

# RE-READING IBN-KHALDUN IN THE 21ST CENTURY: TRAVELING THEORY AND THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY, LEGITIMACY, AND STATE VIOLENCE IN THE MODERN ARAB WORLD

*Ahmed Abozeid*

**Abstract:** To illuminate the complicated relationship between the authorities and society in the contemporary Arab world, this paper draws on Ibn Khaldun's propositions. By applying Edward Said's notion of traveling theory, it traces, interrogates, and evaluates ways in which multiple readings of Ibn Khaldun's theory have been (re)formulated, transplanted, and circulated by other authors, and how these theories traveled from an earlier point to another time and place where they come into new prominence. Furthermore, it examines how three contemporary Arab thinkers (Abid Al-Jabri, Abdullah Laroui, and Nazih Ayubi) addressed and interpreted the heritage of Ibn Khaldun and his theory on state formation and authority constitutive in the Arab Islamic world (particularly the Sunni world). The paper concludes that, in comparison with Said's "traveling theory" intentions, the three modern Arabic readings of Ibn Khaldun's theory were not traveling as much as it was attempting to uproot, distort, suffocate, and even bury Ibn Khaldun's original theory, as well as obliterate and culturally appropriate the features of the original theory, and portray it as the opposite of progress and modernization, in favor of enhancing the dominance of Western epistemology.

**Keywords:** Ibn Khaldun, Edward Said, traveling theory, decolonialization, Arab State, authority, legitimacy

Abu Zaid Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, generally known as "Ibn Khaldun" (1322–1406 AD) is one of the most prominent Arab Muslim scholars who rigorously theorized the dialectical relations between state, authority, and legitimacy. His theory on *al-ghalba wal-shawka* (i.e., preponderance, dominance) or 'brute force' and 'effective power' of the authorities according to Ovamir Anjum,<sup>1</sup> of *ilm al 'umran al bashari* (the science of civilisation and urbanism), examines how Arab Islamic states were formulated and how political authority was

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Ahmed Abozeid is a PhD candidate at the School of International Relations, University of St. Andrews, Scotland

constituted throughout the first seven centuries of Islam (622–1400 AD). Likewise, he pioneered the discussion on the centrality of violence and social (tribal and *asabiyah*) and religious (*Sharia*) configurations in politics and authority, away from *Sharia* and *Fiqh* (juridical) conversations which were controversially centered on succession and indulged in theological, juridical, jurisprudential, and religion-based writings known as *al-Adab al-Sultaniya* (The Ordinances of Government) that overwhelmingly discussed *Sharia* and political legitimacy on submissive principles like *al-sam'a wel ta'a* (hearing and obeying), which pursues the restoration of the imaginary 'golden age' of the caliphate.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to this perspective, Ibn Khaldun analyzed the articulation and intersection between violence and authority and their origins in Arab Islamic history. In his famous book *al-Muqaddimah* (written in 1377), Ibn Khaldun discussed the genesis and development of Arab states,<sup>3</sup> where he offered the most perceptive and accurate contribution in this regard.<sup>4</sup> More importantly, more than any other aspects of his broad theory, Ibn Khaldun deeply engaged with the problems of state formation and constitution of authority, the role of violence and coercion in forming these states, maintaining their existence and stability, and consolidating their political power.

To understand modern Arab state violence and its articulation with authority and legitimacy, this paper starts by discussing the vision presented by Ibn Khaldun which deconstructs dialectical relationships between these overlapping components. As set by the example of Ibn Khaldun, this paper analyses the articulation and the tension between three contested determinants in the Arab Islamic history: *al-aqidah*, *al-qabalah*, *al-ghaneemah*, religion, tribe, and economic spoils, in the language of Ibn Khaldun and Jabri, or the state, authority, and legitimacy in today's language.

To examine the complicated relationship between the authorities/state and society, and drawing on Ibn Khaldun's propositions, this paper outlines how *asabiyah* (the dominant political groups) formed, constituted, and consolidated their authority and political power mainly for the purposes of hegemony and control over society (territories, population, and economy), and fundamentally via the excessive use of violence and coercion (physical and symbolic or material and normative violence) by the police and the army, as well as the systematic securitization and politicization of the *Sharia* (discourse and ideology).

This article is divided into three parts. The first outlines Said's "travelling theory" propositions and how valuable the interpretations it provides are to understanding Ibn Khaldun's modern readings. The second part discusses the details of three modern readings of Ibn Khaldun's theory on the state, authority, and legitimacy in the Arab-Islamic world. In this section, I emphasize three modern Arab scholars, Mohamed Abid Al-Jabri, Abdullah Laroui, and Nazih Ayubi. The final part critically engages with these readings and challenges their claims on Ibn Khaldun's theory regarding the formulation and the development of Arab modern states.

## “Traveling Theory” and Bringing Ibn Khaldun Back in

In order to elaborate how Arab thinkers addressed and interpreted the heritage of Ibn Khaldun and his theory on state formation and authority constitutive in the Arab Islamic world (particularly the Sunni world) this paper engages Edward Said’s notion of traveling theory,<sup>5</sup> that is applied to trace, interrogate, and evaluate ways in which multiple readings of particular theories/ideas have been (re)formulated, transplanted, and circulated by other authors, and how these theories/ideas traveled from an earlier point to another time and place where they come into new prominence. Moreover, traveling theory tracks how theories were converted, modified, adapted, and even distorted. In other words, it studies how theories take another form of life by moving through time and space. According to Said:

Like people and schools of criticism, ideas, and theories travel from person to person, from situation to situation. from one period to another. Cultural and intellectual life are usually nourished and often sustained by this circulation of ideas, and whether it takes the form of acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation, the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity.<sup>6</sup>

Dealing with Ibn Khaldun’s theory, which moves from one place and time to another, means proposing to examine the theory itself as an interesting topic of investigation. At the outset, it means framing and contextualizing the theory within a historical approach, which assumes that any theory is “a result of specific historical circumstances,” as well as monitoring and observing “what did happen to it when, in different circumstances and for new reasons, it is used again and, in still more different circumstances, again? What can this tell us about the theory itself - its limits, its possibilities, its inherent problems-and what can it suggest to us about the relationship between theory and criticism, on the one hand, and society and culture on the other?”<sup>7</sup>

In Said’s perspective, theory travel occurs through four common stages:<sup>8</sup>

1. There is a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse.
2. There is a distance transversed, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into a new prominence.
3. There is a set of conditions, call them conditions of acceptance or, as an inevitable part of acceptance, resistance, which then confronts the transplanted

theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be.

4. The now fully (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place.

Said explicitly warns us to not neglect the fact that “[n]o reading is neutral or innocent” and that “every text and every reader is to some extent the product of a theoretical standpoint” regardless of how implicit or unconscious such a standpoint may be.<sup>9</sup> This requires us to be aware and recognize the theoretical and methodological choices and prejudices of authors/readers when engaging with and interpreting the “origin” theory. Furthermore, it requires an awareness of the obstacles and challenges of transplantation, transference, circulation, and commerce of theories and ideas into new environments.

