# DECOLONIZING ISLAMIC STUDIES: A VIEW FROM THE SALAFIS SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

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**ABSTRACT**
*This essay argues for a critical re-evaluation of Islamic studies, challenging the Eurocentric and Arab-centric biases that have historically shaped the field. We propose a de-colonial approach that dismantles assumptions of Arab supremacy and promotes a more inclusive understanding of Islam. Through the lens of the Salafi school of thought, a historically and geographically diverse movement within Islam, we examine the relationship between Islamic faith and Arab identity. Through the lens of critical thinking, we explore how the Salafi school both reinforces and critiques notions of Arab centrality in Islam. Furthermore, we examine potential tensions between Salafi interpretations and human autonomy and rights. Ultimately, we argue that decolonizing Islamic studies necessitates diverse perspectives, fostering a more humane, creative, and productive understanding of this global religion with over 1.8 billion adherents worldwide.*

## Introduction:

Islamic studies, a field traditionally dominated by Western and Arab-centric perspectives, often presents a limited and sometimes stereotypical understanding of Islam, which overlooks the diverse experiences of Muslims worldwide. This essay, titled "Decolonizing Islamic Studies: A View from the Salafi School of Thought," aims to challenge these prevailing assumptions and promote a more inclusive understanding of Islam.

A considerable body of literature has examined the historical development of Islamic studies, often highlighting the influence of Western Orientalism and the dominance of Arab perspectives. Edward Said's seminal work, "Orientalism," critically analyses how Western scholarship has historically constructed a distorted image of the Orient, including Islamic societies, for colonial purposes (Said, 1978). Similarly, Talal Asad's "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam" interrogates the implications of viewing Islam through a monolithic lens, suggesting that such perspectives fail to capture the religion's inherent diversity (Asad, 1986).

In addition to these critical works, recent scholarship has begun to address the need for decolonizing Islamic studies by incorporating non-Arab and non-Western perspectives. For instance, Leila Ahmed's "Women and Gender in Islam" challenges both Western feminist and traditional Islamic narratives by highlighting the diverse experiences of Muslim women (Ahmed, 1992). Omid Safi's "The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam" underscores the importance of contextualising Islamic knowledge production within broader socio-political frameworks rather than viewing it through a purely theological lens (Safi, 2006).

Despite these contributions, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the role of the Salafi school of thought in either reinforcing or challenging these dominant narratives. Most studies on Salafism focus on its theological doctrines or its association with contemporary political movements, without adequately addressing its potential to offer alternative perspectives within Islamic studies.

This essay seeks to fill this gap by exploring the Salafi school of thought not merely as a theological or political phenomenon but as a critical lens through which to examine broader issues within Islamic studies. It aims to contribute to the decolonization of the field and highlight the diversity within Islamic thought itself.

We begin by defining key terms such as "Islamic studies,""Islam," and "Arab," setting the stage for a nuanced discussion. The essay then delves into the complex relationship between Arab identity and Islam, investigating how historical interpretations have sometimes conflated the two. Through a critical examination of the Salafi school of thought—a revivalist movement within Islam—we analyse how Salafi interpretations may challenge or reinforce notions of Arab supremacy and address potential violations of individual rights within Islamic discourse.

## Statement of the Problem

Despite the extensive scholarship on Islamic studies, much of the existing literature remains entrenched in Western and Arab-centric perspectives that perpetuate stereotypes and overlook the diversity within Islam. Critical works by scholars such as Edward Said and Talal Asad have laid the groundwork for understanding the influence of Orientalism and monolithic views of Islam. However, there remains a significant gap in addressing how internal Islamic movements, particularly the Salafi school of thought, contribute to or challenge these dominant narratives. This paper seeks to address this gap by examining the Salafi school not merely as a theological or political entity but as a critical lens to de-construct the conflation of Arab identity with Islam and to explore the implications for individual rights within Islamic discourse.

The problem, therefore, is twofold: first, the need to decolonise Islamic studies by incorporating diverse perspectives that go beyond Western and Arab-centric views; and second, the necessity of critically examining the Salafi movement to understand its potential role in either reinforcing or challenging these prevailing narratives. By addressing these issues, this paper aims to contribute to a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of Islam, highlighting the diversity and complexity within Islamic thought.

