

Contributions of Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh to the Debates on Nationalism

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
In partial fulfilment of the requirements
for award of the degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

PRIYANKA CHANDRA



**Center for West Asian Studies
School of International Studies
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
New Delhi 110067
INDIA
2012**



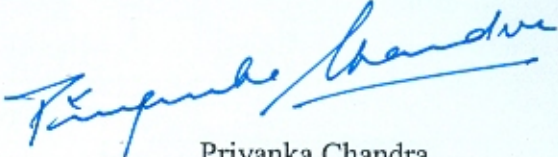
Centre for West Asian Studies
School of International Studies
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
New Delhi - 110067

Phone : +91-11-2670 4379
Mobile : +91 98 18 77 83 15
Email : cwas.jnu@gmail.com

Date: 16 July 2012

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation titled "**Contributions of Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh to the Debates on Nationalism**" submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been previously submitted for any degree of this university or any other university.



Priyanka Chandra

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that the dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



Prof. A.K. Ramakrishnan

Chairperson



Prof. A.K. Ramakrishnan

Supervisor

Contents

Acknowledgments	i
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Nationalism in the Arab World	14
Key Concepts and Theories of Nationalism	
Nationalism and Culture	
Nationalism and Religion	
Nationalism and Identity	
Arab Nationalism	
The Role of Islam in Arab Nationalism	
The Other Side of Nationalism	
Nation and the Self: The Context of Colonialism	
Chapter 3: Afghani on Nationalism: Convergence of Religion and Politics	39
Responding to the Challenge of Western Imperialism	
Placing Islam and Nationalism Together	
Pan-Islamism	
Unorthodoxy in Afghani's Discourse	
Reform	
"Arab" Identity, Civilization and Nation: Questions in Modern Muslim Identity	
Chapter 4: Nationalism in the Works of Abduh	60
Abduh's Reform Programme	
Abduh and Secularism	
Convergence of Islam and Nationalism	
A New Identity	
Chapter 5: Conclusion	86
Bibliography	89

Chapter 1

Introduction

The linkages between religion and politics have been a major theme of debate and discussion among scholars of Islam. It became a major point of discussion during the interaction between the West and the Muslim world in the colonial period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This period provides an interesting study of the interaction of the Muslim community with alternate political systems like secular democracies of the West. Significantly, the influences of the West were resented as much as they were found fascinating. The various features of modernity present in most Western states like democracy, secularism, etc. contrasted so deeply with the Islamic political community that they provoked varied reactions from the Islamic world. Two thinkers who made significant contributions to this debate were Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh.

The influences of the West as well as the subjugation of the Islamic states invoked a variety of reactions from the people of the Muslim world. A major strand of this was represented by indigenous scholars of that time who were fascinated by modernity in its Western sense, and at the same time resented the colonial rule. These scholars were torn between two extreme positions of either going back to their religious roots and upholding orthodox interpretations of religion, or adopting modern ideas at the risk of betraying their faith. What emerged was a plethora of intellectual views and ideas, all reactions to Western modernity as well as the changing times and new challenges faced by their own society.

Afghani and Abduh are known as Islamic modernists as they engaged with modern ideas. Their primary contribution was to the field of ideas. They contemplated modern ideas while giving important discourses on theology. Al-Afghani was a political activist and Islamic thinker in the late nineteenth century. He was one of the major advocates of pan-

Islamism, a concept that held varied but important political connotations in the following decades. He was known to be anti-British and spent a major period of his life formulating anti-imperialist opinions among his peers. He held some important political positions in both Iran and Egypt, which made his anti-British attitude even more significant. In addition to his political activities, he also gave important discourses on theology and religion, often in response to Western criticism of Islamic communities, for instance that of the renowned French thinker, Ernest Renan. At the same time, his exposure to the West and Western modernity also left him deeply impressed as a result of which he made an attempt to imbibe features of modernity into his discourse on religion. He emphasised the role of rationality and science in religion. He believed that Islam and its revealed law were compatible with rationality and, thus, Muslims could become politically unified while also maintaining their faith based on a religious social morality.

Through his works and thought he accumulated a number of students and followers, the most well known of whom is Muhammad Abduh. He had joined al-Afghani in Paris in publishing the journal *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* (The Firmest/Indissoluble Bond), an Islamic revolutionary journal that promoted anti-British views. Muhammad Abduh was greatly influenced by the ideas of his teacher, Afghani, and, in turn, went on to propound some of the most important and radical ideas in theology. One of the most important of such ideas was to bring back the concept of *ijtihad*- reinterpretation of religious texts on the basis of human reasoning and in accordance with the needs of the changing times. Using *ijtihad* in a new context allowed a more organic linkage with rationality. He argued that Muslims could not simply rely on the texts provided by medieval clerics, they needed to use reason to keep up with changing times. Abduh called for a return to the spirit of early Islam and a reinterpretation of the Quran and the *Sunna* of Prophet Muhammad in light of the modern times. He believed that limited borrowing from Western ideas was permissible and that properly used reason could not conflict with religious revelation. His ideas on both theology and the concept of nationalism were influenced not just by Afghani, but by his own experiences and exposure to Western modernity and, thus, they were more nuanced. Some of his ideas, like that of Afghani, came in response to the criticism of Islamic culture by writers like Farah Antun.

In the process of interpreting and attempting to imbibe modernity, both Afghani and Abduh made efforts to contextualise nationalism in the Islamic state, in accordance with the socio-political challenges of their time. Modernity, or the western concept of it, brought with it the ideas of secularism and democracy, which remained elusive to most Islamic communities. The ideas that modernity introduced to politics and the role of religion were not just new but so contradictory to the politico-religious system of Islamic states that a conflict between the two was inevitable. What complicated the situation further was that while modernity in the West is a product of the history of events that took place, and which are not common to the Islamic world, Western political thinkers like Renan wished to see its consequences and benefits in the Islamic world. Even the people of the Islamic world aspired to this modernity without wanting to give up their traditional idea of a religious society where religion reigns supreme.

The separation of the church and the state, a significant hallmark of the Western concept of secularism, posed an interesting question when juxtaposed with the nineteenth and twentieth century Islam. Islam, its religious texts and doctrines are not simply theological in nature. They pervade every aspect of human life from society to economy to polity, without classifying or categorising them into separate compartments. Debates on Islam and different political systems have become commonplace and oft-repeated, yet one is compelled to go back to them over and over again. The reason for this may be that while the religious practices and doctrines of Islam have remained specific to the culture and tradition of the place in which they evolved, everything else has changed so much that striking a balance between the two has become a constant challenge for theoreticians-both political and religious.

The works of Afghani and Abduh proved to be a landmark in this context. The ideas of both Afghani and Abduh, as noted earlier, were a reaction to colonial rule as well as colonial modernity and they often took up the defence of Islam as a religion and culture in reaction to criticisms from the West. They did not renounce their religion in order to bring about change, nor did they go back to the conservative position of other scholars and religious clergy. They talked about using or attempted to use religion as the medium of change and reform through the process of reinterpretation and reasoning. Their

nationalist programme was shaped by the colonial context as well as what they perceived as the 'stagnant condition' of the Muslim society.