These movements in Said’s standpoint were “never unimpeded”. In fact, according to Said, this process usually “involves processes of representation and institutionalization different from those at the point of origin,”<sup>10</sup> which in return, makes Said question whether a theory in one historical period and national culture becomes altogether different for another period or situation.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Said suggested comparing and measuring between two (or more) authors and one theory against each other, while taking into consideration undeniable personal prejudices, positionality, and preferences of each author. This could help in “recognizing the extent to which theory is a response to a specific social and historical situation of which an intellectual occasion is a part. Thus, what is insurrectionary consciousness in one instance becomes a tragic vision in another.”<sup>12</sup>

While most scholars agree that Said’s traveling theory is all about adopting and adapting a theory to make it conform to the time and place of the region and era that is being discussed, the three readings of Ibn Khaldun this study discusses are not compatible with such consensus. Moreover, while some critics claim that Ibn Khaldun’s formulations cannot be “contaminated” by other theories and other ideas because they are strictly Arab and Islamic, it does not mean that the theory is being adopted. In contrast, the discussion presented in this article proposes that: the problem with the new readings and interpretations of Ibn Khaldun’s traveled theory is not a result of its strictly Arab and Islamic features, but rather of the cognitive and methodological choices the authors adopted towards Ibn Khaldun’s theory. In other words, the article does not contest that Ibn Khaldun’s theory had been contaminated or adopted by other theories. On the contrary, it claims that the new readings and interpretations presented by both Lauri and Ayubi in particular, do not adopt and adapt the theory to conform with the time and place of the region and era that is being discussed. Instead, their readings and (mis)readings completely abandoned and put Ibn Khaldun’s theory aside, without any attempts to

understand or conform it as suggested by Said and others. In fact, while the authors (except for Jabri) used Ibn Khaldun's theory as a theoretical point of departure, they ended up completely or partially abandoning it in favor of other Western and modern theories. The three "traveled" readings of Ibn Khaldun fundamentally built upon Hegelian, Marxian, and Weberian epistemology at the expense of indigenous and native epistemological frameworks.

Interestingly, Said warns of so-called "over-intolerance" toward new interpretations, favoring them over the "origin" theory, as well as of adopting a hostile position towards these new interpretations. Instead, he called for recognizing these readings (even if they might be considered as misreadings) and emphasizing "*positive*" instead of "*negative*" critique, in the sense of evaluating interpretations as part of the historical transmission of theories and ideas, while clarifying the particularity of their (political, social, economic, and cultural) contexts and exploring what the creator(s) of the "origin" theory wanted to say within their "historical" contexts and frames in comparison with subsequent interpretations. In fact, Said emphasizes that:

the idea that all reading is misreading is fundamentally an abrogation of the critic's responsibility . . . It is never enough for a critic taking the idea of criticism seriously simply to say that interpretation is misinterpretation or that borrowings inevitably involve misreadings. Quite the contrary: it seems to me perfectly possible to judge misreadings (as they occur) as part of a historical transfer of ideas and theories from one setting to another.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, what is crucial here is not the theory itself but the so-called "critical recognition" that "there is no theory capable of covering, closing off, predicting all the situations in which it might be useful."<sup>14</sup>

To differentiate between theory and critical recognition, and drawing on György Lukács' work,<sup>15</sup> Edward Said pointed out that critical recognition is "a son of spatial sense, a sort of measuring faculty for locating or situating theory, and this means that theory has to be grasped in the place and the time out of which it emerges as a pan of that time, working in and for it, responding to it; then, consequently, that first place can be measured against subsequent places where the theory turns up for use."<sup>16</sup>

The critical consciousness is awareness of the differences between situations, awareness too of the fact that no system or theory exhausts the situation out of which it emerges or to which it is transported. And, above all, critical consciousness is awareness of the resistances to theory, reactions to it elicited by those concrete experiences or interpretations with which it is in conflict.<sup>17</sup>

The absence of this critical recognition has profound consequences on the nature, type, and meaning of the interpretation and re-reading of the origin theory. Regarding the case examined here, it means the adaptation of Ibn Khaldun's "origin" theory on the state, authority, and violence by a distinguished Egyptian scholar in England in the 21st century (Ayubi) or by Moroccan philosophers (Laroui and Jabri) in the late 20th century. Comparing Jabri, Laroui, and Ayubi's reflections on the nation-state, authority, and violence with the ones suggested by Ibn Khaldun could expose the "lowering of color, the greater degree of distance, the loss of immediate force" in their theories and the "origin" theory. In a way, "radical" character of origin theory becomes erased in comparison with new versions produced through traveling from a certain time and space to another.

In return, this article proposes a different interpretation from Said's "traveling theory", especially in non-Western and pre-modernist contexts. Here I want to use Said's notion on "traveling theory" to trace and track the continuity and the presence of the past. In other words, instead of using this theory, as a critical literary method that examines the extent to which certain theories had been grasped, adopted, and adapted to conform with the time and place of the region and era that are being discussed, I am trying to employ it to trace the continuities and discontinuities/disruption of the intellectual history and how the movement of original theories from the past can help in understanding the present. Moreover, I attempt to reveal the long-standing concerns about the process and mechanism of intellectual replacement and cultural appropriation of Arab and other Islamic ideas and practices by the West.

By concentrating on the case of Ibn Khaldun's theory (and other examples of Eastern and non-Western philosophies in general), the article argues that the interpretations, readings, and appropriations of Ibn Khaldun's theory were not about adopting and adapting the theory to make it conform to the time and place of the region and era that is being discussed (as Said proposed), as much as it was an attempt to seize and replace the past (not just displace or grasp it) and put it in a distinctive framework, which primarily was a product of the enlightenment, modernity, and imperialism. In other words, interpreting Ibn Khaldun's theory according to the standards of Western knowledge; i.e., while Ibn Khaldun's theory was framed and constituted within Arab-Islamic contexts to the interpreted political phenomena of certain times and places, the modern readings of these theories are based on Eurocentric, enlightened, and modern (i.e., Christian, industrial, and capitalist) models.

While some of the modern Arabic readings and interpretations of Ibn Khaldun's theory on Arab states and society (e.g., Abid Jabri, Taha Hussein, Muhsin Mahdi, Ali Al-Wardi, and others) did try to adopt and adapt it to make it conform to the modern Arab states they were discussing,<sup>18</sup> other readings (e.g., Lauri and Ayubi

in particular) obliterated, distorted, and culturally appropriated the features of the original theory, and portrayed it as if it were in opposition to progress and modernization, and in favor of empowering and the predomination of Western epistemology. While the former readings did conform to and adopted Ibn Khaldun's theory (as the section on Abid Jabri elaborates), the latter readings indicate that Ibn Khaldun's theory, while still important, when compared with Western theories, becomes mystical, spiritual, and emotional (as Laroui claimed) or backward and not compatible with the modernity and progress (as Ayubi claimed).

In principle, Edward Said was mainly dealing with Western and modern theories (in both space and time). Moreover, these theories traveled through the West (in a broader sense), where they had been discussed and interpreted by individuals who belong to academic institutions, comparable to the original source, and even lived at the same place and time. Most importantly, these readings and interpretations were cognitively within the same frameworks and used analogous methods. In return, the modern readings of Ibn Khaldun deliberately excluded and disavowed the epistemological, historical, and social context (the Arab Islamic), and were even ashamed of it, as evident in both Laroui's and Ayubi's readings for varied reasons. Likewise, these readings had bypassed and tried to suffocate (and even bury) Ibn Khaldun's theory, by claiming it to be a hindrance and a barrier before modernity and progress. The article argues that these readings represent an indirect attempt to not only dominate the present (by enabling Western and colonial approaches, but also to control history by presenting a revisionist explanation of the past through concepts of the present, as Laroui tried to do. In his (mis)interpretation of Ibn Khaldun's theory on authority and legitimacy in the Islamic context, Laroui twisted the historical and contextual facts to fit the enlightenment and modernity propositions, presented by both Hegel and Weber after him. Thus, overall, these attempts appeared to be an attempt to distort and extract Ibn Khaldun's theory from its contexts. In the worst interpretation those attempts were conducted to replace it by Western and Eurocentric models. In fact, the first snapshot of these readings and interpretations of Ibn Khaldun's theory reveals a long-standing concern about the cultural appropriation of Arab and other Islamic ideas and practices by the West.

