



# Epistemic Pluralism and Khaldounian Paradigm: Rethinking Social Science Beyond

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## Abstract

In the landscape of contemporary social sciences, the dominance of Western epistemology has long marginalized alternative frameworks rooted in non-European intellectual traditions. This article revisits the ideas of Ibn Khaldoun, the 14th-century Muslim scholar, to explore the possibility of constructing a non-Western paradigm for understanding social and political dynamics. The central research question guiding this study is: Can Ibn Khaldoun's epistemological and methodological insights offer a viable alternative to Eurocentric foundations in the social sciences? To address this question, the article employs a descriptive-analytical method, drawing primarily on textual analysis of Ibn Khaldoun's writings and secondary literature in historical sociology and postcolonial theory. The findings suggest that Ibn Khaldoun's conceptual tools, particularly his notions of Asabiyyah, cyclical state dynamics, empirical historiography, and Multiplex paradigm, provide a sophisticated framework for analyzing social change that predates and, in some ways, anticipates modern sociology. By critically engaging with Eurocentrism and highlighting the originality and relevance of Ibn Khaldoun's work, this study contributes to broader efforts in decolonizing the social sciences and expanding the theoretical foundations of global knowledge production.

**Keywords:** Eurocentrism, Multiplex paradigm, Epistemology, Empirical historiography, Social Science.

## Introduction

The contemporary structure and pedagogy of the social sciences are predominantly informed by intellectual developments originating in Western Europe. Foundational figures such as Auguste Comte with his positivism, Karl Marx with historical materialism, Max Weber's interpretive sociology, and Emile Durkheim's functionalism have played central roles in shaping the discipline (Porter & Ross, 2003). Although these European contributions are of undeniable importance, the disproportionate emphasis on Western frameworks has led to what is increasingly identified by scholars as epistemic Eurocentrism, a phenomenon where non-Western intellectual traditions receive minimal recognition or are systematically omitted from the dominant academic narrative (Mills et al., 2010). Against this backdrop,

the movement to decolonize knowledge has gained momentum as an essential scholarly endeavor, calling on academics to broaden their theoretical scope and engage with alternative models of social thought that originate beyond the Western world (Khoo, 2024). Among the most notable yet frequently overlooked intellectuals in this context is the 14th-century North African historian and philosopher, Ibn Khaldoun (1332–1406). His influential text, *Al-Muqaddimah* (The Introduction), composed in 1377, is widely acknowledged as a pioneering work in the study of history, society, and political systems (Omonijo, 2021). Ibn Khaldoun's exploration of concepts such as social solidarity ('Asabiyyah), the cyclical nature of political authority, labor-based value theory, and critical approaches to historiography predates the work of many modern theorists by several centuries. Though occasionally cited as a forerunner in sociology or historiography, he is seldom recognized as a thinker who established an autonomous theoretical paradigm (Ashimi, 2023).

This paper argues that Ibn Khaldoun's contributions not only prefigure many fundamental issues within contemporary social science but also constitute a distinct and comprehensive framework that contests the dominance of Eurocentric theories (Fedayee, 2023). In recent years, there has been a notable increase in English-language academic work that takes a more in-depth view of Ibn Khaldoun's intellectual legacy. Scholars like Muhsin Mahdi (1957), Aziz Al-Azmeh (1981), and Syed Farid Alatas (2013) have examined his methodology, epistemological stance (Abdulganiy & Abdulganiy, 2019).

Several scholars have concentrated on specific aspects of Ibn Khaldoun's intellectual contributions. For instance, Yousef El-Ahmar (2022) interprets the concept of 'asabiyyah as an early formulation of what is now known as social capital, while A. M. Syed (2019) delves into Ibn Khaldoun's economic ideas, particularly his early articulation of a labor theory of value and his cyclical perspective on state economies (Faraji & Ghasemi, 2014). These studies underscore the interdisciplinary relevance of Ibn Khaldoun's work, which spans sociology, political science, economics, and even touches upon environmental studies. Nevertheless, much of the existing scholarship still lacks a comprehensive interpretation that frames Ibn Khaldoun not merely as a historical precursor but as a foundational thinker who presents a truly distinct paradigm, one shaped by a unique cultural, religious, and epistemological context (Amin et al., 2023). Despite these scholarly contributions, Ibn Khaldoun continues to be largely excluded from standard introductory textbooks in both sociology and political science, and his theories are seldom incorporated into core theoretical curricula. This exclusion cannot be attributed solely to historical neglect; rather, it reveals a more profound epistemological prejudice within the social sciences (Abdullahi, 2012). The prevailing dominance of Western paradigms has created a context in which theoretical contributions are judged by their alignment with European models, and non-Western thinkers are primarily valued when they appear to mirror or prefigure Western concepts. Within this framework, Ibn Khaldoun is often labeled as the "Arab Machiavelli" or a "precursor to Durkheim," instead of being examined as a thinker with his own original and self-contained intellectual vision (Rameez, 2018).