## Conceptual Clarification

The academic field of Islamic studies investigates Islam's historical, cultural, religious, and intellectual aspects and the societies that follow it. It uses the expository, critical methods of research to study how Islam has been expressed and understood in different times and places. Islamic studies also deal with the current issues and problems Muslims face and their relations with other groups. Islamic studies try to comprehend and appreciate the diversity and richness of Islamic civilization and its role in human history and culture (Hillenbrand, 2020).

Carole Hillenbrand is one of the leading scholars in Islamic studies. She describes it as "a discipline that seeks to explain what the Islamic world has achieved in the past and what the future holds for it." She claims that Islamic studies can provide insights into the historical changes, cultural variety, and intellectual innovation of Islam, as well as its importance for today's world (Hillenbrand, 2015).

Ahmed (2016) states that Islamic studies are fraught with textualism and outright theorization. This is because the field is dominated mainly by philologists and historians, so theories must pay more attention to discussions. According to the above assertion, there are divergent views among scholars regarding Islamic studies, which usually results in never-ending debates between most Islamic scholars who tend to be extremists and those who are non-radical and non-Islamic.

There are two primary schools of thought in Islamic studies, which are as follows:

1.**Orientalist school of thought:** This school of thought places more premium on conservatively interpreting Islamic history without questioning the traditional account of the early time of Islam nor information regarding Muhammad and how the Quran was written or came into existence. This implies that most of these scholars are likely to be Arabic Muslims and practitioners of Islam.

2. **The revolutionist school of thought:** Scholars in this school of thought are geared towards questioning the uncritical adherence to traditional Islamic sources while locating the earliest time of Islamic civilization by adopting historical-critical methods (Stile 2002; Oxford Encyclopaedia of Islamic Studies (n.d.).

Since Islamic studies are centred around Islam as a religion, culture, and civilization, it is pertinent to look at what Islam depicts.

**Islam:**

Islam is derived from the Arabic word for peace and signifies surrender to Allah (God). Islam teaches that Allah is the only and supreme God who communicates with humanity through various prophets, sacred scriptures, and natural signs, with the Quran being the final and complete revelation and Muhammad being the last of the prophets. Islam is a global religion with over a billion adherents who practice its teachings. This means that one out of every five people on Earth follows Islam (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Muslims believe that Islam is the original and universal faith that was revealed many times through earlier prophets such as Adam (believed to be the first human), Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, among others; these earlier revelations are attributed to Judaism and Christianity, which are considered in Islam as spiritual predecessor of faiths (History Editors, 2019).

**The nexus between Islam representation and Arabic identity**

Islam has various significant historical, symbolic, and commemorative events and items for its believers. For example, a mosque is a place of worship for Muslims where they conduct prayers and other religious rituals. Likewise, fasting and charity works are spiritual disciplines Muslims practice as part of their faith. Also, Mecca, located in Saudi Arabia, is the most sacred city for Muslims as it is where Muhammad was born and received his first revelation. Every year, millions of Muslims make the pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca, one of the pillars of Islam. Furthermore, Islamic history is shaped by the legacy of Islamic missionaries, Jihad (struggle in the way of God), and the rise of the Ottoman Empire through the Caliphs (successors) that lived and followed Muhammad. Likewise, the Quran was written in Arabic, which became the standard and sacred language for most Muslims worldwide (Britannica, 2023).

The above representation of Islam based on history, symbols, and legacies has made many scholars and some schools of thought to identify Arabs as Islam and Islam as Arab. However, both are not the same. Although one did not help the spread of the other solely because it was a collaborative effort.

At this stage, we will look at Arabs concisely to understand if there are any differences or similarities between Islam representation and Arab identity.

**Arabs:**

These are ethnic groups mainly inhabiting the Arab world in Western Asia, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa, West Indian Ocean islands. Islam started in Arabia, Arabic is the language of Islamic scriptures, and most Arabs are Muslims. However, only 20% of Muslims are Arabs (Bureš, 2008; Mabry, 2015).

The information above shows that the Arabic language is a form of identity for Islam representation. Arabs tend to have diverse religious affiliations among practitioners. During the Pre-Islamic era, some Arabians practisedpolytheistic and pagan religions, which brought about different ethnic groups to identify with Christianity, Judaism, and Hanifis. Thus, Arabia was not a unified political entity at Muhammad's birth but a collection of tribes and city-states with different cultures and religions (Britannica, 2023).

Currently, 93% of Arabs are adherent to Islam which cuts across Suni, Shites, Ibadi, and Alawite dominations. At the same time, the Christians among them are found within the Oriental Orthodox Churches, Eastern Catholics Churches, and Eastern Protestant Christians (Pew Research Centre, 2023).