Interestingly though, in a follow-up piece, Said revisited his original idea and reconsidered the possibility of an alternative mode of traveling theory, which he was referring to in these readings that "actually developed away from its original formulation, but instead of becoming domesticated in the terms enabled by Lukács's desire for respite and resolution, flames out, so to speak, restates and reaffirms its own inherent tensions by moving to another site?" Said called this "alternative" and surprising development an instance of "transgressive theory," that it crosses over from and challenges the notion of a theory that begins with

fierce contradiction and ends up promising a form of redemption?<sup>19</sup> Edward Said himself emphasized how crucial the influence of what he called the “common European culture” of those who read Lukács (and other works for sure), and more particularly the affinity stemming from the Hegelian tradition to which they belong, on the type of reading and interpretations of any travelled theory. Said insightfully anticipated the possibility and prospects that could be achieved in the event of presenting a distinct reading and interpretation of a travelled theory in different methodological and cultural paradigms (i.e., non-European or modern) which explains his enthusiasm and embracing of Fanon’s reading of Lukács travelled theory. In Said’s view:

“It is therefore quite startling to discover the subject-object dialectic deployed with devastating intellectual and political force in Frantz Fanon’s last work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, written in 1961, the very year of its author’s death. All of Fanon’s books on colonialism show evidence of his indebtedness to Marx and Engels, as well as to Freud and Hegel. Yet the striking power that differentiates his last work from, say, the largely Caribbean setting of *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952) is evident from the unflagging mobilizing energy with which in the Algerian setting Fanon analyzes and situates the antinomy of the settler versus the native. There is a philosophical logic to the tension that is scarcely visible in his previous work, in which psychology, impressions, astute observation, and an almost novelistic technique of insight and vignette give Fanon’s writing its ingratiatingly eloquent inflections.”<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, this was not the case with the travelled reading and interpretation of Ibn Khaldun’s theory presented by Jabri, Laroui, and Ayubi. On the contrary, I am claiming that the three authors (to a different degree) completely adopted the Western culture and abandoned Ibn Khaldun. I found the action of three authors toward Ibn Khaldun’s travelled theory contradicts Said’s late illumination. The three authors (to different degrees) moved Ibn Khaldun into the Western framework, culturally, methodologically, and dialytically, relying to a great degree on Hegel, Weber, and Lukács, which led to distorting and scattering his original contributions on the state, authority, and legitimacy of the Arab States, in a way that makes Ibn Khaldun become rejected or toned down by his own people, deliberately or unintentionally. Said’s “traveling theory reconsidered” reveals several similarities and intersections between the misreading and misinterpretation of some of Lukács’s readers, and the proposed claims I made about the misreading of Ibn Khaldun by the three authors. In Said’s view, most of Lukács’s readers were “totally influenced by his description of reification and the subject-object impasse, did not accept the reconciliatory denouement of his



theory, and indeed deliberately, programmatically, intransigently refused it?"<sup>21</sup> The same logic I noticed with the case of (re)reading of Ibn Khaldun, where the three authors were influenced by his discussion and analysis of the rise and fall of Arab States, the flourishing and decay of civilizations (*'umran*), and the role of *asabiyah*. The authors locked Ibn Khaldun within certain historical and social contexts and framed him inside the medieval framework, and consequently refused the so-called deterministic denouement of his theory, and – like Lukács's readers – they deliberately, programmatically, intransigently refused it, and consequently, Ibn Khaldun's original "revisionist" notions have become just a relatively tame academic substitute, under the claims that these historical circumstances, where the original theory originated, cannot replicate its original power, and that the situation has quietened down and changed.<sup>22</sup> On the one hand, such epistemological positions hinder attempts to resist the dominant Western forms of knowledge and on the other hand reflect the short-sightedness of seeing possibilities to develop and adapt these original theories, or to propose new alternatives.

### **Re-reading Ibn-Khaldun in the 21st Century**

Contemporary interpretations of Ibn Khaldun are too many to be counted. This thesis focuses on three examples only: Jabri, Laroui, and Ayubi. These authors are recognized for their contributions on questions of state, authority, legitimacy, and modes of economy and governance within the Arabic and Western circles of Middle Eastern studies. Their works were mainly concerned with the study of the Arab states as a political organization and the challenges it faced in the 20th century. These authors are exceedingly engaged with the heritage of Ibn Khaldun regarding the formation of state and the constitution of authority.

Interestingly, the three authors discussed the articulation between the state, authority, legitimacy, and violence in the 20th-century Arab Islamic world and were keen to acknowledge the influence of Ibn Khaldun's ideas despite the time distance and different contexts. The ideas of Ibn Khaldun therefore moved from their original point to another time and place where they came into new prominence. The new prominence appears in various forms, either full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) ideas, or to some extent transformed by new time and place. In addition, the new prominence could take the form of what I call "a ghost interpretation," where the effect of the original ideas and theory on the new forms of interpretation and framing appears as an attempt to distance, transcend, and overcome the origin theory. This paper claims that Ayubi's "traveling" reading of Ibn Khaldun represents an example of this "ghost interpretation," where he argued that the point of origin, or what Said called "a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse", no longer exists.

### M. Abid Al-Jabri

I start by analysing the work of a Moroccan philosopher Mohamed Abid Al-Jabri (1935–2010), focusing on two books, namely *Al-asabiyah wal-dawla*<sup>23</sup> and *Al-aql al-siyassi al-arabi*.<sup>24</sup> Jabri was a big supporter of Ibn Khaldun and his theories, which he used to develop “the features of Khaldouni’s theory in Islamic history” regarding the state and the authority.<sup>25</sup> According to Jabri, by *mulk* Ibn Khaldun meant rulership or authority, not the state as understood by Sati’ Al-Husri for instance.<sup>26</sup> However, Jabri admits that the state is the locus of Ibn Khaldun’s theory. Likewise, authority is mainly performed by *ghalba* and *qahr*, brute violence, repression, and subjugation.<sup>27</sup> In Jabri’s view, the idea that dominated Ibn Khaldun’s research is the disclosure of “the principles and ranks of states” and the identification of “the reasons for their contention and succession,” where the main question is: what is the power by which ruling dynasties seize and maintain authority and hegemony?<sup>28</sup>

Jabri defines politics as “a social act that expresses a strong relationship between two parties, where one part exercises a special kind of authority, which is the capacity to rule.”<sup>29</sup> In Arab society, Jabri claimed that politics is practiced in the name of religion, tribe, and spoil,<sup>30</sup> since the so-called “political mind”<sup>31</sup> is intertwined with the cognitive systems that govern the process of thinking in any civilization, and where the political mind is not a subject of this civilization as much as it seeks to subjugate the civilization to its purposes.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, by Arab society Jabri meant “a society in which conditions have not developed into the stage of capitalism,” known in political and economic literature as “pre-capitalist societies” such as tribal societies, ancient and medieval civilizations, and to some extent contemporary societies in Asia and Africa classified and labeled as Third World countries.<sup>33</sup>

Based on Ibn Khaldun, Jabri located three main factors as foundations of the Arabic “political mind”: (1) *al-aqidah* or the ideological factor (i.e., Islam), (2) *al-qabilah* or the social factor, (3) *al-ghaneema* or the economic factor.<sup>34</sup> As a modernist philosopher, Jabri stated that he uses these three terms (*al-aqidah*, *al-qabilah*, and *al-ghaneema*, or ideology, tribe, spoil) in a transcendent sense. In other words, inspired by psychoanalysis, Jabri connects these factors with subconscious motives that guide the behavior, in the “symbolic structure,” which is located neither in the mind nor the unconscious, but in the so-called, *imaginaire social* (social imagination). These determinants are the “*subconscient politique*, political subconscious,” to use Régis Debray’s term, that drive this imagination, which in turn stimulates the political action of both groups and individuals.<sup>35</sup> Jabri deals with Ibn Khaldun’s terms selectively and confusingly. Sometimes he uses them in their literal meanings, at other times he calls for (re)interpreting these terms, and not limiting the understanding to Ibn Khaldun’s original connotations.