By elevating Ibn Khaldoun to the status of a paradigmatic thinker, this article contributes to the expanding body of research aimed at diversifying the theoretical bases of the social sciences. It also responds to the broader demand for epistemic justice by acknowledging that the world's intellectual legacy is far more expansive and heterogeneous than the dominant Eurocentric lens implies (Garrison, 2012). When approached as a fully developed paradigm, Ibn Khaldoun's thought not only provides valuable historical perspectives but also holds

significant contemporary implications for rethinking the study of society in a genuinely inclusive and globalized context (Ibid).

## Material and Method

This study is based primarily on library research and an extensive review of secondary academic sources. Central materials include classical translations of Ibn Khaldoun's writings, alongside modern scholarly interpretations and critical evaluations found in academic books, peer-reviewed journals, and scholarly essays. The research employs a descriptive-analytical approach to examine and interpret the fundamental concepts, methodological principles, and underlying assumptions in Ibn Khaldoun's work, situating them in dialogue with established Western social theories. By integrating insights from both the original texts and subsequent academic commentary, the paper seeks to construct a comprehensive account of Ibn Khaldoun's paradigm and evaluate its relevance to the ongoing efforts toward decolonizing and diversifying the field of contemporary social science.

## Reclaiming Ibn Khaldoun: The Scholar and His Time

Ibn Khaldoun (1332–1406), a versatile scholar, historian, philosopher, and sociologist, is regarded as one of the most significant intellectual figures in the history of the Islamic world. His pioneering contributions, particularly in sociology, historiography, and political theory, have had a lasting impact over the centuries (Ashimi, 2023). Despite his intellectual stature, Ibn Khaldoun's ideas are often sidelined in mainstream social science education, with his European contemporaries frequently taking precedence. This section aims to restore Ibn Khaldoun to his rightful place as a key foundational thinker whose work continues to question the Eurocentric assumptions that pervade contemporary social science (Fedayee, 2023).

Ibn Khaldoun, born in Tunis during the Islamic Golden Age, had his intellectual development deeply influenced by the political turmoil of his era. He witnessed the decline of the Ayyubid dynasty and the emergence of the Mamluks, experiencing firsthand the unpredictable nature of political power in both North Africa and the Middle East (Ashrafi, 2023). His direct exposure to political instability, coupled with his academic rigor, led him to formulate a critical understanding of history's cyclical nature and the inevitable rise and fall of civilizations. This historical backdrop played a crucial role in shaping his worldview and methodology, which would later form the basis of his magnum opus, *Al-Muqaddimah* (1377), a seminal work that laid the groundwork for the fields of sociology and the philosophy of history (Mamchii, 2024).

Ibn Khaldoun's contributions must be understood within the broader Islamic intellectual tradition, which, during the medieval period, was a thriving and multifaceted intellectual environment. The Islamic world nurtured significant advancements in philosophy, theology, science, and the arts, producing prominent scholars such as Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes (Ashimi, 2023). Ibn Khaldoun was part of this intellectual ecosystem, yet his work stood out due to its analytical and empirical approach. While many earlier scholars focused on theological or philosophical speculation, Ibn Khaldoun grounded his theories in empirical observation and systematic analysis. His methods were not confined to

philosophy but extended to history and sociology, employing a scientific approach to understanding human society (Patriarca, 2010).

One of Ibn Khaldoun's most significant contributions was his concept of *asabiyyah*, social cohesion or group solidarity. In *Al-Muqaddimah*, he argued that the strength of a community or state is contingent upon the solidarity among its people (Sümer, 2012). He believed that dynasties and empires rise to power when their rulers have strong *asabiyyah*, but inevitably decline as this unity weakens over time. His cyclical theory of the rise and fall of civilizations was groundbreaking for its era and anticipated future developments in political theory and sociology (Ibid). Furthermore, Ibn Khaldoun was an early critic of historical narratives that relied solely on religious or mythical explanations. He stressed the importance of empirical evidence and critical reasoning, arguing that historians should seek rational explanations for events rather than attributing them to supernatural or religious causes. His work was among the first to propose a scientific method for historiography, influencing later historians and social scientists (Nidzom & Rafsanjani, 2022).

Within the Islamic world, Ibn Khaldoun's intellectual contributions were revolutionary, and his ideas extended beyond regional boundaries, having a global impact. In many ways, his work preceded and foreshadowed the intellectual advances of later European thinkers such as Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Emile Durkheim (Khan, 2013). However, despite his clear intellectual accomplishments, Ibn Khaldoun remains largely excluded from Western social theory. This marginalization is tied to the broader historical and epistemological structures of the social sciences, which have been dominated by Eurocentric viewpoints (Sune, 2016). By restoring Ibn Khaldoun's legacy, we challenge the notion that the evolution of social theory was exclusively a product of Western intellectual traditions. When examined in its own context, his work provides a robust, alternative framework for understanding society, history, and political power (Fedayee, 2023). Acknowledging Ibn Khaldoun as a foundational figure in the social sciences not only recognizes his intellectual contributions but also paves the way for a more inclusive and diverse approach to understanding human society (Ibid).

