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# Muslim Intellectuals and Contemporary Issues: Bridging Tradition and Modernity


*Intelektual Muslim dan Isu Kontemporari: Menjambatani Tradisi dan Kemodenan*

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To cite this article:

Usman, A. H. (2026). Muslim intellectuals and contemporary issues: Bridging tradition and modernity. *Al-Irsyad: Journal of Islamic and Contemporary Issues*, 11(1), xli-xlix. <https://doi.org/10.53840/alirsyad.v11i1.624>.

To link this article:

 <https://doi.org/10.53840/alirsyad.v11i1.624>

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 Published online: 22 June 2026

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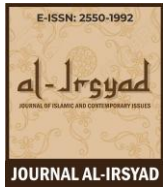
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Vol. 11, No. 1 (June 2026)

# Muslim Intellectuals and Contemporary Issues: Bridging Tradition and Modernity

*[Intelektual Muslim dan Isu Kontemporari: Menjambatani Tradisi dan Kemodenan]*

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## To cite:

Usman, A. H. (2026). Muslim intellectuals and contemporary issues: Bridging tradition and modernity. *Al-Irsyad: Journal of Islamic and Contemporary Issues*, 11(1), xli-xlix. <https://doi.org/10.53840/alirsyad.v11i1.624>

Contemporary Muslim intellectuals navigate the complexities of modernity while remaining rooted in Islamic tradition. This intersection is crucial for understanding their contributions to social issues, the reconciliation of Islamic principles with modern advancements and the evolving interpretations of Islamic texts. Muslim intellectuals actively engage with contemporary challenges such as gender equality, justice and pluralism. They often reinterpret traditional Islamic concepts to align with modern human rights ethics, thereby fostering progressive Islamic thought that resonates with contemporary values (Kersten, 2010; Tanriverdi, 2021). For instance, discussions around patriarchal interpretations of the Quran and the re-contextualization of *sharīah* law highlight efforts to adapt Islamic teachings to modern societal norms (Marcotte, 2012).

Many Muslim thinkers advocate for reform within the Islamic tradition, emphasizing the need to reconcile faith with modernity. This includes critical engagement with modern philosophical principles and the adaptation of Islamic teachings to address contemporary realities (Rodrigues, 2011). The emergence of Reformist American Muslim Intellectuals (RAMIs) exemplifies this trend, as they challenge traditional views on democracy and gender equality while promoting a vision of social justice that integrates Islamic values with modern democratic ideals (Tanriverdi, 2021).

The relationship between Islam and modern science is complex. While many Muslim intellectuals argue for a harmonious coexistence of faith and science, tensions remain, particularly regarding theories such as evolution (Edis & Boujaoude, 2014). Some conservative thinkers advocate for an Islamisation of science, seeking to align inquiry with Islamic principles, while others express scepticism toward modern paradigms (Edis, 2009).

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping intellectual perspectives. They serve as platforms for dialogue between traditional Islamic knowledge and modern educational frameworks, fostering critical examination of how Islamic teachings can inform contemporary scientific and technological advancements (Zarkasyi, 2019). This dual influence encourages re-evaluation of educational content to better meet the needs of students in a rapidly changing world (Baiza, 2022).

Contemporary Muslim thinkers often challenge traditional interpretations of Islamic texts in light of modern societal challenges. This includes contextual readings of the Quran and hadith, allowing for nuanced understandings that address issues such as gender and interfaith relations (Afsaruddin, 2015; Habib, 2022). The diversity of interpretations highlights the dynamic nature of Islamic thought, enabling dialogue between past and present (Abu-Rabi', 2007).

The quest for Islamic modernity reflects a broader intellectual movement among Muslim scholars who seek to define a path that integrates Islamic values with modern realities. This involves critical examination of both Western modernity and traditional Islamic thought, aiming to create a framework that respects heritage while engaging with global challenges (Sadek, 2026; Yalçinkaya, 2019).



