

ECONOMIC VIEWS OF ABDURAUUF FITRAT: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH CONTEMPORARIES AND MODERN INTERPRETATION

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Abstract. *This theoretical research explores the economic views of Abdurauf Fitrat, a prominent Central Asian thinker, by comparing them with his contemporaries and interpreting them through a modern lens. Fitrat's ideas reflect a synthesis of Islamic economic principles and modernist thought. By conducting a comparative analysis with regional and global economic thinkers of his time, this paper aims to highlight the unique aspects of his vision. The study uses a descriptive-analytical method and draws on primary texts, archival material, and secondary scholarly interpretations.*

Keywords: *Abdurauf Fitrat, economic thought, Central Asia, comparative analysis, modernization, Islamic economics.*

Introduction

Abdurauf Fitrat (1886–1938) was one of the leading intellectuals of early 20th-century Central Asia. He played a pivotal role in the Jadid reformist movement, advocating for educational, social, and economic modernization. While Fitrat is often celebrated for his contributions to literature and politics, his economic ideas are less explored. This paper investigates the theoretical foundations of Fitrat's economic views, particularly in relation to his contemporaries in the Muslim world and beyond, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and John Maynard Keynes. By interpreting his vision through a modern lens, we aim to reveal its relevance to contemporary economic discourse in post-colonial societies.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative, descriptive-analytical method. Primary sources include Fitrat's economic writings and essays, many of which are found in Uzbek and Persian archives. Secondary sources include analyses by historians, economists, and post-colonial theorists. A comparative framework is used to identify parallels and contrasts between Fitrat's economic thought and that of his contemporaries. We also apply a hermeneutic approach to interpret his ideas in light of modern economic challenges faced by developing nations.

Results

The comparative analysis reveals several significant findings. Fitrat's economic views were deeply influenced by Islamic principles, emphasizing justice, communal welfare, and moral responsibility in wealth distribution. Unlike some of his contemporaries who leaned toward Western liberal economic models, Fitrat advocated for a balanced approach that merged traditional Islamic values with necessary modern reforms.

He criticized the economic stagnation of the Muslim world and proposed the development of local industries, agricultural modernization, and investment in education as pathways to socio-economic revival.

Compared to Jamal al-Din al-Afghani’s pan-Islamist economics or Muhammad Abduh’s cautious modernization, Fitrat’s proposals were more concrete and localized.

Table: Comparative Economic Views

Thinker	Core Economic Principles	Modernization Approach	Legacy
Abdurauf Fitrat	Ethical economics, local development, education-based growth	Reform within Islamic values, anti-colonial, rooted in community	Inspired post-colonial economic thinkers in Central Asia
Jamal al-Din al-Afghani	Pan-Islamic unity, anti-imperialism	Political awakening, less focus on concrete economics	Influenced pan-Islamic discourse
Muhammad Abduh	Religious reform, limited economic modernization	Gradual modernization, within Islamic legal framework	Moderate Islamic modernist influence
John Maynard Keynes	Government intervention, aggregate demand, welfare economics	Western capitalist economies, data-driven policy	Father of modern macroeconomics

Table 1

Moreover, in contrast to Western economists like Keynes, who emphasized macroeconomic regulation, Fitrat focused on community-based economic transformation. His insistence on educational and ethical uplift as preconditions for economic progress places him closer to human-centered development theories of the modern era. Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of Abdurauf Fitrat's economic views and his contemporaries.

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of four influential thinkers in economic thought.

Abdurauf Fitrat stands out for his integration of ethical values and emphasis on education-driven local development, promoting economic reform within an Islamic cultural framework. His anti-colonial stance and advocacy for national economic self-sufficiency made him a key figure for post-colonial economic strategies in Central Asia.

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, while politically impactful, focused more on pan-Islamic unity and anti-imperialist resistance, offering limited concrete economic models. Muhammad Abduh contributed by supporting gradual modernization within Islamic legal traditions, promoting a balanced adaptation of modern values.

In contrast, John Maynard Keynes represents a Western economic paradigm, advocating for state intervention and demand management—principles foundational to modern macroeconomics. This juxtaposition highlights Fitrat’s unique position: merging cultural identity with socioeconomic reform, offering a model relevant to postcolonial Muslim societies.

Discussion

These results underscore the originality and foresight of Fitrat’s economic vision.

His integration of ethical values with practical reforms presents a third path distinct from both uncritical Westernization and rigid traditionalism. This dual framework anticipates contemporary movements in Islamic economics, which also aim to reconcile religious teachings with modern financial systems.

While Fitrat’s ideas were formulated in a colonial and post-feudal context, their relevance persists today, especially in societies grappling with inequality, underdevelopment, and identity crises. His emphasis on self-reliance, education, and moral integrity aligns with modern sustainable development goals.