### **The Concept of 'Asabiyyah: Foundations of Social Cohesion and Order**

In his seminal work *Al-Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldoun introduces the concept of *asabiyyah*, often translated as "social cohesion" or "group solidarity," which he posits as the foundation of societal structure and political authority (Sümer, 2012). For Ibn Khaldoun, *asabiyyah* is not a mere abstract idea but a dynamic, real force that dictates the fate of states, dynasties, and civilizations. This concept is central to his analysis of social organization and the rise and fall of political powers, representing a significant shift from traditional religious or mythological explanations of social order (Ibid).

At its essence, *asabiyyah* refers to the strength and unity within a group, whether it be a tribe, family, or even a nation. Ibn Khaldoun asserts that the cohesion of the group is the key factor in its ability to establish and sustain political power (Ali, 2019). In the early phases of any political entity, *asabiyyah* is at its peak, with group members bonded by loyalty, shared goals, and a common sense of purpose. This unity provides the necessary strength for the group to overcome external obstacles and secure social and political dominance (Sümer, 2012). However, *asabiyyah* is not an unchanging or enduring force. As Ibn Khaldoun famously argues, the life cycle of a society follows the dynamics of *asabiyyah*, which starts strong but gradually diminishes over time. His cyclical theory, central to his analysis of political power,

asserts that the decline of *asabiyyah* leads to the collapse of ruling entities (Ismail & Abdul Rahim, 2018). As internal solidarity weakens, corruption, internal conflict, and social decay take root, ultimately causing the political order to disintegrate. This theory, emphasizing the importance of social cohesion, provides profound insights into the fragility of political power and the complexities of sustaining social order (*Ibid*).

Within Ibn Khaldoun's framework, *asabiyyah* serves as a pivotal explanatory concept for understanding the emergence of new dynasties. When a new group, often originating from a marginalized or nomadic background, possesses strong *asabiyyah*, it can challenge established power structures and take control of state institutions (Wazir et al., 2022). An example of this is the rise of the Berber dynasties in North Africa, which Ibn Khaldoun analyzed through the lens of *asabiyyah*. These dynasties initially succeeded due to their unity and cohesion, but as their *asabiyyah* weakened over time, their rule became more fragile, eventually succumbing to external invasions or internal divisions (Bolton, 2017).

Ibn Khaldoun's concept of *asabiyyah* transcends political and governance issues, providing a broader framework for understanding social order. The strength of *asabiyyah* directly influences the stability of society, affecting everything from economic output to cultural practices (Qadir, 2013). Societies with weak *asabiyyah* are more prone to corruption, social unrest, and fragmentation, whereas those with strong *asabiyyah* experience greater cohesion, unity, and collective advancement. This wider application of *asabiyyah* highlights Ibn Khaldoun's perception of human society as a dynamic, interconnected system, where the stability and success of the group are essential for its endurance and prosperity (*Ibid*).

Furthermore, the concept of *asabiyyah* directly challenges the Eurocentric assumptions that dominate social theory, which often neglect the significance of collective solidarity in shaping political order (Mohammad, 1998). While Western theories tend to emphasize individualism or state-centered models of governance, Ibn Khaldoun positions the collective at the heart of his analysis, offering an alternative perspective on political and social organization. His approach highlights the centrality of communal values and group identity, opposing the Western focus on individual autonomy as the primary foundation for social order (*Ibid*).

### Political Power and the Rise and Fall of Dynasties

Building on his exploration of *asabiyyah*, Ibn Khaldoun's cyclical theory of states is one of his most revolutionary contributions to political theory. At the heart of his historical perspective is the belief that political power follows a predictable cycle of emergence, growth, and eventual decline (Önder & Ulaşan, 2018). This cyclical progression, which Ibn Khaldoun observed in the histories of different dynasties, is deeply intertwined with the dynamics of social cohesion (*asabiyyah*) and is essential to understanding the fragile nature of political authority and the inevitable collapse of ruling powers (Stowasser, 1984).

Ibn Khaldoun's cyclical theory suggests that dynasties and states originate from strong *asabiyyah*, which forms the basis for their rise to power. This unity and group solidarity enable new rulers, often from marginalized or nomadic groups, to challenge existing power structures and establish their own governance (Önder & Ulaşan, 2018). In this initial phase, the dynasty is defined by a collective sense of purpose, discipline, and cohesion, which propels it toward political and military success. The early stages of any dynasty are frequently marked by efforts to ensure internal unity and expand externally, which helps the group strengthen its hold on power (Stowasser, 1984).