Muslim intellectuals are at the forefront of addressing contemporary issues by bridging tradition and modernity. Their contributions span social reform, reconciliation of faith with science and reinterpretation of texts, all while navigating modern complexities. Educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping this discourse, enabling dialogue that respects tradition while meeting modern demands. Through these efforts, contemporary Muslim thinkers preserve heritage while actively participating in global conversations on modernity. Herewith, the latest publication of *al-Irsyad: Journal of Islamic and Contemporary Issues* (IJICI), Volume 11, Issue 1 (June 2026), presents a diverse corpus of five scholarly articles authored by contributors representing six countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Sri Lanka and Saudi Arabia. Collectively, these studies provide a substantive overview of contemporary Islamic discourses and their applications across varied academic and professional fields, thereby highlighting the journal's commitment to advancing critical engagement with current issues in Muslim's scholar thought and practice.

The first paper conducted by Usman et al., titled *Expression of Wa al-Sāriqah in al-Hidāyah wa al-'Irfān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān by Muḥammad Abū Zayd al-Damanhūrī*. This study undertakes a critical reassessment of the assertion that the Arabic morphological form *ism al-fā'il* necessarily conveys repetition or continuity, a presupposition central to al-Damanhūrī's Quranic exegetical work. Through rigorous linguistic and exegetical analysis, the findings demonstrate that such a claim cannot be universally applied but must instead be situated within broader syntactic, semantic and rhetorical parameters. Evidence from classical Arabic linguistics and Quranic exegetical traditions indicates that *ism al-fā'il* denote permanence, temporality, or even a singular occurrence, contingent upon contextual indicators (*qarā'in*). The study highlights the imperative of adhering to established hermeneutical principles articulated by authoritative scholars, as deviation from these methodological safeguard's risks compromising the coherence, ethical orientation and juridical foundations of Islamic teachings, thereby opening the possibility of distorted or ideologically motivated interpretations of the Quran.

In my view, classical Arabic grammar has long emphasized the decisive role of contextual and semantic determinants in shaping meaning, particularly in Quranic discourse where semantic forces often override prescriptive norms (Awda & Alani, 2025). Within this framework, *ism al-fā'il* emerges as a participial form whose interpretive scope permanent, temporary, or singular depends on surrounding linguistic and situational cues. The Arabic verbal system itself illustrates semantic multiplicity, as forms such as *fa'ala* and *yaf'al* vary in temporal and aspectual values according to context (Bardi, 2022; Weigelt, 2023). By analogy, *ism al-fā'il* demonstrates comparable flexibility, oscillating between permanence and temporality in exegetical usage.

The intellectual reorientation of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, notably in al-Jurjānī's works, privileged semantics and pragmatics over rigid syntactic categories (Bagatin, 2025). Ibn Jinnī's semantic innovations further reinforced this trajectory, showing how participles encode diverse temporal nuances (Solimando, 2021). Exegetical traditions thus consistently integrate linguistic analysis beyond grammar, with Quranic interpretation hinging on contextual and semantic determinants. Consequently, *ism al-fā'il* in Quranic contexts denote enduring divine attributes, temporally bound human actions, or singular occurrences, depending on operative *qarā'in*. This interpretive elasticity reflects broader currents in Arabic linguistic thought, which foreground the dynamic interplay of grammar, semantics and pragmatics.

The second paper by Abdullah et al., titled *The Contribution of Al-Baghawī's Exegesis in Guiding Metonymic Meaning: An Applied Study on Selected Quranic Verses*. This study foregrounds the rhetorical dimension of *al-Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, with particular emphasis on its role in guiding metonymic meanings, an aspect frequently overlooked in earlier scholarship. Close analysis of selected Quranic verses reveals al-Baghawī's attentiveness to rhetorical style and its interpretive function. The research contributes to both exegetical and rhetorical studies, affirms the enduring value of *al-Tafsīr al-Baghawī* as a reference by bridging classical interpretive traditions with contemporary analytical approaches.