While Afghani and Abduh were impressed with certain aspects of modernity, such as science and technology, and attempted to imbibe them, they deeply resented the colonial rule. They both took a strong anti-imperialist stand. Their entire endeavour to revive Islamic culture through reinterpretation and internal reform was aimed at strengthening their own Islamic culture and society. Though the ideas of Islamic unity did exist before them, Afghani is seen as one of the major architects of pan-Islamism. The major part of his political life was spent in trying to form a strong anti-British stance in the political circles. This was the main reason why Afghani became so critical of the Shah's pro-British policies in Iran. He was one of the first thinkers to bring forth the concept of nationalism based on Islamic unity. Abduh took this conception of nationalism further. His major point of difference with Afghani was that while Afghani was constantly involved in political assertions and strategic moves against imperial rule, Abduh wanted to resist it by strengthening Islamic culture through internal reform.

This concept of nationalism was inspired by colonial modernity and it was also a reaction to the latter. However, Afghani's conception of nationalism in the pan-Islamic sense was not quite compatible with nationalism in the Western sense. That is to say, while Afghani talked of Islamic universalism or the traditional concept of *umma*, there was a constant tension between the *umma* and the modern concept of territorial nationalism and the nation-state. Afghani and Abduh were realists enough to know that it was impossible to have one unified Islamic state. Their discourse on this theme was multi-layered and nuanced, and several interpretations have been made of their ideas on nationalism in later decades. Scholars hold varying positions on the compatibility between Islamic universalism and the modern concept of territorial nationalism. Yet the contradiction in the understanding of their ideas remains, unexplained and unresolved. In developing their programme of nationalism, both Afghani and Abduh not just addressed the tension between these two concepts, but also attempted to address the important questions about identity that had been raised by this contradiction between traditional and modernity.

Survey of Literature

The survey of literature is divided into three broad themes. The first theme describes the reactions of Afghani and Abduh to colonialism and the Western ideas of modernity; their interpretation of modernity as well as how they attempted to imbibe it and the interpretations drawn from it by various scholars. This theme includes a description of their works and concepts like *ijtihad*. The second theme discusses their views on the convergence of religion and politics as reflected in their works and in the understanding of various scholars. The third theme is devoted to their ideas on nationalism and how they attempted to contextualise it, and the discourse of various scholars on this topic.

The Works of Afghani and Abduh

One of the most significant thinkers with whose life and work Islamic modernism is associated is Afghani. His name is not attached to the Islamic history of only a single country in the West Asian region, though his stay in Egypt was the most fruitful period of his career. His political and educational activities in Egypt in the late 1870s, his writing in India from 1880 to 1882 and his stint as an editor with Muhammad Abduh of the pan-Islamic journal *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* in 1884 are the high points of his productivity and influence (Keddie 1968). Although politically Afghani held a strong anti-imperialist stand, he was deeply impressed and influenced by the modernist discourse of nineteenth-century Europe. He believed in human intellect and rationality as the prime movers of social progress and human civilization (Moaddel and Talatoff 2002). Thus, when he spoke of the decline of Islam, he meant not the religion but the Islamic civilization. Abduh too was influenced by the Enlightenment discourse. He was an admirer of Herbert Spencer whose work on education he translated into Arabic. He had also read the works of Rousseau, Tolstoy, Strauss, and Renan. However, he realised that transplanting European laws and institutions to Egypt would be impossible, thus he spoke of bringing internal reform, through his reform project of *ijtihad* (Moaddel and Talatoff 2002; Haj 2009). Two of Abduh's works, *The Theology of Unity (Risalat al-Tawhid, 1879)* and *Islam and Christianity* set down several themes which were later developed by his

disciple, Rashid Rida. These included the revival of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) and a rejection of the mentality of blind imitation of tradition (*taqlid*), which marked a shift of emphasis from traditional focus on jurisprudence to modern fields of learning and promoting the common good through mass education. Thus, Abduh too emphasised the primacy of reason over tradition and sought to assimilate the Western approach of science and knowledge (Wood 2007).

One of the most important works of Abduh and Afghani together was for the journal *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa*. It aimed at fostering rational thinking in the Muslim world, advocating Islamic nationalism and attacking British colonialism. Its objective and policy were clearly stated in its first issue: the study of the defects of the Muslim world, their remedies and cures, and advocating the concept of Islamic nationalism (Selim 1959).

The thought and activities of Afghani and Abduh go hand in hand and only a comprehensive study of both can give a complete understanding of it. There are some ambiguities in their works and political activities (Adams 1933). Some of the ambiguities also exist owing to the fact that Afghani accepted the technique of the philosophers, of using one kind of argument for the elite and another for the general public (Hourani 1970). In explaining the reactions of the *umma* to the challenge of the European civilization, Badawi (1976) categorises them into four positions: conservatives, Westernisers, Muslim secularists and reformists. He also mentions how these four positions are points on a continuum stretching from one extreme (conservatives) to the other (Westernisers), and that it is possible for a thinker to hold various positions based on his opinions on various important issues. Though Afghani and Abduh are seen as reformists, by the nature of their stand, they seem least consistent, as the middle course is the most elusive. This explains the reason behind the ambiguity in the opinions of Afghani and Abduh on various issues (Badawi 1976).

Religion and Politics

This particular theme of the convergence of religion and politics is a very contentious one, as it is hard to find any particular commentary by either Afghani or Abduh in their

works that deals specifically with this theme. However, in their discourse on theology, and especially on reformation and revival based on modern ideas, one gets some understanding of their views on it. Due to this there is a gap in the knowledge of their opinions on this theme, as a result of which various scholars have held varied and extreme views about the stance taken by Afghani and Abduh on religion and the question of secularism. It is contended by Albert Hourani that Abduh was less concerned with whether Muslims could accept the institutions and ideas of the modern world, and more with how to convert Islam, a revealed religion, into a valid framework of life for the modern world (Hourani 1983). Whereas some of his followers, like Rashid Rida, used his work to stress a more fundamentalist and rigid line, others like Abdul Raziq adopted some of his positions to promote a more secular vision of society (Haj 2002). However, Abduh, while refusing to undermine the role of religion, was not blind to the merits of European systems (Khoury 1976; Gesink 2010). While he sought to imbibe the Western approach to knowledge, he wished to retain and reinforce Islamic cultural integrity. This line of thinking is interpreted by scholars as Abduh's belief that modernity would strengthen Islam, a position contrary to that held by secularists (Wood 2007).

In the reform programme of *ijtihad*, one finds the views of Abduh on the role of religion in politics. His engagement with Farah Antun is extremely important as these are the works in which Abduh delved into the question of whether political power should be civic or religious. He stated that Islam did not seek political power, because unlike the Christian Church, the Quran categorically prohibited the coercion of faith, and that religious authority lies not in its political power but in its moral guidance. He also asserted that it was equally important that political sovereignty should refrain from exerting control over tasks assigned to religion as they were beyond civic tasks. While he did not reject the secular authority of the modern state, he did raise the issue of the social and historical particularity of Muslim societies. Thus, secular power to him was historically and culturally specific, rather than predetermined or universal (Haj 2002).

In propounding their views on religion, Afghani and Abduh called for unity under the rule of the Caliphate. Abduh saw the Caliph as a civil and not a religious ruler, reasoning that the Caliph was simply the political head of the community and not equivalent to the

role of the Pope in Christianity. On the question of separation of Islam and politics, while *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* attempts to differentiate between Islam and the causes of power, Abduh does not completely reject any such separation as that would be tantamount to abandoning Islam itself (Badawi 1976).

However, owing to a host of contradictions in his enunciated ideas, many scholars have contested the widely held views about Afghani. Afghani's traditional image as a devoted champion of Islamic reformist teachings is believed to be quite misleading. In reality, he is believed to have been a freethinker who viewed religious appeals as instrumental to political ends (Keddie 1972). This can be understood through the various shifts in his position on essential issues. One such shift in Afghani's stance is noticed in his nuanced discourse on religion when he stated "center of attention is no longer Islam as a religion, it is rather Islam as a civilization" (Hourani 1962).

