

Ibn Khaldun and the Idea of the Ummah. A Study of the Conditions of Social Cohesion and Civilizational Decline

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ABSTRACT: This research investigates the concept of the “Ummah” in Ibn Khaldun’s thought by performing a careful reading of his famous *Muqaddimah*, and one of the fundamental pillars of historical sociology that modern social scientists rely on. In particular, the research seeks to identify the conditions of social cohesion that Ibn Khaldun considered important for the emergence of states and the viability of civilizations, with the respect to the concepts of *asabiyyah* (social solidarity), religion, and justice as essential cornerstones of human society. Additionally, the research evaluates the causes of civilizational decline, such as isintegration of social cohesion, unjust actions, and excessive indulgence to describe the cyclical process of emergence and decline that Ibn Khaldun assigned to a meaning-making framework. Lastly, the study will extend the discussion into a contemporary context pointing to the salience of thinkers such as Ibn Khaldun, with respect to understanding the structural crises emerging within modern Arab societies. Overall, our final remarks state that Ibn Khaldun remains a key and critical theoretical reference point for making sense of social and political issues in a contemporary context.

KEYWORDS: Ibn Khaldun; Ummah; Asabiyyah; Civilization; Social Cohesion; Civilizational Decline.

TITLU: „Ibn Khaldun și ideea de *Ummah*: Un studiu al condițiilor coeziunii sociale și ale declinului civilizațional”

REZUMAT: Această cercetare investighează conceptul de „Ummah” în gândirea lui Ibn Khaldun prin citirea atentă a faimoasei sale lucrări *Muqaddimah*, una dintre fundamentele sociologiei istorice pe care se sprijină oamenii de știință socială moderni. În special, studiul își propune să identifice condițiile coeziunii sociale pe care Ibn Khaldun le-a considerat importante pentru apariția statelor și pentru viabilitatea civilizațiilor, cu referire la conceptele de *asabiyyah* (solidaritate socială), religie și dreptate ca pilieri esențiale ale societății umane. În plus, cercetarea evaluează cauzele declinului civilizațional, precum dezintegrarea coeziunii sociale, acțiunile nedrepte și excesul de indulgență, pentru a descrie procesul ciclic de apariție și declin pe care Ibn Khaldun l-a încadrat într-un model cu sens. În cele din urmă, studiul va extinde discuția într-un context contemporan, indicând relevanța gânditorilor precum Ibn Khaldun pentru înțelegerea crizelor structurale care apar în societățile arabe moderne. În general, observațiile noastre finale susțin că Ibn Khaldun rămâne un punct de referință teoretic cheie și critic pentru înțelegerea problemelor sociale și politice într-un context contemporan.

CUVINTE-CHEIE: Ibn Khaldun; Ummah; Asabiyyah; civilizație; coeziune socială; declin civilizațional.

Introduction

Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun is held up among the most significant thinkers who made a key contribution to social and historical thought. In the famous *Muqaddimah* to his historical analysis of North African and Spanish societies, he laid what might be regarded as the first stone of historical sociology. In this pioneering study, and in some of his chronicles, Ibn Khaldun offered a detailed view of the totality of human civilization, the movement of history, and the rise and fall of states, through a thorough analysis of the social, political, economic and religious variables that shape the arrangement of societies and determine their fate (Ibn-Khaldun 1958).

One of the key concepts discussed by Ibn Khaldun is the concept of *the Ummah*. Khaldun did not consider it merely as a political entity defined by boundaries or ethnicities, as most modern nationalist literature would do. He considered it a complex civilization structure based on the interrelationship between as Groundwork (*asabiyyah*), a religion, and a civilization Paveditingumumran) (Alatas 2014) . Thus, he did not merely describe the events in a narrative fashion like his contemporaries, he tried to go further by addressing their structure or sets of underlying causes.

The flexibility of Ibn Khaldun's theory and its theoretical richnesses are not separate things, but part of a whole; this very optimal dimension of his work, which transcended the limits of pure narrative description to prioritize explanation and causal analysis (Irwin 2018). This interpretive vision added great value to Khaldun's work as a fundamentally contemporary resource for studies of the state and society. His theories provide significant analysis and reference points to older realities, and unique forms of articulational power of meaning can often shed light on more complex phenomena. In comparing to a reductionist mode of application, Khaldun's theories often become a true tool for the researcher.

This paper will examine the idea of the Ummah as discussed by Ibn Khaldun with a focus on the circumstances he considered necessary for the development and sustaining of social integration, as well as the reasons he believed contributed to social disintegration and decline of civilization and this time I will explore those contextualizing the author's social theory to the contemporary social and political conditions allows for re-reading the intellectual heritage inherited from our predecessors in light of the contemporary problems faced by Arab societies: social fragmentation, political division, and erosion of collective trust (Salama 2011)

This study will adopt a critical analytic framework that utilizes a close reading of Ibn Khaldun's text as contained in his *Muqaddimah*, (Ibn-Khaldun 1958) , alongside critical readings from modern context of contemporary readings that have unpacked his ideas- notably those of writers such as (Alatas, 2014) , Robert Irwin., or Gholamreza Mansouri. By bringing this approach to bear upon the relevance and interpretation of Khaldun's ideas, we hope to provide a contemporary and applied reading about his ideas in order to reclaim its interpretative potential and conceptual value with respect to addressing the systemic challenges faced by our societies today.

Considering this view, recalling Ibn Khaldun's thoughts is not simply a wistful remembering of the past, but an effort to recover an important interpretative model that might serve to further analyze current realities and develop alternative analytical frameworks that can be more sensitive to the realities of the contemporary Arab world. Invoking ideas such as *asabiyyah*, justice, luxury, and religious mission is not merely of historical interest—it is an epistemic aperture onto the praxeological questions about cohesion and decline in post-nation-state societies.

Thus, the present article explores Ibn Khaldun's conception of the Ummah, the features of its unity, and the reasons for its disintegration in a balanced, critical writing style combining textual interpretations with sociological considerations, and hopefully enrich the academic discourse on collective identity, social cohesion, and civilizational history in socio-historical contexts framed within Islamic and Arab contexts.

Ibn Khaldun: Between Personal Formation and Civilizational Influence

Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun is acknowledged as one of the most influential thinkers who instigated a radical change in our knowledge of history and society as historian, philosopher, and sociologist. His *Muqaddimah* is a landmark text and one of the most important intellectual products of humanity, and together with his monumental history of the Muslim people, set the stage for the future of a new field he called the "science of human society" (*'ilm al-umrān al-basharī*).

In this exemplary groundwork, Ibn Khaldun provided true scientific and methodological principles for studying history, surpassing the historical methodology of his peers while also incorporating more scientific methodologies. He utilized rational tools to analyze social phenomena, avoided repetitive and historical mistakes, and used causal analysis rather than simple chronologies. His perception clearly embodied a qualitative shift in the realm of historical inquiry and critical analysis: he did not merely

chronicle events, but sought to identify general laws to explain the growth of societies, and to analyze the cause of their movement – thereby laying the foundations for a broader and deeper scientific inquiry into the history of humanity.