In my view, metonymy constitutes a central rhetorical device in Arabic, enhancing eloquence and enabling indirect meaning through substitution of closely associated concepts, consistent with the broader figurative tradition of the language (Aldekhani & O'Neill, 2024). Quranic metonymies, in particular, reflect the cultural and environmental realities of Arab society, embedding figurative language within lived experience and collective mentality. This cultural specificity, however, complicates translation, as literal renderings often obscure intended connotations, highlighting the need for sensitivity to linguistic and cultural nuance (Abdullah, 2017; Farghal & Alenezi, 2022).

Beyond rhetoric, metonymy functions as a cognitive mechanism structuring thought and enabling conceptual contiguity, thereby facilitating the succinct expression of complex ideas (Aldekhani & O'Neill, 2024; Conti, 2023; Wachowski, 2019). It also operates as a communicative bridge across linguistic communities, leveraging shared cultural knowledge to reflect societal values (Littlemore, 2015). Although direct analyses of al-

Baghawī's exegetical works remain limited, his reliance on Arabic linguistic traditions suggests that metonymy was integral to his interpretive methodology, aligning with the rhetorical and jurisprudential practices of his era (Al Balushi & Zeid, 2023). Thus, metonymy in Arabic exemplifies the intersection of rhetoric, cognition and culture, offering a framework for understanding its role in exegetical traditions and translation studies.

The third paper by Anis Malik Thoha, titled *Green Leadership in Development Management: Synthesizing Islamic Ethical Paradigms and Sustainability Science*. This study advances a novel contribution to the field of sustainability leadership through the formulation of the Green Khalifah Leadership Framework (GKL-F), a theoretically integrated model that rearticulates metaphysical ontology, ethical formation and public governance within a unified Islamic paradigm. It addresses a critical lacuna in the existing literature, wherein sustainability discourse remains predominantly anthropocentric and epistemically secular, by demonstrating how *tawhīd* (divine unity), *adab* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* serve as a coherent foundation for leadership and policy design. In contrast to prior studies that have approached Islamic environmental ethics primarily in descriptive terms, this research develops a systematic and operationalisable framework that links moral consciousness to institutional practice. Furthermore, it contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship by reinterpreting secularisation theory through a comparative civilisational lens and by elucidating the methodological role of the Islamisation of knowledge as a meta-epistemological approach to integrative research.

In my view, the concept of green leadership in development management seeks to integrate ethical paradigms with sustainability science to address contemporary environmental and social challenges. Despite its alignment with sustainability goals, green leadership remains theoretically underdeveloped, often borrowing from transformational and ethical leadership models without establishing an independent paradigm and its Western-centric assumptions limit adaptability in non-Western contexts (Kılınç, Özçelik, Ertem, & Ünal, 2026).

Islamic ethical principles such as *tawhīd* and *khalīfah* (stewardship) provide a robust ecocentric alternative, emphasizing ecological balance and interdependence among species (Haider, Mathlouthi, Nor, & Ramadhita, 2026; Moneim, 2023). Instruments like *Green Sukuk*, *zakat* and *waqf* further operationalize these paradigms by funding projects that advance environmental sustainability and social welfare, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (Ikram, Wafa, & Mimoune, 2025; Rahim, Rathore, Rabbani, & Alam, 2024). Foundational Islamic leadership values such as truthfulness (*sidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), sound judgment (*faṭānah*) and effective communication (*tablīgh*) strengthen governance and enhance sustainable outcomes (Kamaruding, Muis, Alias, & Mokhtar, 2026). Synthesizing Islamic ethics with sustainability science thus offers a coherent framework for advancing green leadership in Muslim-majority contexts, though challenges of cultural resistance, leadership competency and political prioritization remain (Haider et al., 2026; Kamaruding et al., 2026).