Debate on Nationalism

Nationalism cannot be understood simply as an ideology or a form of politics, it must be studied as a cultural phenomenon as well. Nationalism, the ideology and the movement, are closely related to national identity, a multidimensional concept which includes culture, language, sentiments and symbolism. Thus, an understanding of nationalism as a political force depends on grounding its analysis on the idea of national identity as a collective cultural phenomenon (Smith 1991). Nationalism can be identified as a 'cultural artefact' (Anderson 1983). An understanding of this requires knowledge of how it became a 'historical being', and in what ways its meanings have changed overtime. Also, despite being the product of historical forces, once created, the idea of nationalism was capable of being transplanted, in varying degrees, to a variety of social terrains. However, its viability would depend on how culturally specific it remains (Anderson 1983). The context within which Afghani and Abduh wrote on nationalism was similar to this. It was a foreign concept, but became an instrument of Afghani's and Abduh's reaction to colonial rule. A dichotomy remained in their propagation of this idea, as they aspired to the Western concept of territorial nationalism, but spoke of the traditional concept of

umma, the unity of the Islamic world. According to Ernest Gellner, nationalism translates into a feeling of anger aroused by the violation of political sovereignty. However, one case to which nationalism or nationalist sentiment is particularly sensitive is if the rulers of the political unit belong to a nation other than that of the majority of the ruled (Gellner 1983). This is visible in the writings of Afghani and Abduh whose idea of nationalism was based on their strong anti-colonial attitude.

Afghani held immense pride in Arab nationalism and saw this as a cause of unity for the Arab people. This is clearly visible in his interaction with Renan, where he replies to the latter's critique of the Arab people (Keddie 1983). Afghani made Islam the main fabric of solidarity, placing it on the same footing as other solidarity-producing beliefs. His political activities and teachings promoted a secularist and activist attitude toward politics. This is what made Afghani such an important figure in modern Islamic politics (Haim 1962).

Afghani and Abduh lived in the age when European power was the dominant force across the world. Therein too, Afghani was more aware of the threat posed by British imperialism than by that of other countries. He contested the notion that the European powers were superior to Muslim countries. He recognised science and philosophy as the instruments of European progression, and urged the Muslims to learn the useful arts of Europe, though not by imitation. The appeal for unity is the theme which runs through Afghani's work. When talking of Muslim unity, Afghani did not simply refer to cooperation of religious and political leaders; he meant primarily the solidarity of the *umma*. To him solidarity was the force which held the society together (Hourani 1962).

Afghani's biographers may differ about many things, but they all agree upon his unswerving opposition to the British. His name is closely associated with the pan-Islamic movement because he was working, especially during his stay in Europe, for the unity of the Muslim world under the Caliph. Afghani was enough of a realist to appreciate the difficulty of Muslims coming under one rule, thus he suggested that rather than unite in one single state, Muslims could achieve such a unity as essential for their defence. Like Afghani, Abduh is thought to have been conscious of Europe as a political force to be resisted. In his initial years when Abduh was politically active, he openly advocated the

idea of *watan*, which ran counter to the universal community, *umma*, so basic to Islam. However, there was an eventual shift in Abduh's approach to nationalism. In the later years of his life, as he abandoned the political struggle, his whole effort was devoted to interpreting Islam in terms of modernity so that it could meet the challenge of European colonialism (Badawi 1976).

Here again, due to the ambiguities of the available works, some scholars hold the contrary view. The appeal to pan-Islamic sentiment, to which Afghani's legacy is particularly associated, is thought to be only sporadic. Afghani did not preach it until 1883, when engaged in courting Sultan Abd al-Hamid, and on subsequent occasions he was quite prepared to drop it in favour of conflicting causes. For instance, despite his open and burning hostility to British imperialism, which is acknowledged by most biographers, the consistency breaks down. There was at least one occasion when he was willing to lend his services to the British government in its dealings with the Ottoman Sultan (Keddie 1972).

Rationale and Scope of Study

Despite the laborious works of various scholars, the gaps in knowledge about these two thinkers, Afghani and Abduh, remain. This is more glaring for their contributions to the chosen theme- nationalism. Both Afghani's and Abduh's ideas on the theme of nationalism and the interpretations drawn from their works by various scholars left a lot unexplained. Even though the significance of the works of Afghani and Abduh has been recognised, the issue of nationalism has not been discussed adequately.

The purpose of this study is to identify and problematise the various ambiguities and conflicts in the interpretations of the works of Afghani and Abduh. This study deals specifically with the theme of nationalism, and how this theme was treated in the works of Afghani and Abduh. Further, this study inquires into their reactions to the Western conceptions of modernity and Western colonialism, and how these shaped nationalism in the works of Afghani and Abduh. It attempts to gain a new and fresh perspective of

nationalism as defined by the two thinkers, its causes, and their chosen ways of propagating it.

The rationale behind taking up this study is that it is important to understand the stance taken by these two important thinkers on this theme because nationalism is still relevant in the contemporary age in the West Asian region. Afghani and Abduh were two of the foremost thinkers to propagate nationalism in the form of religious and cultural unity. This eventually grew into the wider concept of Arab nationalism which has had varying but significant political connotations over the last century in West Asia. As a political theme and motivation, its resurgence has been witnessed on various occasions.

Research Questions

- What are the ways in which Afghani and Abduh encountered Western modernity?
- What is the nature of the linkage between religion and politics in the works of Afghani and Abduh?
- How were the ideas of Afghani and Abduh on nationalism different from those of the Western thinkers and their ideas?
- Is there a contradiction between the traditional concept of *umma* which they propagated and the modern concept of nationalism which they aspired to?

Hypotheses

- For Afghani and Abduh, religious interpretations were a means for achieving social and political transformation.
- The anti-imperialist discourse of Afghani and Abduh helped them bridge the gap between the ideas of *umma* and modern nationalism.

Research Methods

This study is both descriptive and analytical, and attempts to discuss the contentious issues and address the outcomes. Data for the study is derived from both accessible primary sources as well as secondary sources. Primary sources include the available English works of the two thinkers: books, articles, journals, letters and speeches. Secondary sources comprise of books based on the lives and works of Afghani and Abduh, along with books and articles that deal specifically with the themes of secularism and nationalism.

Scheme of Chapters

The second chapter, **Nationalism in the Arab World**, presents a conceptual background to nationalism. It highlights some of the major theories of nationalism and the various important factors that influence nationalism. It also highlights the contributions of some of the thinkers in the Arab world to the development and propagation of the idea of nationalism in the Arab lands, indicating how nationalism, as a theory, has developed in the specific Arab and Islamic context. This chapter also provides the discursive context in which Afghani's and Abduh's work is located and how it impacts the question of identity.

The third chapter, **Afghani on Nationalism: Convergence of Religion and Politics**, presents Afghani's contribution to nationalism, describing the context of colonialism and Afghani's reaction to it. While discussing the thinker's response to the challenges posed by the ideas of Western modernity to the Islamic society, it also brings out the convergence of Islam and nationalism in Afghani's work through his efforts to combine pan-Islam and nationalism, and his efforts to address the question of identity.

The fourth chapter, **Nationalism in the Works of Abduh**, discusses Abduh's reform programme arising from the changing socio-political needs as well as the challenge of colonialism. This chapter also examines his views on secularism and how Islam and

nationalism intersect in his work. Further, the chapter discusses his contribution to the idea of alternate conception of selfhood and identity in the context of colonial modernity.