Ibn Khaldun: Upbringing and Civilizational Context

Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Jabir ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Khalid (Khaldun) al-Hadrami (Salem & Allah, 2011, p. 15) was born in Tunis in 732 AH (1332 CE), during a period marked by upheavals and strife, when the Islamic world was at the height of political fragmentation—especially following the fall of the Almohad state in the mid-7th century AH. This collapse led to the emergence of several competing dynasties, including the Marinid state in the western Maghreb in 668 AH, the Zayyanid (Abd al-Wadid) state in the central Maghreb (present-day Algeria) in 733 AH, and the Hafsid state in the eastern Maghreb (Tunisia) in 724 AH.

Amid this politically and socially troubled environment, Ibn Khaldun was raised in a distinguished Arab-Andalusian family with roots in Hadramawt. His ancestors had settled in Seville with the Yemeni troops and later migrated to Tunis under the Hafsids after the worsening of conditions in al-Andalus (Salem & Allah 2011, 15)

At the time, Tunis was an important intellectual center because it was relatively stable politically under Hafsid rule. Many Andalusian scholars settled there as a response to the wars and conflicts in their regions, which had a significant effect on Ibn Khaldun's intellectual and cultural upbringing. Ibn Khaldun was from a political and scholarly family and received his early education at the Zaytuna Mosque in which he studied Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), logic, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and language sciences (grammar, morphology, rhetoric, and literature). He also memorized the Qur'an according to the seven canonized readings and studied Maliki jurisprudence and Hadith.

He won the affections of his teachers and received their certifications (ijazāt). His best-known teachers included Shaykh Abu Abd Allah al-Husayri, a gram-marian; Abu Abd Allah Ibn Harr, a scholar of linguistic sciences; Abu Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Jabir al-Wadi Ashi (673-749 AH); and Abu Muhammad Abd al-Mu'in al-Hadrami, who taught Hadith.

Even before he was twenty years old, Ibn Khaldun had studied very complex rational works like al-Muhassal by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi and al-Tusi's commentary on it. Regarded as a scholar, his understanding of history and politics began to take form in the context of a disorder-ed environment characterized by the sharp differences between a rural, tribal space and an urban, civilizational reality, perhaps exacerbated by cold political divisions and civilizational disintegration. All of these elements were critical to his intellectual formation.

His Life, Travels, and Scholarly Journey

Ibn Khaldun's professional and political careers began at an early age, and he had travelled through many cities in the Maghreb. He travelled from Biskra to Fez, and in Fez he entered the court of Abu Inan al-Marinid and had responsibilities as a writer and historian. After, he travelled to Granada and Seville, before going to the fortress of Bani Salama (modern-day Tiaret, Algeria), where he lived for four years and wrote the Muqaddimah, the first volume of the monumental Kitāb al-'Ibar wa Dīwān al-Mubtada' wa al-Khabar fī Ayyām al-'Arab wa al-'Ajam wa al-Barbar wa Man 'Āsarahum min Dhawī al-Sultān al-Akbar.

After 1377 CE, he returned to Tunis, where he was able to use the libraries in the city to revise and redraft his book. Ibn Khaldun experienced a myriad of complex political roles throughout his working life, crossing over between royal courts of power and prison cells of despair - roles he lived that gave him a deep connection to the existence of power and the society composed around it.

He later moved to Egypt, where he was appointed to various judicial and educational positions, including serving as the chief judge (*qāḍī*) of the Maliki school. He continued his scholarly, writing, and teaching activities until his death in Cairo in 808 AH / 1406 CE (Abu Imran Al-Sheikh 1995, 193).

His Works and Intellectual Contributions

Ibn Khaldun made a scholarly contribution to the study of politics, history and social thought. He occupied the positions of ambassador to and adviser of a number of rulers in North Africa and al-Andalus. His scholarly legacy includes the *Muqaddimah*, where he laid a systematic ground-working study of human civilization ('*umrān al-basharī*'), the emergence of societies and their transformation, thus establishing the analytic and scientific basis for understanding the rise and fall of states and the cycle of civilizations, and providing an inductive, scientific method for understanding history, anticipating many of the developments in the modern discipline of sociology.

Not only was the *Muqaddimah* more than just a history but a serious examination of sociocultural and political phenomenon drafted and ultimately developed in response to Ibn Khaldun's own political institutions and experiences. In many respects it can be said that Ibn Khaldun progressed from historical writing to a critical, inferential approach through the *Muqaddimah*.

At the time, scholarly writing was often characterized by excessive eloquence and rhetorical ornamentation, with rhymed prose and verbal embellishment dominating the content. However, Ibn Khaldun took a different stance: he criticized this linguistic artifice and preferred a clear, straightforward style, insisting that excessive rhetorical decoration weakens meaning and undermines the purpose of writing.

Although Ibn Khaldun occasionally employed rhymed prose (*saj'*), as seen in some of his letters or in the preface to *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, this was done primarily for rhetorical or communicative purposes. He believed that the nature of his new subject—the science of civilization ('*ilm al-'umrān*)—required precision in word choice and clarity in expression. For this reason, he coined new terms or repurposed existing ones to suit his conceptual framework. For example, he used the word '*umrān*' to refer to what we now understand as sociology, and redefined *tanāzul* to mean cohabitation or coexistence, diverging from its common usage.

As for the structure of the *Muqaddimah*, it was organized into six introductory chapters that laid the groundwork for his study of '*ilm al-'umrān*'. These were preceded by an extended prologue in which he explained his reasons for writing the book and offered a critique of traditional historiography. In these chapters, Ibn Khaldun addressed a wide range of topics, including the influence of climate on human behavior, the characteristics of Bedouin society, the nature of '*asabiyyah*' (group solidarity) and its role in state formation, the mechanisms behind the rise and fall of kingdoms, modes of subsistence, commerce, and industries, and finally, the sciences and their classification.

Ibn Khaldun's social ideas stood out clearly, particularly in his analysis of the characteristics of Bedouin society. He introduced an innovative sociological perspective when he discussed the concept of '*asabiyyah*', which refers to the strength and prestige enjoyed by a tribe or family, grounded—according to him—in bonds of lineage, kinship, and similar social ties (Ibn Khaldun's social ideas stood out clearly, particularly in his analysis of the characteristics of Bedouin society. He introduced an innovative sociological perspective when he discussed the concept of '*asabiyyah*', which refers to the strength and prestige enjoyed by a tribe or family, grounded—according to him—in bonds of lineage, kinship, and similar social ties ('Anan 1953, 121). He regarded '*asabiyyah*' as the foundational force behind the formation of states. In this context, he also expressed his view of the Arabs as a predominantly Bedouin nation prone to rapid ruin once they attain power (Anan, 1953, p. 121). He regarded '*asabiyyah*' as the foundational force behind the formation of states. In this context, he also expressed his view of the Arabs as a predominantly Bedouin nation prone to rapid ruin once they attain power.