The fourth paper by Hashimee et al., titled *Pragmatic Analysis of Quranic Dialogue in Light of Austin's and Searle's Speech Act Theory: An Integrated Practical Framework*. This study illuminates the pragmatic dimension of Quranic dialogue, particularly in demonstrating how meaning is progressively constructed through communicative movement shaped by speech contexts, an aspect that has received limited applied attention in prior scholarship. Through an analysis of the dialogues between Prophet Moses and Allah in sūrahs al-A'rāf [7] and Yūnus [10], the research traces the progression of speech acts in sūrah al-A'rāf from longing and request to instruction and proof, then to repentance and faith and ultimately to selection and commissioning. A corresponding trajectory is identified in sūrah Yūnus, beginning with the diagnosis of corruption, followed by supplication for decisive resolution, a declaration of divine response accompanied by commands to remain steadfast and warnings against deviation. In this way, the study enriches Quranic pragmatic analysis by presenting an integrated applied framework for future research on Quranic dialogue.

In my view, Speech Act Theory as developed by Austin and Searle, provides a systematic framework for analysing the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of utterances, classifying them into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations (Al-Ademi & Al-Eryani, 2025; Hosseini-Maasoum & Radmard, 2015; Salama, 2021). Quranic dialogues, such as those between Allah and Iblīs (Q. 15: 32-43), exemplify the full range of these categories, with participants assuming roles that reflect theological and communicative positions. Representatives assert divine truths, directives command or prohibit, commissives reassure through promises and expressives convey emotional resonance, while declarations establish divine authority (Khazaleh, Sapar, Jan, & Alaqqad, 2025).

Rhetorical strategies including rhetorical questions, argumentative progression and deliberate silence further enrich Quranic dialogue, engaging audiences in reflection and persuasion (Bamigbade & Dalha, 2020). The verb *qāla* (he said) anchors reported speech, shifting between assertive and directive force depending on context, with Meccan sūrahs emphasizing representatives and Medinan sūrahs highlighting directives (Dror, 2021; Hosseini-Maasoum & Radmard, 2015). Applying Speech Act Theory to Quranic dialogue reveals its

sophisticated pragmatic design, demonstrating how divine communication integrates theological authority with rhetorical and linguistic strategies to guide, persuade and reassure audiences.

The last paper of this current issue is *Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Mandīlī's Methodology in Introducing and Evaluating Shāfi'ī Jurisprudential Works: An Analytical Study of Khazā'in al-Saniyyah* by Niteh et al. This study highlights the bibliographical methodology employed by Malay scholars in their engagement with the Islamic legal heritage and highlights the pivotal role of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Mandīlī in safeguarding and perpetuating the Shāfi'ī intellectual tradition within the Malay world.

The evolution of classical Malay *fiqh* writings from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries reflects intellectual dynamism and methodological diversity, demonstrating the adaptability of Islamic jurisprudence to local socio-cultural contexts (Abdul Malik, Abdul Hamid, & Abd. Rahim, 2025). Manuscripts such as *Qawānīn al-Mubtadi' fī al-Fiqh* illustrate the influence of the Shāfi'ī school and the role of Malay scholars in producing works responsive to community needs (Patmawati, Ma'u, Prasajo, & Nurrahmi, 2025). These contributions extended beyond rural settings, shaping broader Islamic thought through engagement with *fiqh*, *'aqīdah* and *taṣawwuf*, often grounded in hadith and classical sources (Abdul Latif, Abdul Hamid, & Mohd Nor, 2012).

The development of Islamic scholarship in the Malay Archipelago was sustained by intellectual networks, educational institutions and methods of transmission, with figures such as Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Mandīlī, Nawawi al-Bantānī and Muḥammad Dawūd al-Fatānī playing pivotal roles (Monady, Hasan, & Sagir, 2025). Within this tradition, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Mandīlī's bibliographical methodology exemplified the safeguarding and contextualization of Shāfi'ī jurisprudence for Malay society. Malay *fiqh* writing thus embodies methodological diversity and adaptability, with scholars like al-Mandīlī ensuring the continuity and relevance of the Shāfi'ī intellectual tradition in the Malay world.