From the above discussion, it can be observed that Arabs started Islam, and the Arabic language was used in recording the Quran. However, there are other languages that have been used to transmit Islamic knowledge and literature, such as Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Swahili, Malay, and others (Khan Academy, 2023).

Nevertheless, to associate and identify Arabs as Islam and viz a viz is not proper. According to Crone and Cook (1977), a traditional account of Islamic history and civilization is a myth that encourages Arab superiority over other Islamist ethnic groups. This postulation was, however, criticized by the following:

Donner contends that Crone and Cook's analysis of non-Arabic sources is partial and prejudiced and that they overlook or reject the Arabic sources that challenge their argument. He also denounces their re-imagining of early Islamic history as conjectural and unrealistic and their depiction of Islam as a Jewish messianic movement lacking evidence. He concedes that Crone and Cook's work was original and stimulating, but he asserts that it was also erroneous and deceptive (Donner, 2006). In the same vein, Al-Azmeh maintains that Crone and Cook's approach is grounded in a Eurocentric and Orientalist view that negates the agency and authenticity of Muslim historical actors. He also charges them with using outdated and essentialist categories to characterize early Islam, such as "Judaism,""Christianity," and "Hellenism." He alleges that Crone and Cook's work results from their political agenda and ideological bias and weakens the legitimacy and identity of Islam and Muslims (Al-Azmeh, 1987).

Humphrey's argues that Crone and Cook's method is circular and self-referential and depends on dubious assumptions and conjectures to fill the gaps in their evidence. He also doubts their use of non-Arabic sources as reliable witnesses to early Islamic history and their dismissal of Arabic sources as unreliable or fabricated. He proposes that Crone and Cook's work is more of a "what-if" experiment than a serious historical inquiry and fails to account for the complexity and diversity of early Islam (Humphreys, 1991).

**Decolonizing Islamic Studies:Moving Beyond Arabian Identification**

To effectively decolonize Islamic studies from Arabian identification and perception, we must critically examine several vital assumptions:

**Global Diversity of Muslims:** Over 1.9 billion Muslims reside worldwide, vastly exceeding the total Arabian population. This disparity emphasizes the need to move beyond Arabian perspectives and acknowledge the rich tapestry of Islamic interpretations and expressions across diverse cultures and ethnicities. (Pew Research Centre, 2023).

**Pre-Islamic Arabian Context:** The rise of the Arab state did not birth a monolithic "state religion" known as Islam. Prior to Islam's emergence, Arabian society harboured a diverse range of beliefs and practices, including paganism, polytheism, and Judaism. Recognizing this pre-Islamic context helps de-construct the narrative of Islam solely emerging from an Arabian vacuum (Robinson, 2015).

**Contextualization of the Quran:** While the Quran was initially revealed in Arabic to an Arabic-speaking audience, it is crucial to avoid interpreting this as an inherent Arabization of Islam. The Arabic language served as a tool for communication and transmission, but the message itself transcends specific language or cultural boundaries.

**Quranic Message Against Superiority:** Emphasizing the Quran's message against self-praise and claims of superiority over others directly counters notions of inherent Arabian supremacy associated with Islam. This reinforces the universal nature of Islam's message, advocating for equality and respect for all people (The Quran, Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13).

5. **Beyond the Arabian Empire**: During the expansive Arab Empire, the spread of Islam occurred alongside other religious traditions like Christianity. This historical fact challenges the conflation of Arabs and Muslims, highlighting the need to distinguish between religious and ethnic identities (Lapidus2014).

From the observation above, it has been established that not all Muslims are Arab. Besides, Muslims comprise many ethnic groups worldwide, embracing the Islamic religion. While Arabs, Arabic language, and culture have to deal directly with the Arabians who reside within the Arab regions. However, the Arabic language has helped to unify most Muslims since it is a language in which they communicate by reciting the Quran and offering prayers. By extension, this has promoted the Arab culture beyond the shores of the Arabian Peninsula.

**Salafist Plane of Thought:**

This intellectual tradition emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries as a response to the twin movements that sought to revive Islam in its original homeland. These movements consisted of a violent strand known as jihadism and a peaceful strand known as reformism. A prominent example of the latter is the al-Azhar school in Cairo (Ernst & Martins 2010). Salafism is based on the premise that the purest and most authentic form of Islam is embodied by the Salaf, the early Muslims who were close to the prophet in terms of time and proximity. Salafis around the Arab world today strive to emulate the practices of the first Muslims, such as wearing ankle-length trousers or using miswak to clean their teeth, as the prophet did (Hamid & Dar, 2016; Alsharif, 2021).