He also offered an innovative perspective in his critique of philosophy and his praise for religious sciences, highlighting the significant role played by non-Arab scholars in the development of Islamic civilization. Nevertheless, he did not deny the cultural refinement of certain Arab cities, notably expressing admiration for Cairo and its scientific and architectural advancement.

Living in a time characterized by challenges with the collapse of the caliphate, fragmented authority across various political entities, tribalism, and the process of transmission (*naql*) outstripping rational

thinking ('aql) in most scholarly writing, Ibn Khaldun was able to develop a new model of historical and social thought. Even when operating under these difficult conditions, he was able to develop a unique legacy that now serves to encourage the aspiration for an Islamic and Arab sociology, representing the realities of Muslim societies with their particular needs (Ben Nabi 2013, 59).

The Concept of the *Ummah* in Ibn Khaldun's Thought

The notion of the *Ummah* in Ibn Khaldun's work is understood in a holistic civilizational framework that articulates the social, religious and political aspects as a unified theoretical structure. In distinction to typical definitions of the nation, which often addressed physical territory or ethnic attachment; for Ibn Khaldun, the *Ummah* is the result of a multiple constructions of structure, in which group solidarity - 'asabiyyah- is primary, but also includes religion and civilization- 'umrān.

Here, it is clear that 'asabiyyah is the foundation of the political community. It is the impetus behind organized human association, the foundation of state-making, and one of the principal contributors to state durability (Ibn-Khaldun 1958)

As Ibn Khaldun explained, 'asabiyyah is not simply a biological or familial bond; rather, it is a social tie constituted out of the support of its members for each other, with common interests, and as a collective solidarity. 'asabiyyah's strength is dependent on its ability to encompass diversity and reproduce loyalty. 'asabiyyah that stops at the level of the nuclear family is likely to fragment. On the other hand, when the system that gives rise to 'asabiyyah includes a civilizational or religious value system, it takes the form of an *Ummah* .

Ibn Khaldun notes in his *Muqaddimah* that the *Ummah* can only emerge when 'asabiyyah is elevated beyond its nascent mode and forms a broad solidarity based on allegiance to higher orders of values such as religion, justice or truth. Only by being elevated in this way can 'asabiyyah [be] responsible for uniting the multitude of groups in the project of political coherence.

According to Ibn Khaldun, this is precisely what occurred with the rise of the early Islamic state, where tribal 'asabiyyah was fused with the prophetic mission. The result was a broad religious solidarity that facilitated the formation of an *Ummah*—one that went beyond tribal and ethnic boundaries (Ibn-Khaldun 1958, 102) .

In his examination of the term 'asabiyyah, Irwin (2018) further assist us by establishing that 'asabiyyah is much more than an expression of conflict, aggression, or enthusiastic attachment to one's interests; it is also a principle of organization and social integration. It gives coherence to disparate elements as they crowd in on a common work. For Ibn Khaldun, therefore, the *Ummah* is able to exist as a unique form, when the group can institutionalize and organize 'asabiyyah as an organized and institutionalized idea rather than unlimited force of chaos (Irwin 2018, 212-15).

In a similar way, Alatas (2014) argues that 'asabiyyah is not merely a closed internal structure; it can be thought as an open structure that can accommodate diversity and difference in ideas and beliefs- if this plurality embodies its own symbolic order. Religion is an important regulating mechanism of 'asabiyyah, and re-directs 'asabiyyah in a way that moves away from parochial group interests or local incidents of violence.

Seen from a different perspective, Salama (2011) argues that, in Ibn Khaldun's thinking, *Ummah* is not only a political society, but also the realization of a civilizational condition with continuity—historical expansion. In regards, the *Ummah* has the conditions necessary for expansion and survival when there is a strong 'asabiyyah and regulating function of religion, and the state of 'umrān (civilization) is in a state of growth. When these things are not present, the *Ummah* is in a state of decline, and solidarity will be broken apart and the legitimacy of the ruled will not be maintained.

Current readings—such as Mansouri (2023) current study—show how Ibn Khaldun's concept of the *Ummah* can be used today to think about the historical crises of national fragmentation in the Arab world. In many cases, there are a lack of overarching 'asabiyyahs that are being replaced or represented by partial allegiances—religious, sectarian, or in terms of region—that make national formations fragile and questionable and prone to unravelling. The study discusses how re-establishing the ethical aspect

of 'asabiyyah and re-establishing religion as a potential that unites rather than divides could potentially be meaningful in thinking through current political and social transformations.

Mardiansyah (2024) has, in his comparison of Ibn Khaldun with Sufi thinkers, indicated that the Ummah is more than just the product of materialities or political determinants in Ibn Khaldun's understanding; it is also spiritual. This means it relates to our connection to the Absolute which anchors the community in shared values. The Ummah is susceptible to collapse morally and politically when a community is detached from its foundational values, which underscores the importance of collective consciousness in understanding the trajectory of the Ummah.

In this respect, Ibn Khaldun's understanding of the Ummah transcends structural or narrow legal definitions. It serves as a broadly thoughtful framework to interpret large-scale social and historical development. The Ummah reflects the living expression of the relationship between the level of vitality in 'asabiyyah, the constraining force of religion, and the expansion of civilization ('umrān) in action. It is an entirely integrated social being that is an expression of a civilizational unit throughout the life cycle process from inception, height and ultimately depletion.

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Conditions for Social Cohesion in Ibn Khaldun's Thought

Ibn Khaldun sees loyalty (or allegiance) to the state as a substantial factor in social stability and cohesion. In terms of political authority, he claims the legitimacy of the state rests on incorporating justice and advocacy of citizens' interests. When the state loses this capacity—when it fails to represent the people's needs—individuals begin to seek alternative sources of loyalty, whether tribal, religious, or even allegiance to external powers, ultimately destabilizing the state (Krausch 1992).

Accordingly, Ibn Khaldun sees belonging to the Ummah and the broader society as the primary factor in the establishment and continuity of human civilization ('umrān). This sense of belonging is driven by 'asabiyyah as the engine of social cohesion, religion as a unifying moral framework, and the influence of economic and political structures. When this allegiance weakens, social bonds disintegrate, leading to the collapse of both society and the state.

Ibn Khaldun's conception of belonging is highly meaningful for modern sociological analysis. Many contemporary sociological studies confirm that today's societies remain dependent on the strength of the social and political ties among individuals and entities to the state. His ideas appear to provide a timeless lens for understanding how legitimacy, identity, and social cohesion operate historically and in contemporary society.

Ibn Khaldun introduced a new field of knowledge he calls "the science of human civilization" ('ilm al-'umrān al-basharī) and argued that it gets to the heart of historical study rather than simply being a branch of history. Ibn Khaldun's reasoning, sparked by the distortions and inaccuracies he saw in the works of earlier historians in a poor fashion when transmitting events, led him to consider the realities of human society and the conditions in which reality is maintained.

Ibn Khaldun's claim is that phenomena like tribalism, urbanization, 'asabiyyah, the economy, means of living, production of knowledge, crafts etc., are only knowable, situationally, by 'umrān al-basharī.