As time passes, the very *asabiyyah* that initially facilitated the rise of a dynasty begins to gradually weaken. Ibn Khaldoun asserts that this decline in social cohesion is both natural and inevitable. As rulers become more entrenched in power and wealth, they start to detach themselves from the struggles and values that once bonded them with their followers (Ismail & Abdul Rahim, 2018). The descendants of the original founders, born into privilege, lack the strong sense of unity and solidarity that their ancestors possessed. This weakening of *asabiyyah* leads to a decrease in the effectiveness of the state's leadership, as internal divisions, corruption, and factionalism begin to take root (Bolton, 2017).

The erosion of *asabiyyah* is a crucial element in Ibn Khaldoun's theory of political decay. As group cohesion wanes, the essential unity needed to maintain political order falters, making the state more susceptible to external threats and internal upheaval (Qadir, 2013). This slow process of decline is often accompanied by the deterioration of the state's institutions, which once played a pivotal role in ensuring stability. Ibn Khaldoun observed that as the ruling elites lose their sense of purpose and connection to their people, they become increasingly disconnected from the realities of governance, which destabilizes political authority and leads to the eventual collapse of the dynasty (Butt et al., 2023).

Ibn Khaldoun's model of political decline is cyclical, rather than linear. The fall of one dynasty does not signify the end of political order but paves the way for the emergence of a new group, often united by a revitalized sense of *asabiyyah*. This new group typically arises from the margins of society, bringing with it a renewed sense of solidarity, and the cycle of rise and fall begins again (Okene & Ahmad, 2011). Ibn Khaldoun perceived history as an ongoing cycle of *asabiyyah* waxing and waning, with each cycle mirroring the patterns of those before it. His theory provides a framework for understanding political power dynamics, emphasizing the cyclical nature of history rather than a linear progression (Önder & Ulaşan, 2018).

This cyclical perspective on political power has significant implications for both historical analysis and modern political theory. By acknowledging the fleeting nature of political power, Ibn Khaldoun contests the notion that dynasties or political entities can endure permanently (Oldac, 2024). His interpretation of history stands in stark contrast to Western political thought, which often stresses political stability and the possibility of long-lasting political entities. Ibn Khaldoun, however, emphasizes the inevitability of decline, seeing the decay of states not as an exception but as a predictable and natural result of the dynamics of social cohesion (Önder & Ulaşan, 2018).

Ibn Khaldoun's cyclical theory of states remains profoundly relevant in the modern world. It provides a crucial lens through which to understand the instability of political systems and the tendency for once-dominant states to decline as their social cohesion erodes (Tahir et al., 2023). Whether analyzing the rise and fall of empires, the collapse of authoritarian regimes, or the recurring nature of political revolutions, Ibn Khaldoun's observations on the fragility of political power offer a timeless framework for comprehending the forces that influence the course of human history (Ibid).

### **Empirical Historiography and the Sociological Method**

One of the most significant aspects of Ibn Khaldoun's intellectual legacy is his groundbreaking approach to historiography and social science. While many historians of his time relied on traditional narratives, often influenced by religious or ideological biases, Ibn Khaldoun introduced a critical and empirical methodology that distinguished him as

one of the early pioneers of sociological thought (Nidzom & Rafsanjani, 2022). His influential work in *Al-Muqaddimah* not only redefined historical study but also laid the foundation for modern social science, particularly with its focus on systematic observation, causal analysis, and empirical evidence (Shahidipak, 2020). Ibn Khaldoun's historiographical approach was revolutionary in its emphasis on examining historical events and social phenomena through the lens of causality and empirical verification. He argued that history should not be treated merely as a compilation of dates and occurrences, nor should it be framed solely through religious or mythical lenses (Nidzom & Rafsanjani, 2022). Instead, he proposed that historians critically assess the social, political, and economic contexts surrounding events, identifying the underlying causes and motivations that shaped them. For Ibn Khaldoun, history was not just a record of past events; it was an analytical process aimed at uncovering the deeper forces behind human behavior (Ibid).

This shift from traditional to empirical historiography marked a pivotal departure from earlier models that often, attributed historical events to supernatural or divine forces. In contrast, Ibn Khaldoun's methodology was grounded in scientific principles, emphasizing observation and evidence-based reasoning, rooted in his understanding of human nature and society (Ovacik, 2023). His sociological method, which aimed to understand the dynamics of social groups, political entities, and historical development, formed the foundation of his work. Ibn Khaldoun viewed history as an evolving process, shaped by human interactions and societal structures (Nidzom & Rafsanjani, 2022).

His empirical approach was particularly evident in his analysis of social cohesion (*asabiyyah*) and the cyclical rise and fall of dynasties, as discussed earlier. By examining the social forces influencing political power, Ibn Khaldoun developed a theory of history that was both sociological and dynamic (Gada, 2018). This approach focused on uncovering the structural causes behind social phenomena, whether related to the emergence of new dynasties or the decline of established powers. His empirical historiography established Ibn Khaldoun as a precursor to later social theorists, such as Max Weber and Émile Durkheim, who also sought to explain social behavior through rational, observable causes (Ismail & Abdul Rahim, 2018).

