpret and reform Islamic teachings. This approach has opened the door to criticism that religion may have been instrumentalized to legitimize political power, thus creating potential for the misuse of religious authority for specific political agendas.(Krashennnikova, 2019)

However, within the context of his time, the separation between religious and political activities was nearly impossible, as colonialism and authoritarian Muslim rule were deeply intertwined with religious and societal structures. Al-Afghani himself recognized this paradox and fought for Islam to be more than a formal ritual aspiring instead for it to be a source of political and social empowerment, capable of liberating the Muslim ummah from oppression and decline (Arbi Mulya Sirait, 2020)

However, criticism arises from the ambivalent nature of al-Afghani's approach, which can generate internal tensions within the Muslim community regarding religious authority and political legitimacy. In practice, this ambiguity may hinder a clear and pure interpretation of Islamic teachings, as political agendas and religious imperatives often become intertwined. Consequently, the boundary between religious rationality and political strategy in al-Afghani's thought remains a subject of ongoing debate and further study within the field of modern Islamic thought.(Septiana & Rofiah, 2024)

In summary, the ambiguity between politics and religion in al-Afghani's thinking represents a significant critique that underscores the complexity of Islamic reform traditions shaped by the political struggles of the colonial era. Nonetheless, this integration also reflects both the strength and the challenge of his intellectual legacy, as it sought to awaken the political consciousness of Muslims through a religious foundation.

One of the central critiques of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's thought lies in the tension between Western modernity and Islamic authenticity in his ideas. Al-Afghani explicitly recognized the importance of modernity and the advancement of Western science and

knowledge as tools to restore the dignity and power of the Muslim world. However, he firmly rejected the uncritical adoption of Western values, warning that it could erode the cultural and spiritual identity of Islam.(Hasan & Fauzi, 2023)

Al-Afghani emphasized that modernity is not an exclusive possession of the West, but rather a concept that can be critically adapted by the Islamic world without sacrificing its traditional roots and religious values. He proposed the idea of "multiple modernities" a recognition that modernity can take diverse forms tailored to the unique cultural and social contexts of different societies, including a distinctive and authentic Islamic modernity. In this framework, modernity should be selective and dialogical, not merely an importation of Western systems, technologies, or institutions, which are often accompanied by imperialist and exploitative tendencies.(Khalidun, 2021)

Criticism arises from the tension this approach creates between the urgent need to pursue material progress and scientific development, and the desire to preserve religious and traditional values. Some scholars regard al-Afghani's position as overly ambivalent on one hand encouraging Muslims to embrace modernity, while on the other hand being deeply skeptical of Western modalities that carry imperialistic undercurrents and threaten social and cultural integrity.(Rosyadi, 2021)

Practically, this tension highlights the ongoing challenge for the Muslim world to strike a balance between embracing modern technological and rational advancements, and maintaining the moral and spiritual authenticity of Islam in the face of colonialism and Western domination. Al-Afghani attempted to formulate a model of Islamic modernity that diverged from Western paradigms a form of modernization grounded in fitrah (human nature) and Islamic values, rather than a mechanical imitation of Western culture.(Moh Ngizudin et al., 2025)

Thus, the tension between Western modernity and Islamic authenticity in al-Afghani's thought reflects the complex challenges of Islamic reform in both colonial and post-colonial eras. His ideas remain a critical point of reflection for the contemporary Muslim world, which continues to pursue modernization grounded in identity and authentic religious values.

Conclusion

This study concludes that its primary objective to analyze the relevance of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's rationalism and pan-Islamism within the context of the modern Muslim world has been successfully achieved. The main findings reveal that al-Afghani placed rationality as the foundation of Islamic intellectual reform, while also inspiring anti-colonial movements and theological renewal that significantly contributed to shaping the trajectory of modern Islamic reform. His intellectual legacy greatly influenced reformist figures such as Muhammad Abduh

and Rasyid Ridha, who continued to develop his ideas in addressing the challenges of their respective eras.

Theoretically, this research reinforces the paradigm of Islamic reform centered on rationalism and the dialogue between Islamic values and modernity as core instruments of renewal. Al-Afghani's ideas challenged intellectual stagnation and authoritarianism, while also broadening the concept of pan-Islamism as a strategic political framework for the Muslim world. The practical implications of this study are evident in the development of dynamic and applicable Islamic thought capable of addressing contemporary socio-political issues such as extremism and the geopolitical fragmentation of the Muslim ummah.

Future research is recommended to explore the concrete implementation of al-Afghani's ideas in present-day Muslim-majority contexts, especially how his visions of pan-Islamism and rationalism can be updated and integrated into social policies, educational reform, and international diplomacy. Further inquiry into al-Afghani's role in shaping the character of a critical and progressive Muslim youth is also suggested, in order to sustain and expand the legacy of Islamic reform movements in the contemporary era.