Conventionally, historians capture events satisfactorily, whereas 'umrān describes HOW and WHY events happened, which is what gives Ibn Khaldun's science its unique explanatory power and is a major turning point in social and historical studies.

This methodological awareness in Ibn Khaldun, according to the thinker Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, stemmed from personal experience and a sharp consciousness of the political and social conflicts he lived through—particularly the collapse of states and the rivalry between kingdoms. When the crisis surpassed the boundaries of the self and the problems of the present began to provoke the intellect, turning to history became a natural step in order to understand the underlying causes of reality.

Al-Jabri summarized this idea precisely when he stated: "For Ibn Khaldun's consciousness, the problem was not about his displacement or the death of his friend, but rather this bitter struggle for power—these emirates and kingdoms that arise only to fall or collapse. And when the problem extends beyond the individual and his personal experience—when the present presents itself as a problem that seizes the entirety of one's awareness and provokes deep reflection—then turning to the past and resorting to history becomes something natural" (Al-Jabiri & Mohammed 1992, 92).

Ibn Khaldun regarded the science of 'umrān (human civilization) as an independent discipline in its own right, with its own subject matter (human society), its own questions (social conditions and phenomena), and its own methodology (empirical observation and rational analysis). He described it as a newly invented science, one that had not been developed before him—suggesting that earlier scholars may have overlooked it, or that their works simply did not survive. Ibn Khaldun's theory of 'umrān is multifaceted and rich in topics. As (Al-Sa'ati 2006, 123) noted, "Ibn Khaldun devoted original and profound chapters to the state and its evolution, the nature of power and domination, forms of sovereignty, and the processes of political decay."

He dedicated his famous work, *al-Muqaddimah* ("The Introduction"), to outlining the foundations of this new science. In it, he examined the conditions of human society from multiple angles, including governance, labor, knowledge, and industry. His analysis was grounded in empirical social reality and guided by logical reasoning and critical inquiry.

Ibn Khaldun started to build his thinking around 'umrān (civilization) on a base assumption: the human is inherently a social animal, unable to live in solitude because they inherently must depend on cooperation with others. Cooperation requires both access to food and protection, it requires us to import differentiated roles, and it requires rearranged efforts. He expressed this idea by stating: "'Umrān is the cohabitation and mutual dwelling in a town or encampment, for the sake of social companionship and the fulfillment of needs, due to humans' natural inclination toward cooperation in sustaining life."

He also divided 'umrān into stages, beginning with Bedouin civilization (simple and nomadic) and culminating in urban civilization (complex and settled), asserting that each of these phases represents a historical and social phenomenon inherently linked to the state, and thus central to understanding history and society.

In several chapters of *al-Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun elaborated on the various factors influencing civilization, ranging from geographical (such as regions and climate), to psychological (such as temperaments and inclinations), to spiritual (such as prophecy and miracles). In his classification of the inhabited world (*al-ma'mūr*), he drew upon earlier astronomical and geographical works, including those of Ptolemy and al-Idrīsī.

Ibn Khaldun expressed his hope that scholars would continue what he had begun and critically reassess his work with the aim of completing and refining it. He wrote:

"If I have missed something in documenting it, or if some issues remain unclear, then it is up to the discerning and rigorous reader to correct it."

Overall, Ibn Khaldun's *'ilm al-'umrān* (science of civilization) stands as a genuine foundation for the discipline of sociology, distinguished by the originality of its subject matter, the depth of its methodology, and the comprehensive perspective it offers on the issues of humanity, society, and the state.

In light of all the above, Ibn Khaldun's theory of human civilization (*'umrān al-bashari*) offers a profound understanding of the role of belonging in the formation and stability of societies. Through his

concept of *'asabiyyah* (social cohesion or group solidarity), he illustrates that social cohesion is a fundamental condition for the rise and continuity of states, while the weakening of social bonds leads to the collapse of civilizations.

Religion, in his view, plays a pivotal role in reinforcing identity and collective belonging, as it provides a unified framework of values and beliefs. By analyzing the various stages of societal development, Ibn Khaldun shows that belonging is not a fixed concept but a dynamic one—shaped by economic, social, and political factors. Thus, maintaining a strong sense of collective belonging becomes essential for the survival and stability of nations.

Ibn Khaldun considered social cohesion not as a spontaneous fact or an ephemeral cultural phenomenon, but rather as a basic structural condition necessary for the development and survival of human civilization (*'umrān*). He maintained that societies and states can only emerge and endure in the presence of strong unifying bonds between members, including: *'asabiyyah* (group solidarity), religion, and justice. These three components form the key building blocks of a stable state (Ibn Khaldun 1958/2005).

Importantly, these three components do not exist in isolation, but rather exist within an integrated civilizational system that generates and consolidates the *ummah* (nation).

The First Element: *'Asabiyyah* (Group Solidarity)

The idea of *'asabiyyah* (group solidarity) is one of Ibn Khaldun's most recognizable and unique conceptual contributions to the study of history, and it serves as the foundation upon which he expounds his theory of the rise and fall of states. As he defines it, *'asabiyyah* is not simply a narrow bond of tribe or family; it is a broader social and political phenomenon in which a group of people collectively bring their resources together to pursue common objectives. *'Asabiyyah* is an important force in consolidating internal unity, and combining their resources to confront internal or external obstacles.

For Ibn Khaldun, *'asabiyyah* is the energetic force around which the state spins. The greater the *'asabiyyah*, the stronger the ability of the state to spread outwards and develop, and the weaker a *'asabiyyah*, the more challenges a state will face developing and remaining stable. By consolidating previously separate and unrelated individuals into a singular political and organized entity, the cohesion provided by *'asabiyyah* is necessary for the formation of the state and its ability to endure.

The emergence of states, in Ibn Khaldun's analysis, is closely tied to the strength of *'asabiyyah* possessed by any group of people—particularly among tribesmen who have not yet been tainted by the comforts of civility. In the process of state formation, *'asabiyyah* represents a necessary condition. It is not, however, only a characteristic of nomadic, or tribesman societies. *'Asabiyyah* can also be exhibited by town and more developed societies, in which *'asabiyyah* still operates to unite (politically and culturally) individuals together around goals such as law, war and identity.

Through this examination, it becomes clear to us that continuity or decline of a state is typically directly related to the strength or weakness of *'asabiyyah*. Strong solidarity supports collective action and stability, while a decline in solidarity represents the descent into fragmentation and eventual collapse.

Ibn Khaldun's understanding of *'asabiyyah* reveals it as a bond based on shared belonging, founded on kinship by blood. In his understanding, *'asabiyyah* constitutes the foundation for understanding the rise, development, and fall of states. It embodies the way in which individuals are brought together for mutual cooperation, or bond them in strong loyalty, instead of competing for power, particularly in the event of threat from beyond or within the political community. Ibn Khaldun shows how *'asabiyyah* can emerge as a social bond based on kinship or loyalty, through development it can evolve into collective power that mobilizes individuals and territory and unifies competing interests.