The final chapter concludes the contributions of both Afghani and Abduh to the debates on nationalism and how they impacted and developed a modern discourse of Islamic subjectivity.

*

Chapter 2

Nationalism in the Arab World

An understanding of the concept of nationalism is a prerequisite to the study of the contributions of Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh to the debates on nationalism. Though there is no single universally accepted definition of nationalism, eminent scholars have theorised this concept on the foundations of both general and specific socio-political and cultural contexts. Contradictions in the definitions proposed by various scholars enhance both the ambiguity and variations of this phenomenon. Furthermore, the constituents of nationalism also require attention based on the role they play in shaping a particular nationalism. Culture, religion, language, etc. play an eminent role in the conceptualisation of a national identity distinct from others, since its distinctiveness is derived from these factors. Focusing specifically on Arab nationalism, the onset of colonialism and imperialism, and the Arab nationalist discursive trends since the nineteenth century provide the contextual background to the proposed study. Afghani and Abduh were by no means the only authors of what gradually branched out into nationalism in the Arab lands, as pan-Arabism, and pan-Islamism- which are also seen today as reactions to colonialism. Their works were specific points in a stretch of discursive tradition which forms the basis of what is today known as Arab nationalism. It was a gradual process of evolution of aims, aspirations and ideologies, and Afghani and Abduh were certainly not isolated in their efforts in this direction. Though they stand out in this discursive tradition for their unique contributions to it, there were certainly many important influences in that tradition, from which they were able to draw their ideas. Their own work and nationalist and Islamic thought in turn inspired following generations to participate in this tradition. The emphasis in this study is on the discursive tradition because that was the main area of contribution of Afghani and Abduh to nationalism. Through this discursive tradition, a combination of exposure to Western modernity and Islamic revivalism enabled them to question existing colonial

perceptions of the identities of Muslims and Arabs, and in turn create or at least contemplate new identities, independent of the biases of colonial attitudes.

Key Concepts and Theories of Nationalism

The fact that nationalism as a concept and an important phenomenon in world politics is extremely difficult to define has been conceded by even the most eminent scholars of nationalism, be it Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Elie Kedourie or Anthony Smith. Yasir Suleiman highlights some of the problems of defining nationalism. To begin with, if one accepts culture and ethnicity as one of the basic foundations of nationalism, then its definition becomes complicated owing to the complex nature of ethnicity and the nation, and the nation and the state. As Suleiman points out, “it is not always easy to tell when ethnicity ends and nationalism begins, or whether or not the existence of the sovereign state is a necessary criterion for the existence of the nation as a recognizable or even legal entity” (Suleiman 2003: 18). Further, terms related to the concept of nationalism are often confused. This poses a big problem particularly in the context of the Arab and the Muslim world, as has been noted by Sharara,

There are four words which people confuse whenever they talk of nationalities. These are: nation (*umma*), fatherland (*watan*), people (*sha‘b*), and state (*dawla*). They frequently use the word ‘state’ when they mean ‘nation’, and talk of ‘fatherland’ to signify ‘people’ or else speak of ‘people’ when they intend the ‘nation’, without distinction between the meaning of these vocables, or precise realization of what they denote, or a firm grounding in the differences between the respective concepts (Suleiman 2003: 18).

Having said this, scholars have proposed useful definitions of nationalism. Gellner suggests that the concept of nationalism is parasitic in nature, that is, it is dependent on concepts like ‘nation’. ‘Nation’ in turn is again a rather ambiguous term, very difficult to define. Max Weber suggests the following definition: “A nation is a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence, a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own” (Weber 1948: 176).

According to Weber, nation is a type of community based on solidarity, which needs statehood to become a political entity, different from other communities of solidarity. The nation needs statehood to protect its cultural values against an assault by foreign powers, while the state needs nationhood and the legitimacy that comes with it.

According to Anthony D. Smith, “A nation can be defined as a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (Smith 1991: 14).

Nationalism is widely accepted by social scientists as a modern movement with its origins in the latter half of the eighteenth century in the West, i.e. Europe and America. Nationalism is an inclusive and liberating force which can break down smaller and localised communities based on region, language and dialect, culture, customs and traditions, clan, etc. and create in their place larger, more powerful nation-states. These larger entities then have a uniform system of economy, administration, education and law. In challenging the local trends, this phenomenon in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also challenged the feudal practices of local regions. At the broader level, it was popular and mass-based as it also challenged the oppressive imperial rule and established the sovereignty and right to self rule (Smith 1998: 1). Due to this, nationalism has often been understood as being synonymous with democracy, though that is not always the case. Neither has it been a homogenous movement across the world. It has had many strands, many different forms and has been based on many different ideologies.

One of these strands has been “a host of small-scale mini nationalisms led by intellectuals who appealed to language and cultural differences” (Smith 1998: 2). They talked about the ideas of ethnicity and the awareness and the identity of the ‘self’. These nationalisms appealed sometimes to race, sometimes to culture, at other times to language or religion or contrasting political ideologies within the larger ideology of nationalism itself. They also emphasised the quality of collective identities, thus translating into the idea of nation a cultural construct reflecting the people of that nation.

Smith bases the paradigm of nationalism that spread across the globe in the last three centuries in “classical modernism” (Smith 1998: 3). According to him, the idea of nationalism originated in the West with the onset of modernity and has gradually grown and spread with all other ideas of modernity on the same trajectories. Thus, a major characteristic in the process of modernisation and, simultaneously, the rise of nationalism in non-Western regions has been that of colonialism.

Smith refutes Kedourie’s assertion that nationalism “is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century” (Kedourie 1960:1). While he agrees that the origins of nationalism are in Europe, nationalism as a doctrine to him was not ‘invented’, rather it was a synthesis of pre-existing cultures, social fabrics, symbolism, and ideas as it is multi-dimensional and can be seen both as a manifestation of cultural aspirations and as a political ideology. As he has described it,

If nationalism is part of the ‘spirit of the age’, it is equally dependent upon earlier motifs, visions and ideals. For what we call nationalism operates on many levels and may be regarded as a form of culture as much as a species of political ideology and social movement (Smith 1991: 71).

Gellner opposes this idea, stating that nationalism is not the awakening of old and dormant forces and aspirations, but is the consequence of new forms of social organisation and evolved high-cultures. Though it uses some of the pre-existing cultures, it also transforms them in the process. It is the crystallisation of new units to meet the requirements of new conditions that had not existed before. Inheritances of tradition from the pre-national world may constitute a part of nationalism, but is not synonymous with it (Gellner 1983: 48-49).

Anderson, in his definitive work *Imagined Communities*, defines the ‘nation’ as an imagined community. To him, it is “an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 2006: 6). It is imagined, because the feeling of unity and shared culture on the basis of which nationalism aims to achieve nationhood and become a political entity, is imagined rather than actually existing. That is to say, rather than awakening of a pre-existing but dormant spirit of community, nationalism seeks to create nations where they do not exist. Through this assertion, Anderson challenges the notion of a certain primordial quality often attached to the

concepts of nation and nationalism. The sense of primordialism is often a part of nationalist rhetoric, rather than being a part of the actual evolution of a nation, because it is precisely that, an evolution or a creation of a nation.

In saying that the nation is imagined as limited, Anderson implies that even large nations have finite boundaries, beyond which are other nations. A nation cannot be an all-encompassing entity. Nation stands for a shared culture, history and seeking of a political entity for a community, not for an entity which is coterminous with entire humankind. Its imagination is also as a sovereign. The root cause of this is traced by Anderson to the fact that this concept was born in the age of Enlightenment when political rule as sacred and divinely-ordained or in the form of hierarchical dynasty was being questioned and new foundations for the legitimacy of political rule were being laid. The imagination of a nation as a community is based on the conception of the nation as “a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 2006: 7). It is the feeling of community and fraternity that makes the imagination of a common political entity based on notions of shared culture, history and interests possible.