For example, he defined *asabiyah* as “an indication of the tribal group that is constituted on the *asabiyah* (neural) bond, either at the tribe’s level or the level of one of its branches.” Yet, he admits that the meanings of *asabiyah* at present have diverged from the original meaning of the word.<sup>36</sup>

Jabri concluded that

the Arab political [mind] is not only controlled by the form of government and its constitutional restrictions but also and mainly by social, economic and cultural determinants. Thus, the renewal of this [mind] depends on the “renewal” of its three determinants (i.e., *al-aqidah*, *al-qabilah*, *al-ghaneema*) to become equivalent to the level that responds to the requirements of *nahda* [renaissance] and progress in the present time.<sup>37</sup>

Jabri proposes a modernist solution that engaged Ibn Khaldun’s theory and transformed its notions into “new” modernist interpretations.

First, Jabri suggested transforming the *aqida* (faith or ideology) from a public issue into a mere private (personal) opinion. Such transformation shifted the sectarian and communal ways of thinking into new thinking that guarantees freedom of speech, expression, and respect of differences, which in the long term will liberate the Arabic (mind) from the authority of religious and ethnic communities towards more open and critical thinking.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, he proposed to transform the tribe politically and socially into a form of civil society organizations (i.e., political parties, unions, associations, constitutional institutions, etc.), where the tribe contributes to building a society in which there is a clear distinction between the political community (the state and its agencies) and civil society (independent social and public organizations). This would pave the way to establishing a real political field, where politics can be freely practiced, through “a general economic, social, political and cultural development” that does not underestimate the role of human beings. Thirdly, Jabri suggested transforming the spoil into a tax-based economy. In other words, transforming the rentier economy into a productive-industrial economy. This transformation in Jabri’s view can be achieved through a regional and interstate economic development integration framework. This framework could be the basis of the prospective Arab common market that paves the way for the establishment of Arabic economic unity.

### **Abdallah Laroui**

The second traveled reading of Ibn Khaldun’s theory I analyse is by Abdallah Laroui (1933–). I examine his book *Mafhoum al-dawala*.<sup>39</sup> In comparison to Jabri, who uses Lukács to demonstrate a partial critical recognition of historical circumstances in which Ibn Khaldun formulated his ideas, Laroui’s reading is

more a (re)interpretation, a creative borrowing, in which he actively sought a rapprochement between the original theory of Ibn Khaldun and modern Western thought. Laroui's framing of Ibn Khaldun was dominated by modernist Western philosophical notions. His (re)interpretation resulted in modifying (and even distorting) Ibn Khaldun's theory in favor of Western ideas, namely Machiavelli, Hegel, and Weber.

Drawing on Ibn Khaldun, Laroui stated that the emergence of the state in the Arab world was a product of the articulation between the tribal society that does not recognize or admit temporal authority, and the existing ruling systems, such as the Persian and Byzantine regimes, that contradict both Islamic principles and tribal structure. Laroui called this process "the triangle of the Arab State."<sup>40</sup> Like Jabri, Laroui stated that the Arab state is formed on a specific social configuration, which is the "tribe" that aims to "maintain the balance of power between *asabiyah*, clans, and families," where, thus, the Arab race remains the prime genesis and nucleus of this state, regardless of its form, type, or configurations. The second pillar is *Sharia*, which refers to the call of Islam and seeks to establish a system that "works on the refinement and edification of individuals, that is, to transform them from one creation/moral to a new one." If this system diverges (in Hegelian and Gramscian terms) from the intention and withholds the individual's conscience from the call (i.e., implementing and empowering the *Sharia*), it will be abandoned by the true spirit of Islam (in Montesquieuan terms). The third foundational pillar of the Arab state is what Laroui called "the Asiatic hierarchical order," which represents "an entrenched historical form of authority, in which it seeks to achieve temporal objectives within certain social (class) conditions that may contradict with the goals and advocacy of Islam."<sup>41</sup> According to Laroui: "After a short period of the [*Rashidun*] Caliphate, the rulership system that the Muslims have experienced most often was the natural ruling, mixed with a kind of reason [rational] policy. Where the status quo is the persistence of the natural rule that was fundamentally based on *ghalba* and *qahr* [brute violence and repression], and the [*Rashidun*] Caliphate in most times was only a mirage"<sup>42</sup>.

Laroui accepts Ibn Khaldun's notion on the central role and influence of both *Sharia* and the *asabiyah*. However, Laroui claimed that every Arab and Islamic state through history, no matter how tyrannic it was, preserved a portion of *Sharia* because it is the main source of legitimacy and the guarantor of order and security. The implementation of *Sharia* becomes a crucial component of politics, where the despotic state systematically claims to be the successor of the *dalwalt al-rassoul* (the Prophet's state) and the (Rashidun) Caliphate. "Every state, regardless of its submission to the *Sharia*, it necessarily resorts to force of *asabiyah* to continue and maintain its authority. [Likewise] Every state, no matter how just it was organized, must respect the power of *asabiyah*, and applies the

Table 1 Ibn Khaldun and Max Weber rules of authority

	<i>Arabic determinism</i>	<i>The spirit of Islam</i>	<i>Asiatic order</i>	
Hereditary (temporal)	<i>Jahiliyyah's</i> state	True Caliphate	Nominal Caliphate	Ibn Khaldun
Ethical patterns	Natural rule	Reasoning politics	Caliphate	
Governing rules	<i>Asabiyah</i>	<i>Adl</i> (Justice)	<i>Sharia</i>	
Weber's rules	Charisma	Legality	Legitimacy	

Source: Laroui, 1981: 132.

principle of *Sharia*.”<sup>43</sup> As Ibn Khaldun pointed out: “no state was based on *asabiyyah* alone, or religious call alone, or the rational order alone: the three pillars must exist side by side.”<sup>44</sup> Laroui concludes: “The aforementioned concepts (i.e., *mulk*, caliphate, and rational politics) are not only models of historical hereditary governments, or moral perceptions of how to facilitate and manage human affairs, but rather it is abstract concepts (e.g., *asabiyah*, *Sharia*, *al-adl*), where the political entity is constituted upon it.”<sup>45</sup>

Interestingly, Laroui's reading of Ibn Khaldun's theory reaches the level of distortion when he matches Ibn Khaldun's pivotal concepts with the ones used by Max Weber, namely legitimacy, legality, and charisma.<sup>46</sup> Table 1 demonstrates how Ibn Khaldun's theory turns into a Weberian shorthand.

Nevertheless, Laroui's reading ended with a new interpretation that rejects Ibn Khaldun's original concepts in favor of embracing Weber's modern concepts of the *Sultani* state, which he blamed for being described as tyrannical by Weber. Laroui explains the absence of a “theory of the state” in the work of Arab thinkers (including Ibn Khaldun) and exaggeratedly claimed that:

What we [the Arab intellectuals] mistakenly called an “Islamic State” is a conjoined coexistence between the Sultanate as a reality, and the Caliphate (or the *Shari*-based nation) as a utopia. Such parallelism means that each concept is independent of the other and in contrast with it at the same time and represents the condition of its existence. Therefore, the coexistence as such is inconsistent with the ideology of a state that embodies the legitimacy of the authority and consecrates the consensus of citizens.<sup>47</sup>

Such ambiguity drove Laroui to state that “this inherited behaviour [of the authority not individuals] and the contradictions and overlapping between the actors, does not match or concurred with the entity of the modern [Western] state.”<sup>48</sup>

To clarify his claims, Laroui referred to the experience of the modern Arab state with the so-called *tanzimat* (i.e., Western-based institutional reforms) that took place in the mid-19th century. Despite his admission that modern Western

ideologies (i.e., Classical liberalism and Socialism later) have played a crucial role in Arab political awareness, they did not make a similar change to the structure of Arab authority. While the *tanzimat* reforms developed the state's apparatus and consolidated its influence, they also did not fill the gap or resolve the animosity between these apparatuses and society. On the contrary, Laroui noticed that the gap has grown deeper and wider than it was before.<sup>49</sup>

According to Laroui's (re)interpretation, in which Ibn Khaldun has been turned into pure Weberian thinker, the modern Arab state (i.e., 19th-century state) is "oscillating between two categories of structures: the *Sultani-Mamluki* and the *tanzimat*-rationality, where these two forms conjointly coexist. This fluctuation lies in the gaps between politics and civil society, the authority and financial-administrative influence, the state, and the individuals. These gaps were inherited from the *Sultani* state and have been enhanced by the colonial administration."<sup>50</sup> Therefore, the state in the Arab Islamic world is nothing but a faded version of the *Sultani* (medieval) state that emerged because of two dual processes: 1) the natural development that led to the continuities and the presence of several past ideas, norms, practices, and discourses; 2) the *tanzimat* that took place in the mid-19th century.