Ibn Khaldun claims that *'asabiyyah* can produce fruit only within a group bound together by similar obligations of mutual support and defense against injustice. This group should come together and subordinate itself to a single authority which connects their word to one another. He has also associated *'asabiyyah* with kinship ties, and furthermore sees blood relations as the platform of natural solidarity

and support unless weakened by luxury or entangled by internal strife. In this context, he observes that 'asabiyyah can include those linked to each other by blood ties, and those bound together by loyalty, pact, or affiliation (Khodairi 2007, 162)

Hence, in Ibn Khaldun's view, 'asabiyyah is not merely a tool for conflict or domination, but a fundamental factor in the formation and continuity of the state—provided it is mobilized within the framework of a unifying project, not as a manifestation of blind tribalism, but rather in the service of maintaining order and achieving shared political and social goals. He argues that 'asabiyyah naturally intensifies and becomes stronger as blood ties become closer because solidarity is stronger and cohesion is stronger, which is then visibly shown in the behaviour of the group members. Nevertheless, if kinship is more distant, its effects reach less strongly but being reminded of a common ancestor is enough to awaken 'asabiyyah and provoke a response in favour of the individual with that heritage, as a natural sense of belonging is always present in the individual.

In this context, Ibn Khaldun defines 'asabiyyah as "mutual support based on kinship or alliance," implying a state of social cohesion grounded in solidarity and mutual aid. In this sense, 'asabiyyah becomes the driving force behind all collective social and political action. According to this understanding, the state cannot emerge or endure without a form of 'asabiyyah that both protects it and establishes a foundation of political and social loyalty.

In a modern reinterpretation of the concept, Alatas (2014) contends that 'asabiyyah is not only limited to its, oftentimes tribal form, but can also occur in contemporary forms of solidarity such as nationalistic, religious, or ideological beliefs, as long as they are able to come together as a collective group with a unifying identity. This interpretation provides Ibn Khaldun's idea of 'asabiyyah reducible and usable in the analysis of contemporary social and political events such as the development of nationalist movements or social collective groups in postcolonial societies.

Sümer (2012) noted that the concept of 'asabiyyah can also provide an explanatory account for the resurgence of social movements in modern contexts, especially in countries in the Global South where collective forms of solidarity are rearticulated in the context of a reaction to territorial disintegration or economic downturns. He suggested that reconstructing 'asabiyyah in modern forms of society can help repair the nation's fabric, and provide political legitimacy (Sümer, 2012, p. 220).

So understood, 'asabiyyah represents the central core of Ibn Khaldun's conception, being one of the basic pillars he erected to build his conception of human civilization ('umrān basharī). He thought of civilization as an active and changing process starting from the order of badāwah (nomadism) at its origin, and it ultimately reached, and desired, the final phase of ḥadārah (civilization). Thus Sha'aan (2010, 81), explain it well by saying: "The state-based society of 'asabiyyah is strong in 'asabiyyah in what Ibn Khaldun called badawī 'umrān, and it reaches civilization, what is described as ḥadarī 'umrān, by a sequential phase of development in between."

The Second Element: Religion

Ibn Khaldun employed a different intellectual methodology based upon the core principles of Islam while remaining honest and free from the severe fanaticism of his time, which also allowed him to construct a complete intellectual vision of moderation and realism. This vision came out in the positions he took and the analyses he conducted, an overlap of authenticity and creativity, for he rejected the stagnation of all the other religious and intellectual institutions of his time.

During his time, there was a regressive trend in many religious institutions where religion was used as a method to satisfy narrow political interests, and wherein scholars and thinkers who attempted to recall or purify religious thought were persecuted. Notwithstanding this air of political freedom, however, Ibn Khaldun, pursued a just and fair intellectual course. He moved beyond ideological immobility and used Islam as a moral and ethical reference point, while avoiding being the victim of authoritarian vulgarization.

Ibn Khaldun was, above all things, not just a passive reviewer of the social and historical conditions he lived among. Rather, he was a reformist intellectual and he wanted to develop practical solutions for the social and political ills that plagued society and the state. This reformist inclination was clearly

demonstrated through his approach in the book *al-Muqaddimah*, where he laid out a complete scientific model for studying societies while connecting social, political, and economic phenomena and trends. Arnold Joseph Toynbee (1889–1975), a British historian, called him "a shining star in the darkness of that age" and stated: "Ibn Khaldun conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is unquestionably the greatest of its kind that any mind has ever guild, at any time or place" Al-Din (1991, 21), which illustrates the distinctiveness of his intellect during a time of political and intellectual decline. The profundity of his thought demonstrates that he did not allow the limitations of his time and space to restrict him but he turned them into a source of inspiration to bootstrap a new method, and in this way, he founded sociology and history in a virtually scientific approach.

As a result, Ibn Khaldun was a paradigm of creative critical thinking—objectivity, a set of values, and the engagement with reality—that ensured that he has a lasting place in the intellectual history of Islam, and humanity itself.

Firstly, the *Muqaddimah* was a scientific model for interpreting the structure of human societies, and related economic, social, and political factors into a unified structure with relationships and dependencies. In this sense, the eminent British historian Arnold Toynbee distinguished Ibn Khaldun by saying he was "a bright star in the darkness of that age," perhaps because he had a deeper understanding and civilizational significance of his great work in the historical context.

The analytical scope inherent in the thought of Ibn Khaldun indicates his capacity for a creative twist on the civilizational problems of his time, aided by a scientific methodology of research on which the foundations of sociology and the philosophy of history were laid. His outlook reached a totality of comprehension and constructive criticism, so that "Ibn Khaldun" would come to signify creativity and innovation in the history of human thought. While discussing the problem of social belonging, Ibn Khaldun did not equate the social phenomenon with tribal solidarity only, as he showed in a previous statement, that religion has the effect of generating social consensus for tribal cohesion. Religion is central to the problem of belonging. He sets religion in italics as having legislative and educational power; this provides the context of consensus for members of society, that in belonging through at least a shared religious belief plan or shared "value" means having values to invest - hence to bastion the spirit of belonging and loyalty of "let's belong" of the community and also within, the idea of consolidation and salute for the stability of a state. The orientalist Von Grunebaum (2010) pointed out that Ibn Khaldun was amongst the first thinkers to understand the social function of religion being a foundation of collective identity that produced a continuity of societies beyond generations.

According to Ibn Khaldun, religion and 'asabiyya (group solidarity), exist together in a supportive, cooperative, and complementary manner. Religion strengthens 'asabiyya by limiting expressions of fanaticism, and it plays a fundamental role in fortifying the sense of belonging to the nation and society because it gives individuals a collective identity that supersedes tribal and ethnic differences.

