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In light of the ongoing public debate that focuses on differences between Islam and the West, this presentation suggests a change of perspective. From the theoretical perspective of global modernity, it aims at understanding similarities instead of narrating differences. Departing from the rather unknown and indirect intellectual relationship between the German Sociologist Max Weber and the nineteenth-century Mufti of Mecca, Ahmad Zayni al-Dahlan, the presentation aims at going beyond the conventional wisdom of “European influence on Muslim thinkers.” Through the analytical lenses of contemporary sociological theories, it interprets the emergence of modern knowledge on Islam as a fusion of intellectual horizons in light of general modern concepts such as state, positive law, science, secularism, authenticity etc. It identifies and demonstrates processes of the discursive and social interactions among Islamic Reformers, Orientalists and Sociologists, providing the foundation for our understanding of Islam as a religion in the modern world.

Dietrich Jung is a Professor and Head of Department at the Center for Contemporary Middle East Studies, University of Southern Denmark. He holds a MA in Political Science and Islamic Studies, as well as a Ph.D. from the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, University of Hamburg, Germany, and has large field experience in the Muslim world. His most recent books are Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere: A Genealogy of the Modern Essentialist Image of Islam, Sheffield: Equinox (2011); The Politics of Modern Muslim Subjectivities: Islam, Youth and Social Activism in the Middle East, together with Marie Juul Petersen and Sara Lei Sparre, New York: Palgrave (2014); Muslim History and Social Theory: A Global Sociology of Modernity, New York: Palgrave (2017).

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