**Specific Examples of Salafism in Different Contexts:**

In Nigeria, Boko Haram, a violent Salafist group, has been active for over a decade, imposing their interpretation of Islamic law and attacking non-Muslims and moderate Muslims. The Salafist school of thought has also manifested in Saudi Arabia through the Wahhabi movement, another strand of Salafism, which is the official state religion in Saudi Arabia, influencing social and legal practices. Indonesia is not left out. Their influence has led to increased conservatism and debates about religious tolerance. In the same vein, Bosnia and North America have experienced a stricter interpretation of Islam among some Muslims, impacting gender roles and social interactions as well as establishing mosques and educational centres in North America, promoting their interpretations of Islamic practice.

It is important to note that Salafism arose in parallel with Arab nationalism and, therefore, tends to privilege Arabs as the original and authentic Muslims while marginalizing non-Arabs. Salafis often elevate Arabs and their role in Islam. This intellectual tradition holds that the first three generations of Muslims, known as the Salaf, were the most exemplary because they had direct or close contact with the prophet Muhammad during his lifetime. Ibn Taymiyyah and Hanbali are regarded as the main authorities and inspirations of this school of thought.

At this point, the study will examine some postulations of Ibn Taymiyyah regarding authentic Islam and look further into how all these have paved the way for categorizing Islam into Islam and Islams before summarizing the presentation.

Ibn Taymiyyah's though in his Iqtidi, Taymiyyah sees non-Arab Muslims as a threat to authentic Islam and inferior to Arab Muslims. He noted further that God sent down his book in Arabic through Prophet Muhammad, who is an Arabian, and also made his early followers speakers of the Arabic language. Thus, there is no way forward there is no way to be correct in Islamic religion and knowledge except by being precise in the Arabic language ( Ernst & Martins, 2010). In the same vein, he asserted that as a matter of faith, a Muslim must declare that Arabs surpass non-Arabs, which has always been the case. Consequently, normative Arabic ought to be the language of Muslims even in daily life. As such, Turkish, vernacular Arabic, Syriac, Coptic, and Aramaic are regarded as inferior

religious languages that are treacherous since non-Islamic practices enter into Islam through contact with foreign Muslims.

In terms of dressing, many African American Muslim women wear distinctive styles of hijab that emphasize the head wrap, but they feel that immigrants do not respect their dress. According to Maryam, cited in (Erns & Martins, 2010), their dress is seen as less authentic and less Islamic than the dress of Arab and South Asian Muslim women. She also claimed that their dress was judged as insufficient because it did not cover their ears and necks properly. She maintained that modesty and what constitutes a modest and genuine dress is not fixed, but rather depends on the cultural and geographical context. She further argued that Allah instructed that modesty should be a personal choice based on what is suitable and unsuitable, rather than something imposed by others.

From the above, it is evident that Maryam is opposing the Salafis school of thought, which tries to imitate the dressing method of the prophet while trying to impose some dressing methods for African American Muslim women by stereotyping their hijabs as inferior.

**Islam Versus Islams**

The term Islam and Islams is used to capture the diversity and complexity of the Islamic tradition and its followers. The Islam approach refers to places where Islam is one religion among others (Reinhart, 2020). In such places, Islam is seen as a singular entity that can be compared and contrasted with other religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism. The Islams approach, on the other hand, refers to places where Islam is the dominant or majority religion. In such places, Islam is seen as a plural and diverse phenomenon that encompasses various schools of thought, denominations, sects, movements, and cultures. The Islams approach recognizes that there is no single or uniform way of being Muslim, but rather multiple and varied ways of interpreting and practising Islam.

Ahmed argued that we should overlook the subjectivity of individual believers. God can only speak one tongue for Muslims, scholars, and laypeople. Consequently, only one Islam only one true Islam can exist, and that is usually the believer's own. We perceive diversity as right and wrong to believers (Ahned, 2016). Montgomery Watt (1968), as cited in Ahmed (2016), noted that Islams came into existence due to different religions in each country and region worldwide. The Islam approach began as a reaction to the Orientalist search for a historical Islamic essence (Ahmed, 2016). This is why we have Indonesian Islam, Indian Islam, and Moroccan Islam, among others see (Reinhart, 2020).