References

- Amiruddin, M., Saraswati, E. D., Ath Thoriq, A. Z., & Az-Zahrah, F. (2024). Dinamika Revivalisme dan Nasionalisme di Dunia Islam Era Jamaluddin AL-Afghani. *Ameena Journal*, 2(3), 255–268. <https://doi.org/10.63732/aij.v2i3.104>
- Arbi Mulya Sirait. (2020). Jamaluddin al-Afghani dan Karir Politiknya. *Jurnal Intelektual: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Keislaman*, 10(2), 167–182. <https://doi.org/10.33367/ji.v10i2.1291>
- Azlan, A. A. (2022). Islam and Nationalism in the Thought of Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 12(2), 212–224. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.122.15>
- Balkhi, M. (2022). Misunderstanding Jamaluddin Afghani by Muslims of South Asia: the Radical Interpretation. *CenRaPS Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 169–188. <https://doi.org/10.46291/cenraps.v4i1.66>
- Chandra, P. (2017). *Islamic Modernism in the Works of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and Syed Ahmed Khan* (S. J. R. Bute (ed.); Intercultu, pp. 68–85). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-0582-2.ch004>
- Fauzi, M. I. (2022). Strategi Politik Ekonomi Islam dalam Menciptakan al-Falah menurut Jamaluddin Al-Afghani. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam*, 8(1), 625. <https://doi.org/10.29040/jiei.v8i1.4168>
- Hafez, M. M. (2023). The Elusive Dream of Pan-Islamism. In *The Cambridge Companion to Religion and War* (pp. 332–348). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108884075.021>
- Hasan, I., & Fauzi, S. (2023). Pendidikan sebagai Reproduksi Nilai Menurut Ibnu Khaldun dan Implementasinya di SMP Islam Amanah Ummah. *TSAQOFAH*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.58578/tsaqofah.v4i2.2431>
- Hassani, M. M. (2021). Nationalism or transnationalism? Afghan nationalism and Pan-Islamism in Seraj-ul Akhbar. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 57(5), 730–740.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2021.1892647>
- Helmy, Y. (2022). From Islamic Modernism to Theorizing Authoritarianism. *American Journal of Islam and Society*, 38(3–4), 36–70. <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v38i3-4.2934>
- Junaidin. (2020). Teologi Modern Dan Pan-islamisme: Menilik Gagasan Pembaharuan Islam Jamaluddin Al-afghani. *F i T U A: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 1(1), 33–48. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47625/fitua.v2i1.290>
- Kemper, M. (2024). From Regional Islamic Reform to Global Anti-colonialism? Jamaladdin al-Afghani and Russia's Muslims. *Journal of Central Asian History*, 3(2), 296–326. <https://doi.org/10.1163/27728668-20240029>
- Khairiyanto. (2020). Pemikiran Jamaluddin al-Afghani dan Muhammad Abduh Serta Relasinya Dengan Realitas Sosial di Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, 1(2), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.24042/ijitp.v1i2.5028>
- Khaldun, R. (2021). The Influence of Jamaluddin Al-Afgani's Thought on the Pan Islamism and Islamic Modernism Movement in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ar Ro'ls Mandalika (Armada)*, 01(01), 53–66. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59613/armada.v1i1%20JANUARI.300>
- Khiyaroh, A., Imam Syafi, M., Mutia, C., Mujtahid, A. F., Endah, D., & Nurhuda, A. (2023). The Influence of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's Pan-Islamic Movement on the Fighting Spirit of Muslims in Various Countries. *Fahima*, 2(01), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.54622/fahima.v2i01.84>
- Korneeva, T. G. (2022). "The Answer to the Materialists": Is Al-Afghani Fair to the Isma'ilis? *Islam in the Modern World*, 18(1), 67–84. <https://doi.org/10.22311/2074-1529-2022-18-1-67-84>
- Krashennikova, E. A. (2019). Religious Diplomacy in the Settlement of the Afghan Conflict: Opportunities and Limitations. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 19(4), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2019-19-4-533-544>
- Mahardika, M. D. G. (2023). Jamaluddin Al-afghani's Thoughts In Sarekat Islam And Muhammadiyah Movement Early 20th Century. *Khazanah: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan Islam*, 13(2), 129–141. <https://doi.org/10.15548/khazanah.v13i2.1125>
- Makniyah, J. (2019). Modern Islamic Civilization: A Strategy of Civil Reconstruction through Islamic Science and Education. *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Community Development (ICCD 2019)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/iccd-19.2019.73>
- Miswanto, M., Hitami, M., & Murhayati, S. (2023). Muhammad Abduh dan Jamaluddin Al-Afghani. *Jurnal Arriyadhah*, XX(1), 12–20. <https://jurnalstaiibnusina.ac.id/index.php/ary>
- Moh Ngizudin, Ilham Ilham, Rina Setyaningsih, Agus Rojul Solihin, Rohimin Rohimin, & Khalishah Sukma Syam. (2025). Pengaruh Pemikiran Tokoh Pembaharuan Muhammad Abduh dan Rasyid Ridha terhadap Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. *JURNAL Riset RUMPUN ILMU PENDIDIKAN*, 4(2), 51–63. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurripen.v4i2.5337>
- Nasbi, I. (2019). Jamaluddin Al-afghani (Pan-islamisme Dan Ide Lainnya). *Jurnal Diskursus Islam*, 7(1), 70–79. <https://doi.org/10.24252/jdi.v7i1.9805>
- Nazari, N., & Noori, A. M. S. (2022). The role of geopolitical factors in neighboring countries and regional powers in the continuation of the Afghanistan crisis. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 37, 526–541. <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v37i1.7500>
- Pramono, F., & Fuad, A. (2024). Pan Islamisme Jamaluddin Al Afghani dan Sebagai Upaya Mengatasi Politik Dinasti. *AL-AFKAR: Journal for Islamic Studies*, 7(3), 935–945. <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v7i4.1219.Pan>