In turn, 'asabiyya grants the religious call power and effectiveness, making affiliation with the group no longer limited to tribal ties, but extending to include loyalty to the nation. Here, religion plays an important role in consolidating the foundations of the state, as it removes rivalry among people and brings their hearts together. It also redirects their aggressive nature toward spreading the call to monotheism and building a better society. If a prophet or a saint arises among them, guiding them to the command of God, removing from them reprehensible traits, instilling praiseworthy ones, and uniting their word in order to uphold the truth, they become united and thus gain dominance and rule (Ibn-Khaldun 1958, 626). Ibn Khaldun emphasizes the significant influence that the religious aspect has on 'asabiyya (group solidarity), particularly by rerouting or fine-tuning it so that togetherness becomes stronger and directed toward a common goal. In Ibn Khaldun's mind, religion eliminates the rivalry and envy that can occur among members of a group; he states that it auxiliaries them to a noble and unified objective.

In this context, he states: "The religious character removes the rivalry and envy that exist among those bound by 'asabiyya, and it unifies their direction toward the truth. Once they gain clarity in their purpose, nothing can stand in their way, because their focus is unified, and the goal is equally desired

by all of them, for which they are willing to sacrifice everything... The religious unity thus multiplies the strength of their 'asabiyya through insight and willingness to die for the cause, as we have said—so nothing can stand against them." (Ibn-Khaldun 1958, 170)

This reinforces the notion that religion and its consolidation rely on a strong 'asabiyya (group solidarity) that underlies and bolsters its authority. Religion does not come into being and does not diffuse without a unified group that adopts it and defends it with a force of 'asabiyya. This notion is the basis for our understanding of the structural fusion of the political and the religious in Ibn Khaldun's thought, with 'asabiyya functioning as a precondition for temporal and spiritual rule. He states this explicitly: "Religious preaching without 'asabiyya cannot be fulfilled" (Khaldun & al-Rahman, 2007, 158).

In Ibn Khaldun's view, religion is a core element of 'asabiyya that utilises it towards great ends of collective ambition. He does not consider religion merely as an aspect of spiritual creed, he sees it as an essential socio-political institution contributing to a construction of a collective identity and formative construction of the value system through which individuals act. Once 'asabiyya is rooted in a religious call, it turns into a larger civilizational effort rather than a merely factional movement, as it was in the case of the Islamic mission in the 7th CE (Ibn-Khaldun 1958, 102-105).

Salama (2011) notes Ibn Khaldun explained, religion is a means of shared symbols and shared norms, that legitimizes authority, and regulates social life through solidarity and cooperation. Salama bemoans the idea of compartmentalizing or trivializing religion as a public good, because that animalizes or trivializes one of the foundations of social strength, as he explains. Similarly, Mansouri (2023) also notes, in his comparative study, that contemporary societies without a negotiating space for religion within their own systems of values and norms, are legitimacy crises, and uncertain symbolic unity diminishes the capacity to aggregate national identity. Mansouri's observations, for these purposes, are congruent to those of Ibn Khaldun while considering that the lack of religion, proselytizing religion compounds 'asabiyya, because political authority is legitimated by way of spirituality.

The Third Element: Justice and Economic Organization

To Ibn Khaldun, justice represents one of the fundamental pillars of state stability and the continuity of civilization. Injustice not only erodes loyalty or loyalty, and engenders discontent, it ruptures the underlying social construction to the point of authority disintegration. He famously summarizes this thinking in his memorable quote: "Injustice is the predecessor of ruin of civilization" (Ibn-Khaldun 1958, 285).

He notes that justice is not always legal or political, but also means the fair distribution of resources; a guarantee for basic needs of the population, and equality of opportunity among individuals. When these balances become eroded, society begins to lose its connectedness, and 'asabiyya switches from a form of solidarity to a form of monopoly and dominance.

There are many aspects of stability (political, economic, and social), and when stability and security, are present, they are considered prerequisite conditions for the rebirth phase of the state and for society's prosperity. When stability is not present, things inherently slow down and the costs, which can quickly compound negatively or curve-paralyze in different areas, destabilizing the whole state from an economic, political, and social perspective. Ibn Khaldun recognized this reality as well, stating stability is also associated with stable resources. He suggested that a stable state gets to prosperity or enjoys ease or leisure because of political power and control. He declared, "Stable states have liveliness abundant because of the fusing of their rule and enjoy the ease or leisure based on that, because they have receipts just for themselves" (Abdel & Sayed 2012).

Alatas (2014) confirms this point with the assertion that social justice is an essential basis of social cohesion, and any imbalance in social justice hastens internal division and symbolic decay. Alatas adds that unjust economic systems thwart states from developing true loyalty and turn the state and society into a relationship of oppression and exploitation.

The Interconnection of the Three Elements

These three aspects of Ibn Khaldun's theory converge into his concept of 'umrān basharī' (human civilization). 'Umraṇ basharī' is not just a state of equilibrium; it is a civilizational formation that has balanced 'asabiyya (group solidarity), religion, and justice. Society can never achieve stability if any of these elements does not stick around. If a community loses one of the pillars of its civilization, the social lattice will collapse giving way for downward spiral that can lead to the implosion of the state.

As Fedayee (2023) notes, this three-part model of societies can be seen as an "integrated sociological theory" for clarifying how societies emerge and endure. He encourages a model built upon a focus of lenses to understand societal structures, especially in current social fragmentation and crisis of identity.

Turchin (2012) affirm in a comparative sociological study, societies that accumulate economic injustices, exclude religion from the public sphere, and fragment unifying solidarities ('asabiyyāt) become increasingly prone to disorder, violence, and institutional collapse.

Factors of Civilizational Collapse in Ibn Khaldun's Thought

Ibn Khaldun argues that civilizations and states follow a cyclical trajectory that begins with emergence, followed by growth and consolidation of power, eventually reaching their peak before entering a phase of decline and collapse. In doing so, he presents a dynamic vision of human civilization ('umrān basharī), grounded in the interplay between social power ('asabiyya), religious legitimacy, and economic justice. When any of these elements become unbalanced, the civilizational structure begins to deteriorate, and the state enters stages of weakness and decay (Ibn-Khaldun 1958, 313) .

First Factor: The Weakening of 'Asabiyya

The 'asabiyya that initially served as the primary driving force behind the establishment of the state gradually becomes an empty shell, devoid of substance, as a result of luxury and immersion in palace life. As 'asabiyya weakens, the state loses its ability to mobilize collective energies or defend itself against external threats. Ibn Khaldun writes: "Once they become independent of 'asabiyya, they monopolize power; the force of 'asabiyya weakens, and nothing remains of it but the name" (Ibn-Khaldun, 1958, 314) .

Alatas (2014) explains that this condition parallels the disintegration of social capital in modern societies, where political and social institutions lose their capacity to generate collective loyalty and cohesion.

Ibn Khaldun sees chaos (fawḍā) as one of the most significant drivers of civilization failure. He claims that chaos makes individuals stop working and that it interrupts human labour, which creates social disunity, civil disorder, and any eventual outcomes of destruction. He stated that "Chaos is destructive to human beings, corruptive to civilization; [it] produces decline of labor, causes hands to cease to labor, which results in dislignation of society and ruin of civilization". (Ibn Khaldun 2004, 152).