Additionally, Ibn Khaldoun's sociological method was notably interdisciplinary, incorporating elements from various fields such as economics, sociology, geography, and political theory. His analysis of the economy, for example, was based on a systematic study of labor, production, and wealth, while his views on governance and political power were shaped by a keen understanding of social group dynamics and leadership (Harhour, 2024). This interdisciplinary approach reflects Ibn Khaldoun's broader vision of social science, where no single factor could fully explain the complexities of human societies. He believed that a holistic understanding of these complexities required the integration of multiple perspectives and methodologies, making his work revolutionary in its time and still highly relevant to modern social sciences (Benlahcene et al., 2024).

Ibn Khaldoun's empirical methodology was also marked by his commitment to objectivity and the rejection of bias. Unlike many historians of his era, who were influenced by personal, religious, or political agendas, Ibn Khaldoun sought to present a balanced, rational, and scientifically grounded account of history (Arnason et al., 2006). He urged historians to avoid emotional involvement or partisanship and to approach historical writing with the same objectivity that a scientist would apply to an experiment. His call for objectivity was a

crucial contribution to the evolution of historical scholarship and continues to shape the ethical standards of contemporary historical research ([Harhour, 2024](#)).

### **Ibn Khaldoun's Influence on Modern Social Theory: A Critical Reassessment**

Ibn Khaldoun's most profound contribution to modern social theory is his concept of social cohesion (*asabiyyah*), which underscores the importance of collective solidarity for political power and the maintenance of social order. This idea aligns closely with contemporary sociological theories on group dynamics, social capital, and collective action ([Garrison, 2012](#)). The notion that social cohesion is the driving force behind the emergence of political power and the primary determinant of its decline has been echoed in the works of modern theorists such as Émile Durkheim, who explored social solidarity, and Max Weber, who highlighted the role of communal ties in political legitimacy ([Kadir, 2025](#)). However, Ibn Khaldoun's perspective goes beyond this, portraying social cohesion not only as a condition for social stability but also as a dynamic, cyclical force that governs the rise and fall of entire civilizations. His comprehensive understanding of social power offers a challenge to Western ideas of political stability, which tend to overly focus on institutional frameworks or individual leadership ([Shahidipak, 2020](#)).

Ibn Khaldoun's cyclical theory of political power, which explains the rise, peak, and eventual decline of dynasties, has gained renewed attention in contemporary political science. His model offers an insightful framework for analyzing historical patterns of state formation, empire-building, and the internal dynamics that lead to political regime collapses ([Shehab, 2021](#)). In contrast to linear or teleological models of history, which often assume a progressive development of societies, Ibn Khaldoun's cyclical approach highlights the impermanence of political power and the inevitability of decline ([Abozeid, 2021](#)). This perspective resonates with modern political theorists like Samuel Huntington, whose ideas on the "clash of civilizations" and the cyclical nature of political systems draw on themes present in Ibn Khaldoun's analysis. Additionally, historians of empires who study the repeated rise and fall of great powers have also found Ibn Khaldoun's work valuable, as it suggests that no political entity is immune to the forces of internal decay and external pressure ([Önder & Ulaşan, 2018](#)).

Ibn Khaldoun's empirical and scientific approach to historical analysis distinguishes him from his contemporaries. His call for a rigorous evaluation of sources, a rejection of mythological narratives, and an emphasis on the social causes underlying historical events laid the foundation for modern historiographical methods ([Juraev, 2020](#)). Scholars like Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel, who were instrumental in developing the Annales School of history, embraced similar approaches, focusing on long-term social structures and the social factors driving history over isolated individual events. These modern historians, much like Ibn Khaldoun, recognized that history is not merely a series of discrete events but is deeply intertwined with broader social, economic, and cultural forces that can be understood through empirical research ([Harhour, 2024](#)).

However, Ibn Khaldoun's ideas must be critically reassessed in the context of contemporary debates in social theory. While his theories offer crucial insights into historical cycles and social dynamics, they also require adaptation to modern frameworks of power, identity, and global interconnectivity ([Garrison, 2012](#)). The rise of globalization, post-colonial critiques, and the development of gender and race studies present challenges to Ibn Khaldoun's original framework, which was shaped by the particular historical and cultural context of



14th-century North Africa. Nevertheless, his ability to provide a systemic analysis of social cohesion and state power continues to serve as an essential foundation for critical social theory, particularly in understanding the vulnerabilities of modern political structures (Qadir, 2012).