- Putra, R., Arrasyid, A., & Islamiyati, R. (2022). Menelaah Pandangan Jamaluddin Al-Afghani Tentang Teologi Rasional. *Jurnal Kawakib*, 3(1), 52–57. <https://doi.org/10.24036/kwkib.v3i1.35>
- Rosyadi, I. (2021). Sayyid Jamaluddin Al-Afghani: Pergerakan dan Pemikirannya Bagi Dunia Islam. *Al Qalam*. <http://journal.stit-insida.ac.id/index.php/alqalam/article/view/41>
- Sari, M. N., & Khairanisa, M. (2024). The Role Of Theology In Addressing Sustainable Development: Insights From Jamaluddin Al-afghani's Thought. *Islamic Thought Review*, 2(2), 105–116. <https://doi.org/10.30983/itr.v2i2.8833>
- Septiana, E., & Rofiah, K. (2024). Dampak Dan Peranan Pemikiran Politik Tokoh Islam (Jamaluddin Al-afghani, Muhammad Abduh Dan Muhammad Iqbal) Terhadap Pembaruan Dunia Islam. *AMAL: Jurnal Ekonomi Syariah*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.33477/eksy.v5i02.6921>
- Sukmanila, D. (2019). Kiprah Dan Kontribusi Jamaluddin Al-afghani Dalam Pemikiran Modern Islam. *TAJDID: Jurnal Ilmu Keislaman Dan Ushuluddin*, 22(1), 84–96. <https://doi.org/10.15548/tajdid.v22i1.278>
- Taufik Marwina Hakim. (2024). Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's Thoughts on Islamic Education. *Amandemen: Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Studies*, 2(1), 14–24. <https://doi.org/10.61166/amd.v2i1.37>
- Thariq Azhar, A. I. (2022). Pemikiran Islam Jamaluddin Al-Afghani. *Bayani*, 2(2), 163–175. <https://doi.org/10.52496/bayaniV.2i.2pp163-175>
- Uddin, A., Mohd. Yusof, D., & Heravi, F. ahmad. (2022). Empirical Approach Of Revitalizing Society In The Twenty-first Century: A Short Analysis Of Sayyed Jamal Al-din Afghani's Political Thought. *Journal of Asian and African Social Science and Humanities*, 8(3), 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.55327/jaash.v8i3.271>
- Ulya, I. (2019). Relevance of Jamal al Din al Afghani's Political Thought to The Form of Government of Indonesian Republic. *Al-Balad: Journal of Constitutional Law*, 1(2), 1–13.
- Usman, U., & Muhammad, A. A. (2023). Reintegration Of Science And Islam In Islamic Education Learning In Urban Muslim Communities. *Akademika : Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 28(1), 43. <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v28i1.5775>
- Yusupova, D. (2022). “Panislamism” as a political factor. *Общество и Инновации*, 3(2), 199–209. <https://doi.org/10.47689/2181-1415-vol3-iss2-pp199-209>
- Zahra, N., & Fatimah, F. (2023). Konsep PAN-islamisme menurut pemikiran Jamaluddin Al-Afghani dalam perkembangan partai politik di Indonesia. *Jurnal EDUCATIO: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 9(1), 228. <https://doi.org/10.29210/1202322802>