Nationalism is often used as an ideology which includes a cultural doctrine of nations as well as national will. Ideology is a very significant dimension of nationalism; mostly the two terms are understood to be synonymous. In this context, Smith defines nationalism as, “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (Smith 1991: 73).

For a general understanding of the seemingly universal and normative concept of ‘nation’, Gellner proposes the following definition,

1. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.
2. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation” (Gellner 1983: 7).

This means that commonality of culture, that is, language, race, ethnicity, etc., can create a nation of a category of people, if they recognise certain mutual rights and duties and

have a sense of the shared culture and shared membership of the same community. Based on this understanding of the concept of nation, Gellner describes the concept of nationalism in the following way,

Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political aim and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of this principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist *movement* is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind (Gellner 1983: 1).

Gellner further proposes the idea that a certain kind of violation of this nationalist sentiment is particularly sensitive and provocative, that is, if the rule of the political unit belongs to a nation other than the majority of those who are ruled by them. For nationalists, this is the worst and most intolerable breach of political propriety and rights. If the idea of nationalism is based on the congruence of culture and political authority, the crucial element in this setting is that of political legitimacy. An intersection between ethnic and political boundaries runs contrary to the whole idea of political legitimacy of the ruling political unit, and is thus bound to face opposition (Gellner 1983: 1). If ethnic boundaries of a state separate the rulers from the majority of the ruled, then this is a strong violation of the nationalist sentiment, as it infuses a sense of subjugation and oppression in the ruled. This implies the great significance of culture and ethnicity with regard to the concept of nationalism, as will be discussed further below.

Nationalism and Culture

To say that all nationalisms are purely ‘political’ in nature would mean the denial of nationalist experiences as they have been recorded by history. Nationalism can be a reflection of the culture and local traditions. In many cases it has been a precursor to the more political form of nationalism, a cultural awakening that leads to a nationalist movement based on cultural bonds. According to John Hutchinson, “where political nationalism fails or is exhausted, we find cultural nationalists providing new models and tapping different kinds of collective energies, thereby mobilising the larger numbers of hitherto unaffected members of the community” (Smith 1998: 74). Also such an

assumption would reflect an ethno-centric attitude of the West, since the nature of any particular nationalism would differ from the other due to its differing social, cultural and historical contours. For example, in West Asia, the content of nationalism was largely determined by the linguistic and religious heritages, which were in turn reflected in the nations they aimed to create. Thus, Anderson views 'nation-ness' and nationalism as "cultural artefacts of a particular kind" (Anderson 2006: 4).

Cultural nationalism aims to retain and protect the cultural identity, on which the nation is often based. This is of great significance because 'identity' plays a very significant role in the idea of nationalism. It stands for the religious, linguistic and cultural heritage of a people which form the very basis of the solidarity which then translates into the nationalist sentiment or the unity of the larger community, not just during but even after the formation of the nation. Beyond that the concept of identity is also the assertion of 'selfhood' as opposed to the often coloured perceptions of others. Cultural identity, according to Smith,

Refers not to a uniformity of elements over generations but to a sense of continuity on the part of successive generations of a given cultural unit of population, to shared memories of earlier events and periods in the history of that unit and to notions entertained by each generation about the collective destiny of that unit and its culture (Smith 1991: 25).

It is also significant because it creates space for an understanding of other kinds of nationalisms, particular to the contexts in which they arise. Cultural nationalisms also enable the coexistence of heterogeneous groups by providing appropriate recognition to both the distinctive as well as common features of their identities. Thus, Kedourie's claim that nationalism imposes homogeneity has been challenged by Gellner who states that it is an underlying cultural homogeneity which surfaces in the form of nationalism. However, on the flipside, one cannot overlook that monolithic cultural nationalisms have historically played havoc in societies too.

Nationalism and Religion

Smith has described nationalism as a religion of political modernisation, especially in the new states of Asia and Africa. As he has duly noted,

In this Durkheimian model, nationalism becomes a form of reflexive collective self-worship, a 'political religion' not just in the sense in which a religion like Islam is sometimes characterised as political, that is, as a way of life which does not distinguish between religion and politics, but as a political surrogate for religion. Nationalism here is really a modern, secular ideology which serves as a 'civil religion', performing the same functions for individuals and groups as did traditional religion, although springing from secular, non-traditional source (Smith 1998: 98).

However, this view of what Smith calls a 'political religion' is reflective of both an ethno-centric viewpoint that overlooks the contextual realities of a particular non-Western nationalism, as well as the assumption of religions like Islam being not only monotheistic but also uni-dimensional. Whether or not religion is replaceable by a political system demands an understanding of the role of Islam in Muslim communities and nations. Most Muslim nations having retained their religious character, it would be safe to say that nationalism in the context of these nations has been combined with, and not replaced religion completely. How far the centrality of religion has been challenged in these communities would differ from nation to nation.

On the centrality of religion in nationalism, Smith opines that while religion may manage to preserve a sense of common ethnicity for a period, it needs, of necessity, new currents and movements to revive an otherwise dying religious culture. To him "organized religion by itself is not enough" (Smith 1991: 35). Religious reform becomes essential to the cause of self renewal and revival. Though it works as a solidarity-producing belief, an orthodox and obsolete religious system may not be able to ward off the decay festering on the fringes of the community or invasion from the outside.

Nationalism and Identity

Nationalism can never arise in a void, it is the product of a given context, a cultural and social heritage, and always relates to a people as a collective phenomenon. Thus the concept of identity is central to the understanding of nationalism. It is the creation of a 'national identity' that then transcends into the sentiment and movement of nationalism. Nationalism being based on the idea of solidarity and national unity, one needs to examine what basis the collective national identity provides for such a unity. National identity is a multi-dimensional concept, which evolves its own sentiment, language and symbolism. National identity is in turn based on, or related to the shared ethnic history or a myth¹ thereof, of a people.

Derived from a common culture and its elements, religious identities are based on its values, symbols, traditions, rituals and customs. The commonality of faith binds them into a single community and belief-system, which in turn generates its own distinct symbolism, value-systems and organisation (Smith 1991: 6). In Smith's words,

Religious identities derive from the spheres of communication and socialization. They are based on alignments of culture and its elements- values, symbols, myths and traditions, often codified in custom and ritual. They have therefore tended to join in a single community of the faithful all those who feel they share certain symbolic codes, value-systems and traditions of belief and ritual, including references to a supra-empirical reality, however impersonal, and imprints of specialized organizations, however tenuous (Smith 1991: 6).

The other significant aspect of national identity is ethnicity. This may often coincide with religious identity, though there are times when the two may clash. Apart from religion, ethnicity has played a very important role in the formation of groups and communities, and been a major factor in instilling national sentiment in these groups. Ethnic minorities in particular retain strong religious ties. The division of Islam and Christianity into ethnic sects and churches in West Asia is an example of ethnic cleavages being reflected in religious identities. As opposed to the Western conception of nation based primarily on territory, political community and common ideology of the people, the non-Western

¹ In his book *National Identity* (1991), Smith describes how the ideas of ethnicity and *ethnies* are often either based on, or lead to myths about shared history among a people, infusing a sentiment of community and unity.

regions have witnessed a conception of the nation based on ethnicity. Here law and political ideology of the West may be substituted by a vernacular culture (Smith 1991: 12).