## Decolonizing Islamic Studies: Countering Salafi Extremism Through Critical Thinking

Human society has come to be faced with untold violence and human rights violations arising from dogmas of various degrees in the social, cultural, religious, and political spheres of life. In the religious circle, the rigid and often exclusionary interpretations of Islam propagated by some Salafi groups exemplify this dogma(s) with its attendant violence that oversteps individuals' autonomy and rights as members of society. To overcome this menace, critical thinking will be relevant.

Critical thinking is the ability to rationally analyse factual evidence in a logical manner and form an unbiased judgement (Monday & Kano, 2023). It has also been defined as the skilled and active interpretation and evaluation of observations, communications, information, and argumentation (Thomson, 1999, cited in Monday & Kano, 2023). Critical thinking in this sense means giving a fair and unbiased opinion of something or a state of affairs that will further engender good neighbourliness and cooperative living among men. Critical thinking can be a powerful tool for challenging entrenched beliefs and ideologies, including those held by religious fanatics.

Encouraging critical thinking can help individuals question dogma, engage in self-reflection, and consider alternative perspectives, which can ultimately lead to greater tolerance and understanding. However, it is important to approach this process with empathy and respect, recognising that deeply held beliefs are often tied to identity and personal experiences. Dialogue, education, and exposure to diverse ideas are key components in fostering critical thinking and promoting a more open-minded approach to religion and belief systems. Critical thinking is necessary for every rational society that aims to promote the well-being of men in

society, socially, culturally, religiously, politically, and otherwise. Human society, by its very nature, is social, preventing individuals from living in isolation. However, the autonomy of the human person and respect for human rights are critical to achieving a well-ordered society characterized by freedom of speech, emphasizing themes of peace, coexistence, and respect for human dignity.

The salafi violent Islamic movement can be considered to be continually violating the autonomy and rights of individuals as members of the Islamic religion and adherents of other faiths living among the Islamic faithful.

**Salafi Islamic Movement and Respect for Human Autonomy:**

Respect for human autonomy is essential in addressing religious violence. It involves recognising individuals' rights to choose their beliefs and live according to their own conscience, free from coercion or imposition. Violations of these rights, such as forced conversions, discrimination, or persecution of religious minorities, often lead to religious violence. By fostering environments where individuals feel empowered to express their beliefs without fear of reprisal and where dialogue and understanding flourish, we can promote respect for human autonomy and reduce the likelihood of conflict stemming from religious differences. This approach necessitates a commitment to upholding human rights principles, such as freedom of religion and belief, as well as addressing underlying socio-economic and political factors that contribute to religious tensions.

**Salafi Islamic Movement and Respect for Human Rights**

The Salafi violent ideology has been associated with numerous human rights violations, as it often promotes a strict interpretation of Islamic law that can conflict with internationally recognized human rights standards. Some Salafi groups have been implicated in practices such as discrimination against women and religious minorities, restrictions on freedom of expression and belief, and support for violent extremism. From a human rights perspective, it's important to address Salafi violent ideology in ways that uphold fundamental rights and freedoms, including:

**Freedom of Religion and Belief:** Ensuring that individuals have the right to practice their religion freely and without coercion, including the right to convert to or leave a religion of their choice.

**Gender Equality:** Promoting gender equality and women's rights, including access to education, employment, and participation in public life, which may be restricted under certain interpretations of Salafi ideology.

**Freedom of Expression:** Safeguarding freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, even when expressing views that may be considered controversial or challenging to prevailing religious norms.

**Protection of Minorities:** Protecting the rights of religious, ethnic, and other minority groups from discrimination, persecution, and violence perpetrated by Salafi extremists.

**Counter-terrorism Measures:** Implementing counter-terrorism measures that respect human rights, including due process, fair trial guarantees, and protection against arbitrary detention or torture, while effectively addressing the threat of violent extremism. Addressing Salafi violent ideology from a human rights perspective requires a comprehensive approach that promotes tolerance, pluralism, and respect for diversity, while also addressing underlying socio-economic and political grievances that may fuel radicalization and extremism. It's essential to engage with Salafi communities in ways that uphold human rights principles and promote dialogue, education, and empowerment as alternatives to violence and extremism.

In summary, the fact that Islam started in Arab cannot be disputed. However, in the same way, Islam started with Arabs, Christianity, Judaism, and paganism also existed and spread worldwide. All Arabians are not Muslims, the same way all Christians and pagans worldwide are not Arabians. Authentic Islam should never have existed in the first place because the spread of Islam worldwide was not done solely by Arabians. Besides, non-Arabians have contributed significantly to the growth and development of Islam. Worthy of note is the largest Arabic dictionary, Taj al-Arus, produced in the 18th century by an Indian from Bilgram, Murtada al-Zabido (Hodgson 1974; Donner 2006; Ahmed, 2016).