### **Relevance of Ibn Khaldoun's Thought in Contemporary Social and Political Issues**

Ibn Khaldoun's intellectual legacy, with its deep insights into social cohesion (*asabiyyah*), the cyclical nature of political power, and the processes of historical change, remains highly relevant in contemporary discussions (Alatas, 2013). As modern societies confront intricate social, political, and economic challenges, his ideas offer crucial perspectives on the fragility of political systems, the dynamics of social groups, and the inevitable cycles of societal transformation. His work serves as a valuable tool for analyzing issues such as state instability, social fragmentation, globalization, and political cycles, making it particularly pertinent in today's global context (Kadir, 2025).

Ibn Khaldoun's focus on the interconnection of social, economic, and political factors directly addresses the complexities of today's global challenges. In a world increasingly shaped by globalization, where economic, cultural, and political forces are deeply intertwined, his interdisciplinary approach, combining history, sociology, economics, and politics, provides a valuable method for analyzing global trends (Rizkiah and Chachi, 2020). Ibn Khaldoun's empirical, causal analysis of historical events, grounded in social dynamics and collective behavior, is highly relevant to current discussions on issues like economic inequality, migration, and cultural identity (Kadir, 2025). The economic crises of the 21st century, marked by widening gaps between the wealthy and the impoverished, echo the social breakdown Ibn Khaldoun predicted as societies transitioned from unity to fragmentation. His insights into how economic systems influence political stability are especially pertinent today as nations face the socio-political effects of neoliberalism, deindustrialization, and technological disruption (Ibid).

Ibn Khaldoun's work also offers a crucial lens for understanding the challenges of global governance in an increasingly interconnected world. His theory, which links the decline of political power to the erosion of social cohesion and moral authority, resonates with contemporary debates over the legitimacy of global institutions (Abdullah, 2018). The growing distrust in international organizations and the weakening of multilateralism reflect broader social and political issues that Ibn Khaldoun's theory helps explain. His insights suggest that the globalization of politics has contributed to a weakening of social cohesion, not only within nation-states but also at the international level, where global institutions' political authority is being increasingly questioned by rising nationalist movements (Ibid).

### **Ibn Khaldoun's Legacy: Towards a Comprehensive Social Science Paradigm**

In today's academic world, the integration of various disciplines has become a cornerstone of social science research, especially in fields such as political economy, global studies, and sociology. Ibn Khaldoun's emphasis on the interconnectedness of economic systems, social structures, and political power provides a valuable framework for addressing modern challenges in a holistic way (Alatas, 2013). Issues like economic inequality, migration, environmental change, and global conflicts cannot be understood through a single disciplinary perspective alone. Ibn Khaldoun's work serves as a model for contemporary

scholars who aim to bridge the gaps between traditionally separate academic fields, promoting a more comprehensive approach to studying our complex, interconnected world (Garrison, 2012).

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldoun's approach to historical analysis and his insistence on employing an empirical, causal methodology in understanding societal dynamics remain essential today. In a world where historical narratives are often shaped by ideological or political agendas, his commitment to objective analysis and critical evaluation of sources is crucial for maintaining the integrity of social science research (Juraev, 2019). His scientific methodology, which stresses a systematic and evidence-based approach, is particularly relevant in an era focused on data-driven research and evidence-based policymaking. Ibn Khaldoun's legacy encourages scholars and policymakers to move beyond simplistic or reductionist views of history and society and adopt more sophisticated, evidence-based approaches in their work (Harhour, 2024).

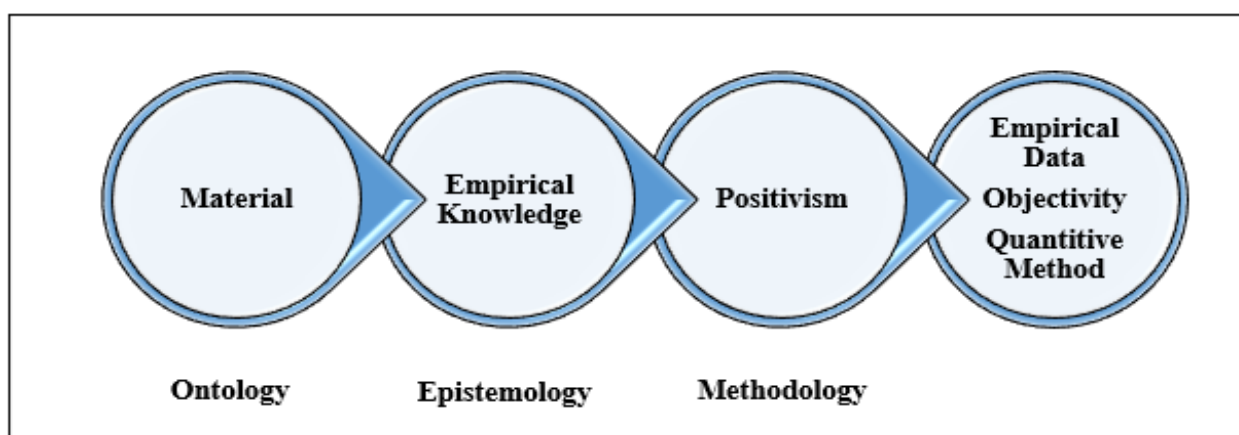
Ultimately, Ibn Khaldoun's integrated social science framework continues to serve as a vital foundation for scholars striving to understand the interconnections between social, political, and economic forces. His ability to transcend the limitations of individual disciplines, combined with his pioneering methodologies, has set the stage for modern, interdisciplinary approaches in social sciences (Tahir et al., 2023).