Smith has outlined five features of national identity: an historic territory, common historical memories, mass public culture, common legal rights and duties, and a common economy. However Yasir Suleiman opposes this rigid definition of national identity, and proposes that the concept of national identity is formed in different ways to suit the imperatives of different socio-political contexts. He also challenges the role of imagination in the formulation of identity, as propounded by Anderson and Smith. While Anderson proposes that the whole idea of the nation, nationalism and national identity is imagined, Suleiman insists that the role of imagination ought not to be over-emphasised. The imagination, invention and mythologisation of national identity can only play a limited role in its composition. Suleiman asserts that national identity is a construct, at both the historical and intellectual planes. It should not be treated as some kind of a 'natural growth'. In the fashioning of the idea of national identity the intellectual elite play a central role. Further, he opines that the concept of national identity emerges from the ideological articulations of nationalism. He points out that this ideological conception of identity in the Arab region is constructed by exploiting the power of contrast. Arab and Muslim intellectuals have often conceptualized national identity, or the identity of the 'self' by invoking a significant 'other'. It is in contrast to, and sometimes in reaction to a powerful 'other' or foreign identity, that the identity of the 'self' or the national identity is conceptualized (Suleiman 2003: 6-9).

Arab Nationalism

As has been stated before, there is no one definition of nationalism that is universally agreed to. The problem with the term 'Arab nationalism' is similar, though even more complicated. The very term 'Arab' has a certain ambiguity to it which makes it extremely challenging to deduce a universal definition of Arab nationalism. George Antonius, in his classic work, *The Arab Awakening*, defines the term Arab in the following manner,

The connotation of the word *Arab* changed accordingly. It is no longer used solely to denote a member of the nomad tribes who peopled the Arabian Peninsula. It gradually came to mean a citizen of that extensive Arab world- not any inhabitant of it, but that great majority whose racial descent, even when it was not of pure Arab lineage, had become submerged in the tide of Arabisation; whose manners and traditions had been shaped in a Arab mould; and, most decisive of all, whose mother tongue is Arabic. The term applies to Christians as well as to Moslems, and to the off-shoots of each of those creeds, the criterion being not Islamisation but the degree of Arabisation (Antonius 2001: 18).

According to John Marlowe, Arab nationalism was essentially a reaction to Western pressures, a nationalism which had developed out of a growing consciousness of common tradition and common interests. The common aspirations of Arab nationalism were to grow into a powerful political and economic entity, with the ability to resist pressure from the West. However, the common tradition is more difficult to define. It is largely accorded by Marlowe to the commonality of race, religion and language, but defining Arab nationalism on the basis of religion and race is difficult (Marlowe 1961:1-2). Though the majority of the population in the Arab land has been Muslim, there are other religions with numerous sects and variations. The concept of race is very ambiguous, because there has been an inter-mingling of Arabs with various immigrants, such as Turks, Kurds and Circassians. What is largely agreed upon as a unifying factor in Arab nationalism, according to Cleveland, is the Arabic language. Though this assumption has its own difficulties and challenges, it is more widely agreed upon by scholars and intellectuals. At the same time, Arab nationalism is also a “domestic movement within the Arab world endeavouring to convert and to absorb the various centrifugal forces operating within the Arab world” (Marlowe 1961:4).

It is not just the definition of Arab nationalism or the term ‘Arab’ alone that have been a subject of debate. The origins and beginnings of Arab nationalism have been much disputed and still remain unsettled. Antonius opines that the origins of Arab nationalism can be traced back to the Wahhabi movement. However this idea is refuted by Sylvia Haim to whom Wahhabis were concerned only with Islam and not with the Arabs, and their cause was to attain the long lost purity of Islam, not the creation of an Arab nation. Tibi, on the other hand, considers Rifa‘a al-Tahtawi as the first Arab nationalist thinker who used and popularized the term *watan* in the sense of the country from which one

originates. Jamaluddin al-Afghani has also been thought to be one of the precursors of Arab nationalism, though he himself was not an Arab. His work and thought have both religious as well as political shades, which has led some, such as Haim, to believe that he was concerned primarily with pan-Islamism and not pan-Arabism, though this belief is widely contested (Chalala 1987: 23). Muhammad Abduh, who worked on the religious and social reformation of the Egyptian Muslim society, is also seen today as a precursor of the Arab nationalist tradition. According to Tibi, Islamic modernism is an integral part of the national movement in the Arab land. In his words, “They had to face Europe as a colonial power, and their attitudes were hence uncompromising. In their writings, Islam becomes an anti-colonialist ideology” (Tibi 1981: 64, 68).

This opinion is also shared by Cleveland who suggests that the Islamic activism of Afghani and Abduh was central to the early formulations of Arab nationalism. According to Haim, the roots of Arab nationalism can be traced back to Rashid Rida, whom she identifies as a salafi. The salafiyya movement stood for a return to the early ways of the Prophet, and it is in the arguments of the salafiyya that she finds the intellectual beginnings of Arab nationalism (Chalala 1987: 25). Youssef M. Choueiri identifies the entire period between 1800 and 1900 as the ‘cultural phase’ which experienced the rediscovery of the “golden age” of Arabic civilization. Owing to the work and efforts of some of the aforementioned Arab and Islamic thinkers, as well as the new literary Arabic language which they also contributed to, led to the creation of “an autonomous cultural identity” within the Islamic world (Choueiri 2000: ix).

According to Micheal Aflaq, Arab nationalism was not based on racial and blood ties, but was an idea articulated on the foundations of common history and culture, and aimed at the defense of one unified fatherland. Aflaq describes the Arab personality as the manifestation of nationalism. He exalts the position of Arabs as the race which received Islam from the Prophet, and describes the religion of Islam as the natural basis of unity not just for Muslims but also for non-Muslims. In this sense the Arab and Muslim identities are one and the same to him in the way that both produce belief in unity and solidarity and give a whole new dimension to the concept of nationalism. To him the concept of the *umma* is not different from nationalism, rather all the *umma* should be

nationalist: “The Arabs are singled out from other nations by their characteristic: their national consciousness is joined to a religious message; or more precisely this message is an eloquent expression of that national consciousness” (Aflaq 2007: 89). According to Aflaq, it is the force of Islam which has been revived and which now appears in the form of Arab nationalism.

It is interesting that Aflaq traces the very foundations of Arab nationalism to Islam and its basic principles. He thinks that Islam was the force which unified the Arabs and enabled them to create the most expansive empire in the history of the world. Furthermore, it is different from the notion of abstract nationalism of the West, which Aflaq criticizes because of its idea of secularism- of separating nationalism from religion. Unlike in Europe, religion (Islam) in the Arab world was of their own world, in their own language and constituted a major part of their national history. Thus to Aflaq it was the national culture of the Muslims as well as the non-Muslims.

The work Abdul Rahman A-Bazzaz has contributed immensely to the concept of Arab nationalism. Interestingly, he takes a comprehensive view of Arab nationalism as a single unified nationalism, not limited to or divided by the boundaries of the various Arab states. According to him, Arab nationalism across Arab states has common history, culture and aspirations of nationhood. As he points out,

Arab nationalism is nothing else than a social, political, and economic doctrine deriving from the awareness of the Arabs, in their various countries, of the basic factors of their common identity- language, history, literature; custom and traditions and character; a common interest and a common aim. Its aim is to free the Arab homeland from the various forms of internal exploitation and foreign colonization; to enable the Arabs to rule their countries themselves, to unite them, to develop and exploit their resources to their advantage, and to realize social justice among them (Al-Bazzaz 1965: 12).