Again, Allah is the creator of all humans and the prophet Muhammad never proclaimed non-Arabian Muslims inauthentic Islam. The Quran prohibits such self-exaltation over others. It should be noted that most scholars and the various schools of thoughts they subscribe to are based on their denominational and ideological inclinations. They hardly have the time to balance their narrative to take into cognizance of Muslim minority perspectives. Islam is all about peace and love, and violence to secure superiority over other Muslim ethnicities is wrong, just as the Jihadist Salafis movement perpetuates. Instead, they should emulate the reformist Salafis school of thought that believes more in lobbying to project policies and programs that conform to their beliefs instead of resorting to violence or attempting to usurp a Government in Power to that effect.

## Conclusion

The study underscores the urgent need for a more diverse and inclusive approach to Islamic studies, one that fully recognises the autonomy and rights of individuals, the significant contributions of non-Arab Muslims, and the wide array of Islamic thought and practice. By employing historical-critical analysis methods, the study challenges traditional accounts of Islam that predominantly rely on Arab sources and perspectives, exposing their limitations and biases.

Our findings reveal a rich and diverse history of Islam that includes substantial contributions from non-Arab Muslims to Islamic scholarship, theology, and culture. This broader perspective counters the narrow, Arab-centric view that has long dominated the field and advocates for a more comprehensive and equitable representation of Islam.Moreover, the study critically examines the Salafi school of thought, highlighting its problematic aspects, such as its emphasis on Arab superiority and the primacy of the Arabic language as essential to authentic Islam. These views not only distort the historical reality of Islam's global spread but also marginalise and silence the voices of non-Arab Muslims.

The study contributes to existing scholarship by demonstrating that while Salafism often reinforces traditional Arab-centric narratives, it also has the potential to challenge these narratives by advocating for a return to early Islamic principles that transcend ethnic and cultural boundaries. This duality within Salafism offers a unique lens through which to decolonise Islamic studies.In conclusion, Islamic studies must confront and challenge these exclusionary beliefs and practices. By promoting an inclusive understanding of Islam that embraces its diverse expressions and practices worldwide, the field can advance towards a more accurate and representative scholarship. This approach not only enriches our understanding of Islam but also fosters a more just and inclusive academic discipline.

## Recommendations

Scholars of Islamic studies should take into account the following suggestions, which are directly in line with the research findings, to foster a more inclusive and diverse understanding of Islam:

**Incorporate non-Arab perspectives into the curriculum**:

Develop courses and teaching materials that highlight the significant contributions of non-Arab Muslims to Islamic history, theology, and culture. This initiative will help to broaden the scope of Islamic studies and ensure that the curriculum reflects the diverse realities of the Muslim world.

**Encourage research on non-Arab contributions to Islamic history.**

Provide funding for research projects that focus on non-Arab Islamic thought and practice. Create opportunities for scholars to explore and publish work on the diverse contributions of non-Arab Muslims. This effort will fill existing gaps in the literature and enhance the field’s comprehensiveness.

**Promote Dialogue and Understanding Between Different Schools of Thought and Denominations Within Islam**:

Organise conferences, workshops, and other events that bring together scholars from various Islamic backgrounds. These platforms should facilitate discussions that bridge gaps between different schools of thought and denominations, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

**Challenge Problematic Beliefs and Practices Within Salafism**:

Conduct and disseminate critical analyses of Salafist ideology, particularly those aspects that emphasise Arab superiority and marginalise non-Arab Muslims. Engage in dialogue with Salafist communities to promote tolerance and inclusivity within Islam. Support initiatives that aim to reform Salafist practices in a way that aligns with the diverse and inclusive principles of Islam.

**Engage with the public to promote a more inclusive understanding of Islam:**

Write op-eds, give public lectures, develop educational resources, and participate in media interviews to disseminate findings and promote a more inclusive understanding of Islam to a broader audience. Public engagement is crucial to challenging stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam and highlighting its diversity.

These recommendations, rooted in the study's findings, aim to transform the field of Islamic studies by embracing and promoting the rich diversity of the Muslim world. The design of these recommendations is to ensure that the discipline not only acknowledges but also celebrates the contributions of all Muslims, irrespective of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

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