The failure of the *Sultani* state was an inevitable outcome of what Laroui called *tobiyat* (utopian ideologies), which explains Laroui's extreme stance towards the utopian components that dominate the *fiqh* (jurisprudential) and legal Islamic "mind." These *tobiyat* are the main reason not only behind the failure of *tanzimat* reforms, both modern and pre-modern attempts, but also behind the absence of a theory of the state in Arab and Islamic history. By utopia Laroui meant "imagining an ideal system outside the frame of the existing state and opposing it." In this sense, utopia is nothing but an ideology of freedom and liberation, and, hence, it is an ideology for a state that may come, not an ideology of an existing state.<sup>51</sup> The main source of these utopias is *Sharia*, i.e., ideological state apparatus in Gramsci and Althusser's words that exists in symbiosis with the oppressive apparatus of the state.<sup>52</sup>

The second aspect is the *Sharia*-based ideology and discourse, which Laroui is deeply skeptical about (if not even hostile toward). In his view, the *Sharia* has permanently penetrated political writings and attempts to theorize the state throughout Islamic history. This explains why the perception of the state in Islamic writings is unified despite the sequence of political fluctuations. Further, *Sharia*, in return, creates a general individual behavior that affects the "subject" of politics itself, and more importantly, reveals the "form" in which the state appears to the "apparatus" it is embodied.<sup>53</sup> In this way, the *Sharia* succeeded in establishing grand narratives and discourses, intertwined with the everyday life of the citizens (subjects) of the Muslim countries to such an extent that it is incomparable to any

other factor to this day. According to Laroui, “For centuries, the Sharia literature that talks about the state as if, and not as it is, have influenced the psyche of the individual(s) by various means: family [upbringing] justifications at home, regular/organized education in the masjid [mosques], with mental and moral discipline in *Zāwiyah* [centre or a settlement of a Sufi], generation after generation.” This “hidden” or “subconsciously implicit” dimension (but with conscious awareness and recognition from the authority, as will be explained later) has played a critical role in the formation of political and social authority throughout Islamic history, as well as laid the foundations for the relationship between authority and the Muslim community. This “heredity education” “propagated” a special idea of “the relationship of the ruler with the ruled,” that is politics and the state,<sup>54</sup> in a way that made Laroui provocatively claim that “the inherited behaviour by the Arab individual(s) does not correspond with the entity of modern states,” in his opinion there is a segregation of morals from state societies in the Arab world.<sup>55</sup>

In Laroui’s view, the essence of the modern state is not confined to its apparatus but to the sense of the political community that is constituted by an ideology and an apparatus, where the ideology is embodied in the concepts of legitimacy and public consensus, and the apparatus consists of the modern bureaucracy and the military (people of the pen and the sword in the words of Ibn Khaldun). The ethics of the state means an analysis of the ideology, i.e., the conditions of achieving legitimacy and public consensus, while state societies are a description of the process of bureaucracy’s formation, i.e., the study of rationalization movement (in a Weberian analogy). Overall, the theory of the state for Laroui means “a dual analysis of the state’s ethics/morals and societies.”<sup>56</sup> This process, unlike the utopian visions he rejected, presents the best approach to understand the Arab Islamic state, by comparing the two visions. In his opinion, it will be easy to “reveal and extract the experience that is embodied in the individual behavior and denotes a certain upbringing.”<sup>57</sup> Evidently, the influence of Hegel is overwhelming, particularly the notion that “the state is the actuality of the ethical idea.” Yet, what does Laroui mean by “statism ideology”, which seems to be a central term in his discussion of the Arab state?

Ideology is not “the crude propaganda that echoes the regime’s achievements, either false, imaginary or real, that is imposed from above,” rather it means “what the citizen understands and interprets later into loyalty, and consequently [it] gives the state a strong moral support pillar.”<sup>58</sup> Inspired by Hegel, Laroui argued that the state’s strength or weakness should be achieved not by looking at its bureaucratic apparatus (the material side) but through its ideological apparatus or the political community. The “ideologization” represents the ethical appearance of the bureaucracy, and perhaps the true appearance of the state in Laroui’s view, where sometimes the apparatus may exist while the state is absent.<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, that is what

urged him to proclaim: “There is no state without statism ideology.” This ideology cannot be formulated by the media or emerge from nothing. Ideology requires the existence of a certain amount of “emotional, affectional, and intellectual consensus among citizens,” this consensus is both a historical output and an expression of the current interests of the public.<sup>60</sup>

Inexplicably, while occupied with critiquing *tobiyat* (utopian) discourses, Laroui overlooked discussing alternatives to the repressive methods and violent practices of the state (the oppressive apparatus of the state in Gramsci’s words), which are considered the main reason for the continuous failure of reforms and attempts of emancipation. In fact, because of the absence of critical recognition and the confusion of Laroui’s (mis)reading of Ibn Khaldun, and his total unquestioning embrace of Weber’s and Hegel’s interpretations on the political community and state morals, Laroui strikingly overlooked the fact that, in the modern Arab world, the so-called “political community” had been brutally suppressed by the oppressive apparatus of the state and authority, as the experiences of the Arab Uprising(s) indisputably demonstrated. Consequently, in contrast with Laroui’s reading, instead of Hegelian-Weberian “ideologization,” it was violence and repression (*ghalba*, *shawka*, and *qahr* to use Ibn Khaldun’s terms) that represent the genuine ethical appearance of the bureaucracy, and the true appearance of the state in modern Arab world.

### **Nazih Ayubi**

The last traveled reading is the one presented by an Egyptian political scholar Nazih Ayubi (1944–1995). In this reading Ayubi intentionally conceals Ibn Khaldun in favor of Marxism,<sup>61</sup> Weberian, and Gramscian<sup>62</sup> interpretations. This made Ibn Khaldun into a ghost. Ayubi’s reading does not resemble an interpretation like Jabri’s, or appropriation like Laroui’s. In our view it is modern (mis)reading and (mis)interpretation, where the partly accommodated (or incorporated) ideas of Ibn Khaldun are to some extent transformed by their new uses, their position in a new time and place. Even though Ayubi acknowledges Ibn Khaldun’s ideas (as articulated in the structure of the Arab authority), he deliberately chooses to displace Ibn Khaldun in favor of more modern and contemporary ideas, in interpreting the transformation that took place in Arab and Egyptian society after Ibn Khaldun.

Ayubi begins his writings on Egypt by distancing himself from Ibn Khaldun and the way of thinking he represents. Where Ayubi believes that Ibn Khaldun reflects the “Bedouin” Arab Islamic thought, Egypt, in his opinion, represents one of the oldest central states in human history, with deep histories of authority and central governments spanning thousands of years. Consequently, and clearly employing a chauvinist perspective, Ayubi refuses to consider Ibn Khaldun’s theory as the point of origin in the discussion of the emergence of the Arab world.



Ayubi states that Egypt was pharaonic before it became an Arabic country. Hence, he completely rejects the idea of limiting the history of Egypt to the history of *jahiliyya* in the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, he rejects the calls to adopt this Islamic history (referring to Jabri's writings about the Arab political mind) to be the history of Egypt and the Arabic-speaking countries in general. In return, Ayubi calls for what he believes to be a more accurate alternative to the prevailing traditional correlation in Arab thinking and claims that the history of the Arabic-speaking peoples today is a history that consists of (national) segments rather than a single historical form, and that the pattern is moving from the "political" to the "cultural," not the other way around.