However, he doesn't view Arab nationalism as a mere static doctrine. Rather it is a movement and an evolving idea which is capable of adapting its principles to the changes in the circumstances and realities of the Arab people, and has the potential to diversify its means to realize its ultimate goal. In this sense, it is not only needed by the Arabs in the political field alone, but is equally relevant and imperative to the cultural and intellectual spheres too. Al-Bazzaz places great significance on the role of culture in the

conceptualization and evolution of Arab nationalism. The commonality of culture across the Arab land is what gives the Arab national movement a common purpose. This is the reason why he emphasizes the importance of a deep understanding of the Arab culture, and sees education as a very crucial instrument of taking the movement forward. As for the political aim of Arab nationalism, Al-Bazzaz outlines it as a nationalism that seeks the liberation of the Arab nation and the union of all parts of the Arab homeland and elevating the level of the individual and enabling him to exercise political rights in accordance with the demands of the times (Al-Bazzaz 1965: 15). It is interesting that his conceptualization of Arab nationalism overlooks or at least attempts to repudiate both the divisions created by national boundaries as well as those created by regional, religious and ideological sectarianism.

The Role of Islam in Arab Nationalism

Throughout the history of the Arab nationalist tradition, there has been a constant and ongoing debate over the role of religion, specifically Islam, in Arab nationalism, with various intellectuals taking up varying stands on the question. On the relationship of Islam and Arab nationalism, Gellner opines that the cultural history of the Arab land has been one of revivalism, or a form of ‘Islamic Protestantism’, with an emphasis on ‘scripturalism’ (Gellner 1983: 41). According to him the history of Islamic revival and Arab nationalism can hardly be separated. As a reformed version of faith, Islam catered to more than the spiritual needs of the rural groups, it met their social needs. This combined with its modern reassertion made it an integral part of the Arab nationalist sentiment. On one extreme have been thinkers like Micheal Aflaq who treat Arab nationalism and Islamic culture as synonymous, arguing that Islam is the culture of every Arab, Muslim and non-Muslim; he stated that the separation of Islam and Arab nationalism as an analogy of modern European culture would be a big mistake since unlike Europe, in the Arab land Islam formed part of the innermost personality of the Arabs (Choueiri 2000: 163). On the other extreme are thinkers, especially in the later decades of the 1960s like Sati al-Husri, who opine that religious solidarity asserted itself not as a part of Arab nationalism, but as a competing ideology and basis of unity. Rashid

Rida, writing in the late nineteenth century in his journal *al-Manar*, stated that Muslims must show the quality of patriotism by becoming good examples for the people of their homeland, and cooperate in every legitimate activity for independence, the learning and developing of science, force and resources based on Islamic law (Rida 2007: 43). It is clear from his writings that he deduced the ideas of nationalism from Islam. Contrary to this is the approach taken by eminent scholar al-Husri, writing in the mid-twentieth century, who asserts that Arab unity precedes the need for Muslim unity and has greater possibility of being achieved. Religious unity in itself, seems a rather far-fetched idea to al-Husri at a time when Islam has spread to many parts of the world which have diverse cultures, languages and value-systems. Thus he feels that religious solidarity would be immensely difficult to achieve (al-Husri 2007: 49-53). While Rida drew the whole idea of nationalism from Islam, al-Husri writing more than half a century later, feels that the two do not necessarily overlap. Elie Chalala points out the lack of any clear definition of Arab nationalism, suggesting that this may be caused due to the precedence that Islamic ideology, or the idea of religious solidarity, took over nationality (Chalala 1987: 19). Interestingly this trend is more visible in the post-Nasser era when the tide of Arab nationalism was on the ebb and when Islamic ideology was becoming more and more visible in the form of theocratic states and radical and fundamental ideologies. However, one must note that this separation or juxtaposing of Islamic ideology against nationalist ideology was possible only when direct colonial rule of the West had ended and secularism had been duly contemplated and criticised.

Back in the nineteenth century, this was not the case. If culture is to be considered essential to the conceptualization of a nationalism, and religion (that is, Islam), was the basis of the culture and the social structure of the Islamic community at that time, then religion was bound to become an important constitutive element in Arab nationalism. Thinkers like Wahhab, Afghani, Abduh, Rida and Rifa al-Tahtawi formed the precursor to what in later decades became the phenomenon of Arab nationalism, even though their work and doctrines were grounded in Islam. At a time when the Arab land was on the cusp of a new political era (with the gradual demise of the Ottoman empire), and when the threat of colonialism and imperialism loomed large, these thinkers who are today identified as Islamic scholars, worked on directing the religious (the strongest at the time)

basis of solidarity towards a nationalist sentiment. Thus, Tibi's assertion that they were nationalists even if they did not know it, holds true.

Albert Hourani views Islam as an essential part of the Arab nationalism, as much as Arabs were central, according to him, to the birth and spread of Islam. Arabs had a special part in the history of Islam, and the facts that the Quran is in Arabic, as a result of which Islamic law and theology till date are largely in the Arabic language, the prophet was an Arab and that he preached to Arabs, are sufficient evidence of the overlapping of Arabism and Islamism. This overlapping can be witnessed in the way the Wahhabi kingdom, being Arab, beckoned all the Muslims back to the "the primitive purity of Islam" and how this led to a revival of the memory of the Arab period in the history of the *umma* (Hourani 1984: 260-261). The return to the original purity of Islam would also mean a strategic shift of the centre of gravity from the Turks, whose rule was then failing and in the process of a gradual demise, back to the Arabs. Hourani opines that the means of bringing about such a shift would be to establish an Arab caliph. According to him, the reform of Islam, and the practice of *ijtihad* could only be conducted by the Arabs, particularly an Arab *ulema* who were central to the Islamic world, and were also the capable of exercising *ijtihad*. One of the prime factors in this common history of Islam and Arabism has been the Arabic language and it, according to Hourani, has played a significant role in combining the two forces as a common basis of solidarity. Even in the works of non-Muslim intellectuals and nationalists, an Arab element can be found based on the ties of a common language which draws from a shared culture and common history. Even if their inherited religious beliefs differ, they take pride in the culture expressed by a common Arabic language. It places the Muslims and non-Muslims of the Arab world on the same platform in terms of the sense of community they derive from this commonality, because though Arabic became the language of Islamic religion, law and theology, it is a pre-Islamic language, which over the centuries continues to be shared by the non-Muslims as well as the Muslims in the Arab world.

In the study of the nationalisms and nationalist movements of various countries of Asia and Africa, Kedourie brings out some of the specificities of these places and movements. One such theme that Kedourie explicates on is the use of religion in nationalist

movements. It is interesting on two counts. First, the very use of religious ideas to foster nationalist pride and sentiment in a people in order to propel them towards what is essentially a political movement, fascinates most political thinkers, especially those Western political thinkers for whom these are completely different and separate fields of study. Secondly, what is more interesting is the distortion of religious ideas by nationalist leaders in order to impress upon their followers such nationalist or patriotic trends in religious discourse to influence them, which actually do not exist. It is a bold claim to make as an outsider to a particular culture or religion, but the fact remains that in the name of differently interpreting religious discourse and bringing in alternate perceptions, actual distortion of religious ideas has been a frequent occurrence. In this, Afghani and Abduh are no different from other such nationalist leaders. As has been claimed by many of their critics and commentators, as Islamic scholars they have taken considerable liberties with the theological aspect of religion, sometimes in the name of reform, sometimes in the name of reinterpretation, but mostly, in their efforts to prove that Islamic theology and the sayings of Quran are compatible with rationality and science.