These scholarly contributions furnish critical insights into pivotal domains, including Quranic exegesis, ecological leadership, pragmatic analysis, metonymic semantics and the jurisprudential legacy of al-Shāfi'ī. Collectively, they highlight the intellectual depth and methodological complexity inherent in addressing contemporary challenges within Islamic thought. Taken together, these works constitute a comprehensive inquiry into the applicability of Muslim scholarly perspectives in navigating the multifaceted issues that shape the current global landscape (Usman, 2025a; 2025b). Hence, Muslim intellectuals have played a pivotal role in addressing contemporary challenges by navigating the complex interplay between Islamic tradition and modernity. Their efforts reflect dynamic and pluralistic engagement with issues such as democracy, gender equality, religious plurality and socio-political reform.

Many Muslim intellectuals advocate for a critical synthesis of Islamic principles with modern values such as justice, equality and pluralism. This approach challenges both rigid traditionalism and uncritical adoption of Western modernity, aiming instead to create an Islamic modernity rooted in Islamic epistemology while addressing contemporary realities (Habib, 2022; Sadek, 2026; Tanriverdi, 2021).

Responses to modernity among Muslim thinkers vary widely, ranging from rejection to adaptation and critical integration. Some emphasize rediscovering the essence of Islamic tradition, while others propose innovative reinterpretations of Islamic texts to align with modern ethical frameworks (Marcotte, 2012; Sadek, 2026). Intellectuals have increasingly engaged with issues of social justice, interfaith dialogue and diversity. They aim to foster a more inclusive understanding of Islam that accommodates pluralistic societies while maintaining its core values (Ainusyamsi, Munawar, Darisman, & Husni, 2025; Hefner, 2014; Tanriverdi, 2021).

The discourse spans diverse regions, from South Asia to the Middle East and Western diaspora communities, reflecting the global nature of these challenges. Intellectuals in different contexts have tailored their approaches to address local socio-political and cultural dynamics (Meuleman, 2005; Parray, 2025; Rodrigues, 2011). While the project of defining and implementing Islamic modernity remains largely theoretical, it holds significant potential for fostering dialogue between Islamic and Western intellectual traditions. This dialogue could challenge the "clash of civilisations" narrative and highlight shared universal values (Afsaruddin, 2015; Osman, 2025; Sadek, 2026).

In conclusion, Muslim intellectuals are actively bridging the gap between tradition and modernity by reinterpreting Islamic thought to address contemporary issues. Their work highlights the adaptability and richness of Islamic intellectual traditions, offering pathways for reform, renewal and progress in a rapidly changing world. Notwithstanding, this edition of *IJICI* reaffirms the journal's sustained commitment to advancing Islamic scholarship while serving as a platform for the constructive integration of tradition and modernity. The diverse and intellectually engaging contributions assembled herein are intended to deepen readers' understanding, stimulate critical discourse and provide substantive perspectives on the multifaceted challenges confronting contemporary society. The editorial team extends its profound gratitude to the contributors, reviewers and readership whose steadfast support has been indispensable to the realization of this publication. Their collective participation has been vital to its success. It is hoped that the knowledge

disseminated through these pages will inspire reflective practice, foster societal advancement and contribute meaningfully to the shared pursuit of human betterment.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this foreword.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank to Universiti Islam Selangor (UIS), Malaysia and especially to Faculty of Islamic Civilisation Studies (FPPI) for its continuous support and given me the confidence to prepare these editorial notes.

## AI USE DECLARATION

No AI tools were used for idea generation, analysis, or interpretation. Any AI assistance was limited to language editing and did not affect the originality of the work.

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