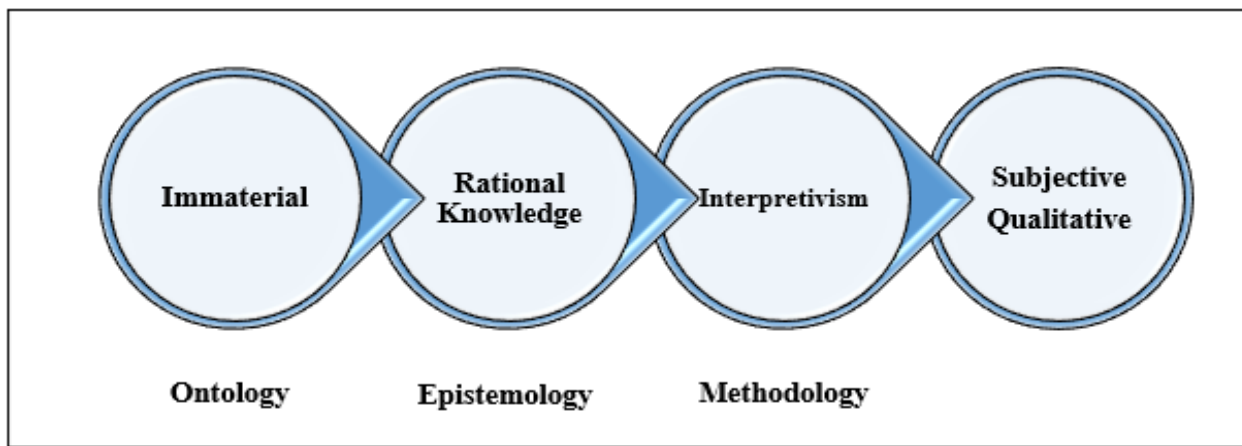
## Results

This study establishes that Ibn Khaldun articulates a unique and comprehensive paradigm of social sciences, referred to here as the Khaldounian Multiplex Paradigm, which diverges significantly from the conventional materialist and idealist approaches dominant in Western theoretical traditions. While these established paradigms have shaped modern scholarship, both tend to reduce the richness of social reality to singular explanatory dimensions.

The materialist paradigm is founded on a strictly physical conception of reality, underpinned by an empirical theory of knowledge and a methodological commitment to positivism, emphasizing quantifiable data, objectivity, and scientific observation. Human behavior and institutions are interpreted primarily through economic conditions, power dynamics, and observable interactions.

*Figure 1, Materialist Uniplex (Uni-layered) Paradigm*

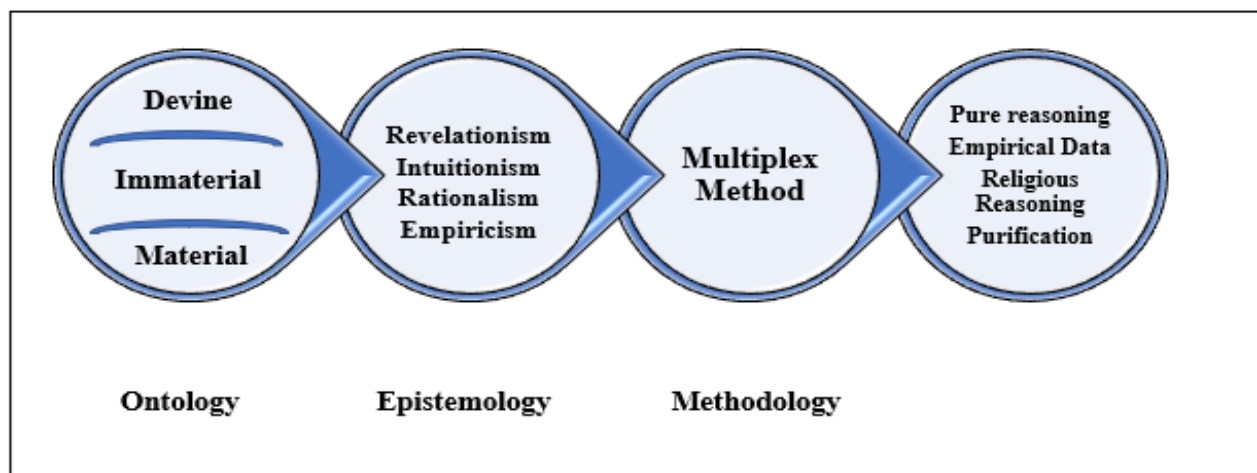




*Source: Created by the Author*

In contrast, the Khaldounian Multiplex Paradigm presents a multi-layered and integrated vision of reality, in which the material, the immaterial, and the divine all coexist as essential dimensions of existence. Its epistemological model draws from a diverse set of sources, including revelation, intuition, reason, and empirical experience, reflecting a rich intellectual pluralism. Correspondingly, its methodological approach blends various tools: logical reasoning, historical analysis, spiritual interpretation, and ethical refinement, offering a more nuanced mode of inquiry.