[T]he decisive variable in forming nations might, instead of language, be the "political factor" which can blend with other factors specific to each situation to form a nation: "languages have not made a national history. National histories are the ones that make languages."<sup>63</sup>

The "Egyptian" state, according to Ayubi, is not only a centralized state thousands of years old, but also the first developed historical model of bureaucracy,<sup>64</sup> in which the authority and central governments are mainly based on the Asiatic mode of production and oriental despotism. Later, it became a Weberian style "bureaucratic" and "organizational" state, retaining the authoritarian character. In other words, it is "a bureaucratic authoritarian state," where violence and repression are the main methods to seize power.<sup>65</sup> The reason for such practices is that the Egyptian economy was established on an irrigation system, which requires complex arrangements, e.g., administrative discipline and security oversight, and more crucially an immense role for the ruler (i.e., central government). The latter works on developing water resources, ensuring as well as regulating the process of distributing water, and preventing conflict over the Nile, which explains the inherited heritage of despotism in Egypt. Ayubi adopted a semi-apologetic claim that justifies the overwhelming role of repression and the use of violence, under the excuse of protecting the only source of life (the Nile) which was not possible without the exaggeration of the Pharaoh's position and the concentration of power.

But where is Ibn Khaldun in this interpretation? Interestingly, while Ayubi denied Ibn Khaldun's position to limit Egypt to the Arab Islamic episode of history, he claimed that Ibn Khaldun's works are crucial for understanding the notion of the centrality of the state in Egypt. Provocatively, Ayubi stated that his work drew upon Ibn Khaldun's theory to understand how the Egyptian state had developed. To explain the transmission between the "bureaucratic" and the "oligarchic" patterns within the cycle of change in Egyptian society, Ayubi proposed to adopt Ibn Khaldun's theory of the rise and fall of the *asabiyah*'s state, or what he called

“the political cycle,”<sup>66</sup> through the “pendulum swing” as an alternative to oriental despotism or the Asiatic mode of production. Egypt did not unilaterally experience these patterns but as a mixture of the bureaucratic and the oligarchic characteristics in most stages of history.<sup>67</sup> This “political cycle” claimed

the presence of an authority that owns the land, and efficiently runs the economy through administration and regulation system, in a way that achieves a product surplus for the state, in which the authority uses to consolidate its power and centralization. As time goes, the authority/state begins to weaken because of the deterioration of irrigation systems, the organizational body of the state on the one hand, and the enrichment of the bureaucracy [officials] who control and appropriate the product surplus for themselves. Hence, the central authority transforms into decentralization, private properties, and competitive and oligarchic policies. Consequently, the collapse occurs through the submission to foreign rule, and finally the fall and dissolution of the authority and the state as a whole.<sup>68</sup>

This reading is clearly a form of appropriation, and perhaps a kind of creative borrowing. Ayubi injected Ibn Khaldun’s theory with Marxist ideas, and claims that the state’s ability and powers of (coercive) expropriation and (politico-economic) extraction, via direct taxation, either by repression and violence or by soft politics, represent the ideal departure point to understand the development and the “overstating” of the Egyptian state, and the Arab states in general: “the advanced extractive capacity of the state, via direct taxation, indicative of its own strength and institutional sophistication, but it may also suggest that matters are on the move towards some kind of democracy.”<sup>69</sup> In return, “once their powers of (coercive) expropriation are exhausted, it becomes clear that their powers of (politico-economic) extraction, via direct taxation, are seriously impaired.”<sup>70</sup>

Ayubi’s reading interpreted and transformed the concept of *asabiyah* from the original meaning in Ibn Khaldun’s theory, where it referred to the tribe, social solidarity, clan, social cohesion, into a synonym to organization, the ruling elite.<sup>71</sup> Later, *asabiyah* becomes equivalent to the concept of class, which resembles Ibn Khaldun’s notion of *asabiyah* as the social group responsible for *al-ghaneema* (the spoil) in the context of the pre-capitalist “tributary” mode of production.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, in a riverine society (not a desert or a Bedouin) such as Egypt, the function of the so-called *asabiyah* as an authority is to work on preserving the water and protecting the river. However, oddly, Ayubi does not demonstrate how the authority originated in a riverine community like Egypt, while Ibn Khaldun clarified in detail how this authority arose and was established in the “Bedouin” Arab society. Later, Ayubi highlighted this issue by saying:

One outcome of the articulated nature of modes of production in Middle Eastern societies is the variegated and fluid nature of their class structure. Very often aspects of horizontal stratification (i.e., classes, elites, etc.) are intermeshed in such societies with aspects of vertical differentiation (e.g., tribe, sect, ethnic, etc.) An analysis of the complexities and intricacies of such economic and social articulations would therefore prove most crucial for understanding the politics of Arab societies.<sup>73</sup>

In this sense, to establish the modern state it is not necessary to eliminate the *asabiyah* (i.e., the classic authoritarian structures in Ibn Khaldun's theory, which were mistakenly identified by Ayubi as a variable of the political culture), but to articulate these structures with the modes of production.<sup>74</sup> This mixture represents the essence of Ayubi's analytical approach, based on reconciliation between a group of concepts (particularly "political economy" approach and political culture) that had been regarded for a long time to be inevitably contradictory. Nevertheless, Ayubi soon puts Ibn Khaldun aside, and directly admits that "the phenomenon of the state cannot be understood as a legal, political and social manifestation, away from the economic transformations that have taken place in society and affect the class social movement."<sup>75</sup> Ibn Khaldun was displaced in favour of Marxist ideas (i.e., modes of production). On the other hand, Ayubi, who is also a genuine Weberian thinker like Laroui, completely disregarded Ibn Khaldun's theory in his "Over-stating the Arab State" by emphasizing the beginning of the 19th century as the point of origin of the so-called modern Arab State. Having said that, Ayubi's reading conforms to the modern Arab (and Western) narratives which argue that the Arab state is nothing but a product of Western colonialism and interventions. Ayubi believes that, since the era of Mohamed Ali under independence, and while being a product of imperialism like the other Arab States, Egypt has been characterized by a distinctive Quasi-Asiatic or Quasi-capitalist mode of production.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, he claims that, since the 1970s, when the incorporation into the world capitalist system considerably increased, the mode of production in Egypt has transformed. However, according to Ayubi, "this did not necessarily mean that the capitalist mode of production predominated over all other modes; rather it was an articulation of various modes, with the capitalist mode increasingly gaining the upper hand."<sup>77</sup>

The state in the Arab World, not having grown organically and structurally out of its own society, has aspired to "develop" that society by interpolating "politics" in lieu of social, cultural and economic affairs, and by extending bureaucracy everywhere. Yet this state has not succeeded in tackling the problems of its hybrid, cross-bred society (*mujtama' hajin*) but has gradually killed off the whole creature instead.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the development of the modern state in Egypt was a hybrid process, i.e., the transformation from the Asiatic mode into the capitalist mode of production occurred with “Oriental” methods, because of the overlap of the “riverine” mode and the “desert/Bedouin” mode with the introduction of Islam into Egypt in the 7th century.<sup>79</sup> Ayubi called this hybridity “a Quasi-Asiatic Development.”<sup>80</sup> However, despite Ayubi analyzing modes of production, he did not discuss modes of coercion or persuasion.