Second Factor: Luxury and Moral Decay

In the eyes of Ibn Khaldun, luxury (taraf) is more than a show of extravagance; it is a social condition that appears when wealth accumulates in the hands of those who rule. The more the elite become richest, then the more collective values become lost, and individuals shift from a posture of struggling and fighting to one of consuming and lounging. While a little luxury or taraf is good for the moral fabric of society, too much luxury or taraf ruins it altogether, leaving younger generations with no chance of keeping the state.

Turchin and AlSaud (2006) give an analytical reading through this lens, expanding on the proclivities of luxury leading to overproduction of elites, which creates new levels of elite competition (among upper- and lower-class factions), and that elite production or elite competition is leading to collapse of the internal political order.

Third Factor: Injustice and the Absence of Justice

In his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun makes an interesting statement regarding the relationship among injustice, the state, and ruin when he states, "injustice is the forerunner to ruin" – which shows he understands quite a bit about the lack of social justice related to the ruin leading to the decay of the state. Injustice can include violations of property, uneven distributions of wealth, political oppression, and social marginalization. Mohammad Salama (2011) comments on the importance of this perspective; the barrier of injustice establishes space between the ruler and the ruled, and undermines legitimacy of government to such an extreme that space is created for violence and protest. In addition, Javid Fedayee (2021) has found in this statement validation for a complaint he claims alludes to the fragile nature of the social contract between the state and society, which only becomes more fragile with rhinoceros-sized injustices layered upon one another.

The Fourth Factor: Authoritarian Rule and the Loss of Legitimacy

In periods of decline, governance would transition from consultative rule (*shura*) to an increasingly authoritarian stance, where authority is derived more from coercion and taxation than a social contract. Ibn Khaldun sees this evolution as removing the element of collective consent and outright making power the subject of the competition of powerful factions rather than as a collective means of serving the community (Ibn-Khaldun 1958, 320–325). Alatas (2014) also expresses that one form of authoritarianism is acting from *asabiyyah* (group solidarity), which can turn from a unifying force to a tool of dominion—thus losing its legitimacy as a moral enterprise.

A Contemporary Analysis of Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Decline

While Ibn Khaldun's theory of decline asserts that crises are not only the product of immediate causes but demonstrate a structural dysfunction in the system's values and institutions, contemporary scholars have employed and articulated Ibn Khaldun's observations regarding the ongoing states of crisis in the contemporary Arab world. In a recent article by (Mansouri, 2023), he develops the use of Ibn Khaldun's model to analyze the failure of the nation-state in some Arab countries, pointing to the absence of a shared collective project, the decline in national *asabiyyah*, and the monopolization of wealth contributes to a deep political and social break-down.

Sümer (2012) argues that Ibn Khaldun's ideas continue to be relevant for interpreting the newly evolving dynamics of social movements arising as a result of class inequality, violations of justice, and the decline of social connectedness. And, would offer a useful framework for rethinking theories of decline, especially as means of accounting for the new divisions and fragmentation in capitalist societies. By returning to Khaldunian thought, he is advocating for an understanding of how structural disaggregations and grossly compounded by moral degradation leads to new forms of social discontent.

With all of these considerations, we can see that Ibn Khaldun articulated a broad theory about the decline of civilization; one that does not depend upon random events but is based on a deep understanding of social, political, and moral structures of the state. This depth of theory gives remarkable relevance to Ibn Khaldun's framework regarding contemporary realities, as many modern states are experiencing crises that pattern those described by Ibn Khaldun over six century ago. The rationale of his theories regarding the breakdown of justice, the bonds of society, and the legitimacy of government remain relevant to help understand the sources of political and societal collapse today.

The Contemporary Relevance of Ibn Khaldun's Thought in Understanding Modern Societies

Ibn Khaldun's ideas – though originating in the 14th century – have astonishingly relevant contemporary implications for an analysis of the structural crises currently facing modern societies, particularly in transitional conditions or those experiencing a deterioration in their social and political environments. Countless scholars and thinkers have turned to and reappropriated some of his core ideas—such as *asabiyyah* (group solidarity), social cohesion, and the cycles of states—in attempting to

connect and understand certain recurring phenomena in the Arab and Islamic world today. Such ideas have been insightful lenses allowing them to diagnose issues of disintegration of a collective identity, the loss of legitimacy, and cycles of ascend and descend of quite a few modern states.

The notion of *asabiyyah*, as advanced by Ibn Khaldun, has tremendous traction today for understanding the bases of loyalty and belonging in contemporary states, particularly in contexts in which national institutions are weak. Irwin (2018) notes that *asabiyyah* could be interpreted as the counterpart to what Western literature recognizes as "social capital"—the ability of a group to generate trust and solidarity that transcends individual or sectarian identity. This idea offers a rationale for why states often fail, when they are unable to cultivate a broad-based collective loyalty that exceeds ethnic or sectarian identity. In the absence of a cohesive social fabric, the state's coherence and legitimacy erode and the state stands to fragment and possibly collapse—exactly according to what Ibn Khaldun theorized centuries ago.

In the same context, Salama (2011) points out that the fragmentation of modern societies under the pressures of globalization and the absence of a unifying national project has brought renewed attention to the central roles of religion and political *asabiyyah* in constructing social cohesion. Religion, in this regard, is now more than a symbolic aspect—it is an effective means of political mobilization, that can galvanize solidarity or divide us further. This possibility reflects Ibn Khaldun's comments in the *Muqaddimah*, who was prescient that religious identity and group solidarity would on the one hand stabilize societies but could on the other hand destabilize societies, depending on how it fits into the social and political order.

This is exactly what Ibn Khaldun's theory of *'umran* (civilization) suggests: a complicated and layered framework within which he covered several overlapping issues regarding the emergence and development of the state. To better grasp *'ilm al-'umran*, the science of society, we can start with the definition Ibn Khaldun offered in the *Muqaddimah*, when he stated that of the subject of history is the study of how humans organize into societies or what he called the "civilization of the world." Ibn Khaldun is focusing here on studying the elements of human civilization, and the changes they undergo, such as straddling the two poles of settlement (*ta'ānus*) and nomadism (*tawāḥḥush*), along with variations of *asabiyyah*, competition between human groupings for power consumption, and the nature of sovereignty, states, and hierarchies. Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on the dialectics of structure and cycle allows us to closely investigate the general structures and cycles within social settings that provide context as social phenomena over time.

Along with what humans gain in terms of means of livelihood, forms of earning, knowledge, crafts, and so forth—each with its own reasons and descriptions—history, in its essence, is a report on human social organization, which is the world's civilization, and about the circumstances conditioned by human civilization, like, nomadism, sociability, and group solidarities (*asabiyyat*) (Ibn-Khaldun 1958, p. 56), as well as everything else that is naturally derived from that civilization. This theory lends itself with explanatory power when applied to some contemporary developments, such as, state collapse, protest movements, the rise of the rentier class, and class divisions. Syed Alatas (2014) used the concepts from this theory to critique Western sociology, while calling for a Southern sociology that is based on Ibn Khaldun's method of analysis to interpret the social phenomena within countries of the Global South.