*Figure 3, Khaldounian Multiplex (Multi-layered) Paradigm*



*Source: Created by the Author*

This paradigm comes to life in Ibn Khaldoun's key concepts, particularly *asabiyyah* (group solidarity) and his theory of cyclical state dynamics, which analyze both material forces and moral-spiritual decline as intertwined processes shaping political power and social cohesion. These ideas resist categorization within traditional Western binaries, instead forming an independent and contextually grounded framework that integrates empirical, philosophical, and theological dimensions. Ibn Khaldoun's paradigm not only challenges Eurocentric assumptions but also offers a compelling alternative foundation for

understanding society, one that affirms epistemic diversity and promotes a more inclusive, decolonized intellectual landscape.

## Discussion

The development of Western social science, particularly since the Enlightenment, has largely unfolded within the epistemological confines of either idealism or materialism, leading to what can be described as uniplex paradigms, single-layered ontological and epistemological models that oversimplify human reality by reducing it to either mental constructs or material determinants (Altuntas, 2015). Idealist paradigms, influenced by thinkers like Kant and later by social constructivism, argue that the foundation of knowledge and reality resides in the realm of ideas, independent from and preceding the material world (Danielyan, 2023). Their epistemology emphasizes a priori reasoning, with methodologies that tend toward interpretive approaches, as seen in constructivist and post-structuralist traditions within international relations and sociology (*Ibid*). In contrast, materialist paradigms, whether derived from classical empiricism or Marxist historical materialism, assert that material conditions take precedence over the mind, with consciousness arising from material interactions. These frameworks adopt an empiricist epistemology and experimental methodologies, seeking to study society through quantifiable and observable phenomena (Özel, 2022).

However, the dichotomy between ideas and material forces, as well as between interpretivism and empiricism, does not fully capture the complexity of human social life. This is where Ibn Khaldoun's intellectual framework stands out: he offers a multiplex paradigm that goes beyond the constraints of both idealism and materialism (Garrison, 2012). Drawing from classical Islamic philosophy, especially metaphysical and epistemological traditions, Ibn Khaldoun develops an inquiry model that is multi-dimensional, integrative, and holistic, one that recognizes the coexistence of both material and immaterial aspects, as well as the rational and intuitive, empirical and spiritual dimensions (Arif, 2023).

Ibn Khaldoun's view of reality encompasses both the physical and spiritual, recognizing that society is shaped by material factors like geography and power, as well as immaterial influences such as beliefs and values. This holistic approach avoids reductionism, emphasizing the interaction between tangible and intangible forces (Malook, 2023). He integrates rational reasoning, sensory experience, and intuition as complementary sources of knowledge, offering a pluralistic, post-positivist framework. In his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldoun proposes a scientific method that combines empirical observation with ethical and interpretive analysis, addressing gaps in modern social sciences where empirical rigor lacks ethical depth (Sušić, 2021). His paradigm is particularly relevant in postcolonial studies, critiquing Eurocentric assumptions and advocating for indigenous knowledge systems and non-Western social structures. By emphasizing *asabiyyah*, communal solidarity, he challenges individualistic views in modern liberal thought. His cyclical theory of state formation and decay offers a dynamic, non-linear model that better reflects the political instability in many non-Western societies (Sehlikoglu, 2024).

## Conclusion

This article has sought to reposition Ibn Khaldoun not simply as a historical figure or precursor to Western thinkers, but as the originator of a coherent and alternative paradigm within the social sciences. His multiplex worldview, integrating the rational, empirical, spiritual, and intuitive, offers a richly layered approach to understanding social and political life. Grounded in concepts such as *asabiyyah*, the cyclical rise and fall of states, and the moral dimensions of leadership, Ibn Khaldoun's framework transcends the reductive binaries of idealism versus materialism or East versus West. His critical historiography and emphasis on epistemic complexity challenge the foundations of Eurocentric academic models and call for a broader recognition of non-Western intellectual contributions. In light of today's global challenges, from political instability to social fragmentation and ecological crises, Ibn Khaldoun's insights remain remarkably relevant. Reclaiming his work is not only an act of intellectual decolonization but a necessary step toward building a more inclusive, pluralistic, and contextually grounded social science for the future.

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## Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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