In fact, Ayubi’s traveled reading of Ibn Khaldun illustrates that Weber’s ideas and those who share his views on bureaucracy and rationality are still pertinent among experts on administration in the Arab world;<sup>81</sup> nonetheless Ayubi was critical towards the application of Weberian ideas to a large extent. According to Ayubi, Weber’s theory “not only begins with them but also ends up with them, making no reference at all to the relevance of their ideas to an Arab society.”<sup>82</sup> Controversially though, however, Ayubi himself exercises nothing but a Weberian (and Gramscian) approach to understanding the structures of the modern Arab state, in which he frequently refers to the way the bureaucracy in the Arab world transformed into a monarchy because of the despotic authority.<sup>83</sup> Like other Arab thinkers, Ayubi attributed the legacy of tyranny and monarchy in Egypt and the Arab world to the claim that this region “lacks a ‘contractual tradition’” (owing perhaps to the missing “feudal” link in its social history) and a tradition of institutional autonomy, as both the ulama and the guilds were often subservient to the ruler.<sup>84</sup> Hence, in order to address the crisis of the central state in Egypt there is a need to either pressure the Egyptian authority/regime towards democratic transition and capitalist transformation or to correct the course of the authority/state by recognizing its power, with its internal and external positives.<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusion

The discussion of the most important contemporary Arab readings of Ibn Khaldun demonstrates that they neither sanctified nor desecrated his original thesis. Instead, they deliberately chose to ignore him by placing in a “medievalist” frame (if not a cage) and locating him within the reactionary epistemology of *al-Adab al-Sultaniyyah*. To a varying degree, the three authors abandoned Ibn Khaldun in favour of new Western and “modern” sources. Therefore, the traveling of Ibn Khaldun’s ideas occurs through inoculation, transplantation, hybridization, and injection with other theories, namely Marxism, Hegelianism, Weberianism. However, these attempts lack the critical recognition of the historical and social contexts and are not concerned with exploring the possibilities of nourishing Ibn Khaldun’s original theory.

The three modern Arabic readings of Ibn Khaldun discussed in the article to varying degrees ended by choosing to deliberately neglect and abandon Ibn Khaldun's ideas, either completely (e.g., Laroui and Ayubi) or partially (e.g., Jabri) and to completely adopt and embrace Western ideas and theories without criticism or scrutiny. However, the study found that, while Jabri's reading coincides with what Said's meant by traveling theory, Jabri's reading rigorously did adopt and adapt a theory to make it conform to the time and place of the region and era (late 20th-century Arab world). Jabri adapted Ibn Khaldun's original theory based on an innovative historical-material reading (Marxist and Lukácsian in particular) in a way that makes the 14th-century theory of Ibn Khaldun conform to the late 20th-century Arab world. Thus, Jabri's reading becomes a form of appropriation, and perhaps a kind of creative borrowing.

I believe the other two examples discussed in this paper (Laroui and Ayubi) to be an attempt to distort, suffocate, and even bury the original theory completely in favor of alternative Western models. In these readings, Ibn Khaldun's theory was neither adopted nor adapted to conform to certain times and places. Instead, the theory was lost, and Ibn Khaldun himself became a ghost. This indicates the absence of critical recognition among the two authors, along with the lack of comprehensiveness of their readings and interpretations because of the lack of a post-colonial, critical, and reflexive sense. Consequently, this lack has led to the predominance of unilateral (not complementary) interpretations. While the former excludes knowledge of the other, the complementarity interpretations assert that there exist complementary properties of the same object of knowledge.

This deterministic cognitive exclusion of other forms of knowledge has led to the predominance of Western models over the study of the Arab state and Middle Eastern studies in general. Likewise, it emphasizes the uniqueness, progressive, and universal features of Western knowledge exclusively. Such claims cannot be accepted by any postcolonial and critical thinker (like Edward Said and others). On the contrary, such (mis)readings and (mis)interpretations that genuinely underestimate the contributions of native knowledge on one hand and accumulate and enhance the underrepresentation of the other forms of non-Western knowledge on the other, certainly should be criticized, fiercely.

Unlike Ibn Khaldun, Jabri, Laroui, and Ayubi did not identify constitutive principles of the authority and the state in the Arab Islamic world. (i.e., *ghalba and Shawka, asabiyah*, and *waze'a*), or explore their articulation in everyday life. This led them to adopt false, even if theoretically correct, rules summoned in different social and political (but not cultural) contexts. In fact, the nature of authority is the main reason behind the failure of the Arab states. The constitutive factor of the authority in the Arab world is neither Gramsci's "historical bloc" nor "the actuality

of the ethical idea” of Hegel’s state. It is Ibn Khaldun’s *asabiyah*, and its new interpretations. The same mistake was made by Laroui, who falsely assumed that there is no “theory of the state” due to the absence of what he called Hegelian “statism ideology.” Overall, these mistakes make the Arab writings on state and authority “lost in translation” between Weber, Gramsci, and Hegel, although all authors admitted that they were discussing a Khaldunian state as a departure point. The main reason behind these mistakes is that most of the contemporary Arabic studies considered the Western nation-state (not the Arabic Islamic form of state and authority) to be the point of origin for their analysis. Only Jabri was critical of such a Eurocentric approach, despite his own reliance on Lukács side by side with Ibn Khaldun, which also led him to reach limited (if not false) outcomes. The Arabic writings supplanted Ibn Khaldun’s principle of “*ghalba* and *shawka*” with Weber’s principle, despite the fact the former was present and effective (implicitly and explicitly) from the 7th century until today.

Several “traditional” or “premodern” variables such as religion (*Sharia*), *asabiyah* (either the Khaldunian or new manifestations), have succeeded in prevailing in the present and play a fundamental role in (re)constituting authority in the Arab Islamic world today. The so-called *al-ghalba wal-shawka* (i.e., preponderance, dominance, “brute force,” and “effective power”) or, in other words, violence and repression, remain some of the main methods of the state and authority for consolidating power and hegemony and implementing legislation and policies. Unlike traditional pre-Westphalian structures in Europe, these past forms did not get disrupted and continue to exist. Therefore, the structures of power and authority discussed and outlined by Ibn Khaldun 700 years ago are still present today, side by side with the “new” modern structures and norms of power and authority that have been forcefully introduced because of the increasing impact of the “Western” imperial and colonial powers in framing. In short, the structure of authority and state in the modern Arab world has become genuinely hybrid, i.e., the mixture of modern and traditional sociopolitical notions, norms, practices, and components.

In fact, to deal with these structures, the imperial and colonial powers adopted selective, pragmatic, and exploitative strategies. For instance, despite the encouragement and support colonial powers presented to the efforts to establish parliamentary and legislative representative institutions (what known as *tanzimat*), the *de facto* authority in the Arab countries was accomplished through several methods, which have family resemblances with the old methods, i.e., *ghalba*, and mostly *shawka* and *qahr* (repression), toward opposition groups, rebels, and whoever challenged and questioned the power and the legitimacy of the authorities (both colonial and nationalists). Perhaps, nonetheless, the form of authority is no longer “*asabiyah*-based” in the Khaldunian sense, but it takes a new form of life

because of the several processes of (re)interpretations, (re)framing, and transplanting of its sociopolitical configurations that during the last two centuries have taken new manifestations in either in class (i.e., the feudalists), ethnic (i.e., the Turks, Circassians, Europeans), or professional (i.e., officers and landowners) dominance. The imperial and colonial powers (for known reasons) did not eliminate or diminish these traditional structures. On the contrary, they maintained, supported, and even enhanced these structures for the purposes of imperial interests. These tendencies have been enhanced in practice by Arabic writings like those produced by Laroui and Ayubi in particular.

Consequently, since the social and political configurations of authority discussed by Ibn Khaldun remain present and effective, whether in the same form or not, the best way to approach these questions is not through addressing the bureaucratic structures or the modes of production (as did most of the Arab thinkers), but by deconstructing material and discursive structures of despotism, repression, and state violence. In other words, an accurate understanding of Arab state policies and behaviors requires a better examination of the way the state/authority treats its citizens. Since violent practices and discourses are the processes by which state and authority were constituted, the study of state violence articulates ways in which authority and states change through the times.