Even in the economic literature, there is more regained interest in Ibn Khaldun's worldview, like in the book "Ibn Khaldun on Economic Transformation" where the *Muqaddimah* is used to discuss the relationship between equity and justice and stability of the state. All of these factors for Ibn Khaldun, as he stated, are precursors to decline. Unbalanced economic growth, the burgeoning of elites, padded wallets, and concentrated wealth, are signs of the onset of decline in the cycle of *'umran* (civilization).

Ibn Khaldun was one of the earliest thinkers to ascribe a singular role of economics to social structures, and he believed that economic activity was a basic determinant of social origins and as such he overlaid these issues in civilizational structure. When development processes take place, Ibn Khaldun emphasized the role of labor and natural and local resources within subsistence industries, for state building and prosperity. He warned on the other hand that too much excess and wealth would decay

group and social culture and positively created a negative trajectory in the economy and ultimately, over the decline of civilization.

Ibn Khaldun underscores the requirement of organization as a social species. Further, he says it is inescapable for collaborating humans to plan for nourishment and dangers (from predatorial beings). Ibn Khaldun makes this point by referencing Aristotle's comments, "Man is by nature a social animal." A single individual cannot supply all the needs because man's reach exceeds his grasp, and is insufficient to meet all, "therefore it is impossible to meet more than the basic needs of any individual (Ibn-Khaldun 1958, 340) .

On human labor, Ibn Khaldun mentioned it was a social activity at the basis of the economy analyzing it with taxation, trade, and industries production that contributed to the success of state's (or nation's) productivity or progress. Ibn Khaldun openly condemned excessive taxation, which would eventually tax the laborers in subsequent labor produced and weaken the labor force overall. He also cautioned about excessive luxury and wealth with ruling class eventually devolving to state like collapse.

Ibn Khaldun's viewpoint provides fruitful analysis of a contemporary political upcoming by transferring Khaldun's conceptualisation of legitimate shura (consultation) and understanding the u-turn that occurs where acceptable shura becomes the rationale for an authority, the breach of trust and breakdown of the social contract to burst through and revert back to pre-state forms of *asabiyyah*. Fedayee (2023) further augments the analysis by providing the richness of an approach that re-conceptualises *asabiyyah* as a measure of the tenuousness of the national context.

Ibn Khaldun is recognized as a trailblazer in analyzing the nature of the state, as well as for explaining the dynamics of its rise and fall. He pointed out the importance of social values - the bases of which include *asabiyyah* (group identity) - to political power. He emphasized the notion that the state was based not only on legal entities, but on social forces that interplay with the ruler's political decision-making. Politics, for him, was an essential part of human life and could not be discussed outside of social and economic behavior. His totalizing view had enabled him to offer both a scientific and orderly explanation of political activity in his daily life, which is a much-needed difference from many others of his time.

Given the unfortunate situation experienced by some Arab societies today characterized by ideological and sectarian factions, power struggles, and wealth monopolization, it may be time to rethink the Khaldunian approach, not only as a reflection on the past, but also as a way to understand a troubled present. The particulars of the state, the nature of the relationship between authority and society, and the role of religion are all important dimensions, which can be approached through Ibn Khaldun's method of considering the interrelationship of the social, economic, and political aspects of societies. Ibn Khaldun's method provides a possible way for diagnosing structural crises, and developing avenues toward renewal and coherence.

This is to say that Ibn Khaldun's thought has an exceptional explanatory potential, and can serve as a reference point for political sociology, state understanding, and crisis analysis, especially within the context of the non-West. What distinguishes his vision, and thought, is that it is born out of an Islamic historical experience, but it also accepts the logic of transformation and change, and applies it to modern conditions.

To summarize, reclaiming, or grappling with Ibn Khaldun's thought in the contemporary moment is not only an intellectual undertaking, but it is also a reclamation of an alternative theoretical framework - an alternative to reductionist interpretations that have characterized our understandings of Arab societies for too long. It is a call to look at contemporary crises, through a deliberately critical, Arab-Islamic lens, and not lingering in fascination with a Western frame, one which limits a sociology of the depth of local realities.

Conclusion

To engage with Ibn Khaldun's thought about the concept of the "ummah," that is *asabiyyah* for social cohesion and the reasons for urban/ state collapse, is to engage with a kind of overall theoretical project

that retains explanatory power, even six centuries later. Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah provided an analytical vision (historical, sociological, and political) based on the ideas of *asabiyyah* (عصبية) and religion, justice, and 'umran (civilization), and represented an early articulation of what begins to look like political sociology.

This study has shown that the ummah is not merely a political or geographical entity in the thought of Ibn Khaldun, but a network of social and sui - symbolic ties created by *asabiyyah*, religion and justice—elements that can work in combination to find social and political cohesion. Additionally, the elements of civilizational decline he identified—from weakening group solidarity to luxury, corruption and the lack of justice—demonstrate a considerably early understanding he had of the structure of the state and its trajectories of rise and decline.

Ibn Khaldun's relevance today is derived from his exceptional capacity for transcending the historical milieu in which he lived and offering an analytical model that is relevant to modern societies. It is important thus to utilize the Khaldunian project, in this moment of crises of the social contract, crises of political legitimacy, and rising sectarianism and class divisions currently potentially facing many Arab states today, not as a project of the past which may indeed be historic but one that can be informative to understand the present and position the future.

This study has demonstrated as well that Ibn Khaldun's thought could be instrumental for the emergence of an alternative critical sociology—drawing from the Islamic historical experience to utilize projects of knowledge that can analyze social, political, and economic dynamics rather than relying only on ready-made Western methodologies; thus, to deal with Ibn Khaldun today generates both an intellectual engagement and critical position—it is to reclaim an indigenous body of knowledge to approach contemporary challenges.

To conclude, examining Ibn Khaldun's thinking on the ummah, cohesion, and decline means not only engaging in an intellectual history dynamic, but also signalling a desire to re-engage with the Arab-Islamic intellectual heritage as a source of knowledge that can flexibly respond to modern transformations, and as a grounded beginning to engage with the building of a modern civilizational project based upon justice, collective belonging, and social solidarity.

This study recommends a renewed reading of Ibn Khaldun's intellectual legacy in light of contemporary contexts, positioning it as a theoretical framework for understanding the crises facing the ummah and offering structural alternatives for interpretation. It emphasizes the need to orient educational and cultural policies toward reinforcing social cohesion by promoting values of solidarity, justice, and collective belonging. The study also proposes employing Ibn Khaldun's model to analyze the role of modern forms of *asabiyyah* - such as partisanship, ideology, and sectarianism—in either building or undermining the nation.

Additionally, it calls for comparative research between Ibn Khaldun's theories and modern political sociology, in order to deepen understanding and develop more precise analytical tools. The study further highlights the strategic importance of advancing economic and social justice in the construction of the modern nation-state, in line with Ibn Khaldun's warning about the corrosive effects of injustice on civilization. These recommendations pave the way for further research into the applications of Khaldunian thought across sociology, politics, and economics, and advocate for harnessing his intellectual legacy as part of a revivalist project—one that embraces the past while shaping the future.

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BIONOTE:

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