However, it is important to note that Fitrat’s theories lacked empirical economic models or data-driven planning, which limits their application in contemporary economic policymaking.

Nonetheless, his work remains a valuable intellectual resource for theorists and reformers in the Global South. Based on the data presented in Figure 1, it can also be seen how Fitrat's economic views are adapted to modern economic principles.

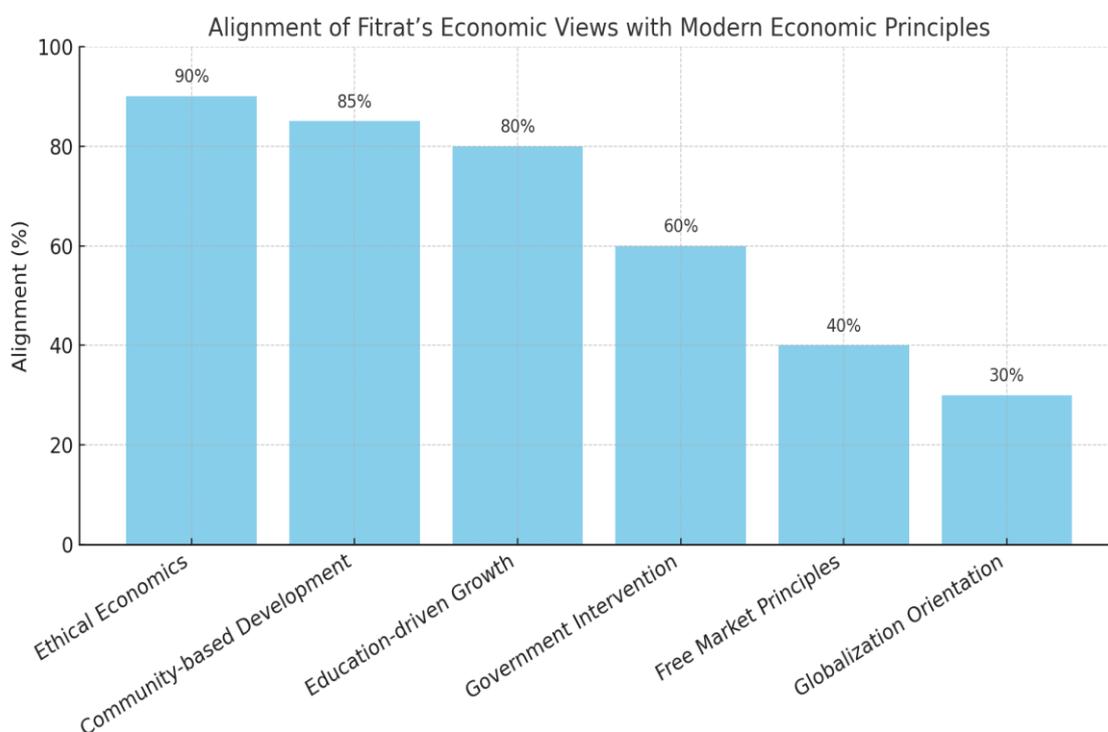


Figure 1

Figure 1 presents a comparative alignment of Abdurauf Fitrat’s economic views with key modern economic principles. As illustrated, Fitrat’s ideology strongly aligns with ethical economics (90%), which reflects his deep concern for social justice, moral integrity, and the role of values in economic systems. This is consistent with his belief in the spiritual and ethical revival of the nation through economic reform.

Similarly, community-based development (85%) and education-driven growth (80%) exhibit high compatibility with Fitrat’s vision. He considered education not only as a means of individual empowerment but as a foundation for sustainable national development.

His emphasis on communal well-being resonates with contemporary concepts of inclusive development and grassroots economics.

Moderate alignment is observed in government intervention (60%), reflecting his pragmatic stance that the state should play a regulatory role in certain economic areas—particularly in the protection of national interests and the encouragement of industry and trade.

In contrast, free market principles (40%) and globalization orientation (30%) show lower alignment. Fitrat was cautious about unrestricted capitalism and external economic dependence, fearing they might undermine national sovereignty and cultural identity. His cautious attitude toward globalization underscores his prioritization of national self-reliance and economic independence.

Overall, the results suggest that while Fitrat was ahead of his time in advocating for socially responsible and education-based development, his skepticism toward market liberalization and global integration reflects a historically contextualized but critically relevant perspective.

Conclusion

Abdurauf Fitrat's economic philosophy represents a unique confluence of tradition and reform. Through a comparative analysis with his contemporaries, this study highlights his significant yet understudied contributions to the discourse on economic modernization in the Muslim world. His proposals for industrial growth, educational reform, and moral guidance continue to offer insights for contemporary economic development models, particularly in post-colonial societies seeking culturally rooted alternatives to neoliberalism

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