In sum, the dynamics of state-society relations, or the articulation between state violence, legitimacy, and authority since the 19th century in Egypt in particular, and in the Arab world in general, cannot be understood by an exclusive stress on a singular reading, either the colonial (i.e., Liberal or Marxist nationalistic or patriotic historiographies), or *torath* writings that only emphasize heritage scripts and sources (i.e., orientalist or revisionist or Islamic Salafism studies). Accordingly, a new proposed interpretation of Ibn Khaldun's original theory, a movement or traveling to another place and period, whether it takes the form of acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation, can usefully nourish the intellectual condition required to understand and deconstruct the role of violence in constituting authority and establishing political legitimacy, as well as unpack the articulations between authority, *Sharia*, legitimacy, and state violence in the modern Arab states, and Egypt particularly. Raising the question of violence and the dialectic of its relations (or articulation in Ayubi's words) with power structures, ideology (or the discourse), and the state could highlight the unknown, inherited dark sides of the establishment process of the modern Arab states, the continuities of modes of subjection, and examine why the Arab states lack freedom, democracy, development, and more importantly the dynamics of authority-citizens relations, especially with opponents and those "fallen through the cracks." These questions have been neglected by most of the scholars of the Middle East and IR theories.

## Acknowledgment

For their insightful comments and provocative discussion, I would like to express my gratitude to Darya Tsymbalyuk, Nasser Rabbat, Tony Lang, Karin Fierke, and Bruce Hoffman.

## Notes

1. O. Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113, 124–127.
2. See: K. Abdul-latif, *Fi tashreeah usoul alastbdad: qera'ah fi nezam al-Adab al-Sultaniya* (Beirut: Dar Al-Talia, 1999). A. Abdullah Laroui, *Mafhoum al-horiah* (Casablanca: al-markaz al-thaqafi al-arabi, 1983). A. Abdullah Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala* (Casablanca: al-markaz al-thaqafi al-arabi, 1981).
3. A. Ibn Khaldun, *Mokadimat Ibn Khaldun*, ed. and introduced by Ali Abdul Wahid Wafi (Cairo: Dar nahdet misr, [1950] 2014), 510 and after. This paper relies on Rosenthal's translation: Abdulrahman Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. and introduced by Franz Rosenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [1967] 2015). However, this version misses six sections (or *fasl* in Arabic) of Ibn Khaldun's last version, including chapters on the repercussions of the state violence against the people of the cities (e.g., chapter 16, part 2, vol. 2). Parts that have been quoted from Wafi's version will be cited as Ibn Khaldun, *Mokadimat*, while the ones that have been quoted from Rosenthal's version will be cited as Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*.
4. See: H. A. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962). Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962). Syed Farid Alatas, *Applying Ibn Khaldun: The Recovery of a Lost Tradition in Sociology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).
5. Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 225–247.
6. Said, *The World*, 226.
7. Said, *The World*, 230.
8. Said, *The World*, 227.
9. Said, *The World*, 241.
10. Said, *The World*, 226.
11. Said, *The World*, 226.
12. Said, *The World*, 237.
13. Said, *The World*, 236.
14. Said, *The World*, 241.
15. György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (London: Merlin Press, [1923] 1975).
16. Said, *The World*, 241–242.
17. Said, *The World*, 241–242.
18. Cf. Taha Hussein, *Filsafat Ibn Khaldun al-ijtimaiyah: Tahleel wa naqd* (Cairo: lajnat al-ta'leef w al-tarjama w al-nashr, 1925). Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957). Ali Al-Wardi, *Mantiq Ibn Khaldun* (London: Dar Kofan, 1994). Ali Al-Wardi, "A Sociological Analysis of Ibn Khaldun's Theory: A Study in the Sociology of Knowledge" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1950).



19. Edward Said, *Reflection on the Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*, (London: Granta Books, 2001), 439.
20. Said, *Reflection on the Exile*, 445.
21. Said, *Reflection on the Exile*, 438.
22. Said, *Reflection on the Exile*, 436.
23. Mohamed Al-Jabri, *Al-asabiyah wal-dawla* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-‘Arabīya, 1971).
24. Mohamed Al-Jabri, *Al-aql al-siyassi al-arabi* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-‘Arabīya, 1990).
25. Al-Jabri, *Al-asabiyah*, 254–260.
26. Al-Jabri, *Al-asabiyah*, 195–196. See also Sati’ Al-Husri, *Dirasat a’ n mokadimat Ibn Khaldun* (Cairo: Dar Al-Maaraf, 1953).
27. Ibn Khaldun, *Mokadimat*, 439.
28. Al-Jabri, *Al-asabiyah*, 165.
29. Al-Jabri, *Al-aql al-siyassi*, 7.
30. Al-Jabri, *Al-aql al-siyassi*, 13.
31. I do not use Al-Jabri’s term the “Arab political mind” because of its cultural appropriation and orientalist implications.
32. Al-Jabri, *Al-aql al-siyassi*, 8.
33. Al-Jabri, *Al-aql al-siyassi*, 9.
34. Al-Jabri, *Al-asabiyah*, 254–260; Al-Jabri, *Al-aql al-siyassi*, 48–51.
35. Al-Jabri, *Al-aql al-siyassi*, 52.
36. Al-Jabri, *Al-asabiyah*, 167.
37. Al-Jabri, *Al-aql al-siyassi*, 373.
38. Al-Jabri, *Al-aql al-siyassi*, 373.
39. Abdullah Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala* (Casablanca: al-markaz al-thaqafi al-arabi, 1981).
40. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 123.
41. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 123–124.
42. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 130; emphasis added.
43. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 131.
44. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 131; emphasis added.
45. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 131–132; emphasis added.
46. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 132; Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).
47. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 210; emphasis added.
48. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 211; emphasis added.
49. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 207.
50. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 228.
51. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 198.
52. See Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince: And Other Writings* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1957), 180–183; Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980), 357–361.
53. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 120–121; emphasis in the original.
54. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 120; emphasis added.
55. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 211.
56. Laroui, *Mafhoum al-dawala*, 210.

57. Laroui, *Maḥmoum al-dawala*, 121.
58. Laroui, *Maḥmoum al-dawala*, 197; emphasis added.
59. Laroui, *Maḥmoum al-dawala*, 198–199.
60. Laroui, *Maḥmoum al-dawala*, 179.
61. Nazih Ayubi, *Aldoulah almrkziah fi misr* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-‘Arabīya, 1989).
62. Nazih Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995).
63. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 143; emphasis in the original.
64. Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 288–289.
65. Ayubi, *Aldoulah almrkziah*, 70.
66. (119) Ibn Khaldun, *Mokadimat*, 543–545.
67. Ayubi, *Aldoulah almrkziah*, 29–30.
68. Ayubi, *Aldoulah almrkziah*, 29–30; 1993; Ayubi, *Ala’rb wmskhkalah aldoulah*.
69. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 454.
70. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 477.
71. Ayubi, *Aldoulah almrkziah*, 76.
72. Ayubi, *Aldoulah almrkziah*, 32–49; 1993; Amin 1978.
73. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 175.
74. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 183–187.
75. Ayubi, *aldoulah almrkziah*, 14.
76. Ayubi, *aldoulah almrkziah*, 76; Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 876.
77. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 170.
78. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 444; emphasis in the original.
79. Ayubi, *aldoulah almrkziah*, 68–69. See also: Amin, *The Arab Nation*; Ahmed Sadiq Saad, *Tarikh ala’rb alajtmaa’i: Thoul altkouin almisri mn alnmt alasyoui ila alnmt alra’smali* (Beirut: Dar al-hadatha, 1981). Ahmed Sadiq Saad, *Tarikh misr alajtmaa’i alaktsadi fi dhaw’a alnmt ala’syoui llantjaj* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Khaldun: 1979).
80. Ayubi, *Aldoulah almrkziah*, 73.
81. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 312.
82. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 312.
83. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 320.
84. Ayubi, *Over-stating*, 398; emphasis in the original.
85. Ayubi, *Aldoulah almrkziah*, 202–203.