Islam, Christianity and Judaism have proved equally pliable and adaptable to political uses. That Islam is a buttress of Arabism has been argued by more considerable writers. Micheal Aflaq, the well known leader of the Ba'ath Party, has stated that Muhammad was the epitome of all the Arabs and that Islam "represented the ascent of Arabism towards unity, power and progress" (Kedourie 1970: 67-68).

Abduh's and especially Afghani's tendencies to find the foundations of Arab nationalism in Islam have resonances in the thought and works of many other thinkers and politicians. The difference between the aims and methods of Afghani and Abduh is that while Afghani spoke in a very general and ambiguous way of Islam, the *umma* and the nation-all in the context of anti-imperialism against a Christian West, Abduh penetrates more deeply into the nuances of theology to find solutions to the socio-political challenges of the time and articulates these solutions largely within the framework of reform. Thus he not only uses Islam as a "buttress" for Arab nationalism, he actually makes an attempt to internalize the logic derived from Western ideas of modernity, and at the same time tries to resolve the resulting paradoxes by reforming and thus doing away with those parts of

traditional understanding of religion which were no longer applicable to the current situation.

The Other Side of Nationalism

There is another side to nationalism too. Nationalism is a concept borrowed from the West, as has been said by Kedourie, sometimes it has been borrowed along with the cultural, economical, political, social and epistemological factors of the West, which may or may not exist in other non-Western societies. In this scenario, nationalism subsumes local cultures, traditions, politics and the pre-existing identities of other societies. It imposes a foreign concept of solidarity on the people, in the process challenging and often killing pre-existing traditions and identities. This borrowed nationalism views the local traditions and cultures as an obstacle at best, and a threat at worst, to the larger idea of national solidarity. This is the other side of nationalism which demands not just a homogenous movement, but a homogenous society too. After all, nationalism and nation have been called imagined communities by one of the leading theorists, Anderson. This imagination of new communities is in turn an imagination of new identities too, i.e. national identities, which are not conducive to sustaining the pre-nationalist realities of a society. It is an imposition of one idea which challenges and comes into conflict with older ideas.

Since it has been borrowed from the West where it originated in the era of modernity, a call for nationalism in non-Western societies is usually accompanied by a wave of modernization. The difference between Western and non-Western societies is that whereas in the former this modernity was achieved through a long process of evolution of ideas necessitated by the social, political and economic conditions of that time, in the latter it is usually imposed in a top-down form. Thus it is bound to come into conflict with pre-modern ideas. Furthermore, since modernity is mostly seen as an acceptance and application of Western ideas, it becomes even more problematic. In the West, modernity introduced concepts like nation, sovereign government, democracy, and a separation of the church and the state. West Asia is predominantly populated by Muslims, and to them

Islam has been a way of life, not just a religion for spiritual guidance. It has for centuries guided them on questions of economy, politics, law etc. with the onslaught of a nationalism which was understood as essentially and compulsorily 'secular' in nature, these pre-existing traditions where religion played a dominant role were seen as old and obsolete. Thus nationalism and modernity (in the Western sense) required a break from tradition, a giving-up of all ideas and systems old. Since these ideas were not typical of Islamic societies, there was a conflict at every step between two dominant groups- the modernizers and the conservatives or traditionalists. Encounters with colonial ideas can make a people defensive of their own traditions and closed to any kind of change. The fact that modern ideas came through colonial influence and exposure, meant that conservative actions of the society were opposed to all things and ideas Western, and thus to many aspects of modernity.

Given this ideological context, the Arab nationalist tradition was rife with two kinds of reactions to colonialism and in turn, to modernity. One reaction was a complete acceptance of Western ideas followed by a blind imitation and imposition of these ideas which the Islamic society was not prepared for. The other was to completely shun the influence of colonialism, a kind of rigidity when it came to any kind of change. The problem with latter reaction was that the socio-political and economic conditions of Islamic society were changing, throwing up many challenges, the biggest of these being colonialism. Apart from this, in a century of numerous changes and innovations, it was no longer to live in isolation from other ideas. It was like trying to live in an era long gone by. Interestingly, this flux of ideas eventually led to a third reaction from the scholarly circles, one that took the middle path. This was the faction that scholars like Afghani and Abduh belonged to.

There was an increasing realisation that either one of these two extreme positions was not appropriate. What was needed was a third position, one which was open to changes that had been necessitated by the time, and at the same time could retain the pre-existing traditions of the past. This position did not view a break from tradition as an inherent characteristic of modernity. Afghani and Abduh have been viewed as the precursors of

not just Arab nationalism, but also the initiators of Islamic modernism. As Marlowe has put it,

Islamic modernism, while undoubtedly influenced by European liberalism, was a conscious attempt to combat European influences on the Moslem world by means of a restatement and re-implementation of the principles of Islam with the object of founding, on the basis of these re-stated and re-implemented principles, a specifically Islamic way of life which would be able to hold its own against all the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social and economic pressures, allurements and undermining from the West (Marlowe 1961: 13).

Afghani and Abduh, among others were aware that while the traditional way of life need not be given up completely, they knew that this system was rife with problems of its own which led to stagnation of the society. Neither was it possible to live in a tradition which was in some ways obsolete and could not solve the problems in those changing times. Most of all, this system on its own was incapable of dealing with the problems that the society faced due to colonialism. They therefore envisaged ways in which the old traditions could be kept up through an intensive reformation. In addition they were open to modern ideas, they did not view them as necessarily contradictory to traditional value-systems. In this way, they were able, to some extent, to make the idea of nationalism culturally relative by giving an indigenous interpretation and understanding of modern ideas. One of the most important ways of achieving this was using Islam as a solidarity-inducing factor to provoke a nationalist sentiment among Islamic people. As has been noted by Smith,

Nationalism demands the rediscovery and restoration of the nation's unique cultural identity; and this means returning to one's authentic roots in the historic culture community inhabiting its ancestral homeland... However secularizing its thrust, nationalism is ultimately more akin to 'political religion' than to political ideology (Smith 2001: 33-35).

While there are theories, such as those of Anderson which says that nation and nationalism are the imagination of 'new' communities, it is important to understand that the basis of the idea of a 'new' nation will always be found in pre-existing cultural moorings. That is why the phenomenon of culture, no matter how loosely defined and ambiguous in itself, is crucial to the conceptualization of a nation and nationalism. Thus it is that in a society where religion predominantly has been the foundation of the social

and even political structure, any effort to create a new structure- social and political will be directed through the channels of religion. Therefore the activities of reformation, renewal and revival become central to such a nationalism. This was precisely the case with both Afghani and Abduh, who for the same reason have been known not only as the precursors to nationalism in the Arab land, but also as key figures of Islamic modernism.

A reformed traditional system also enabled them to establish greater compatibility between traditional value-systems and modern ideas. The stands taken up by Afghani and Abduh on the question of secularism was also very important because it as a reaction to a Western modern idea, it became an integral part of the larger scheme of their nationalist agenda. While Afghani took a rather ambiguous stand on this question, as a theologian and Islamic scholar Abduh provides deeper observations and understanding of this concept though neither his acceptance nor his rejection of it is absolute, as will be examined in the third fourth chapter.

Nation and the Self: The Context of Colonialism

Expanding on the Kantian idea of self-determination, Smith opines that,

Nationalism signifies the awakening of the nation and its members to its true collective 'self', so that it, and they, obey only the 'inner voice' of the purified community. Authentic experiences and authentic community are therefore preconditions of full autonomy, just as only autonomy can allow the nation and its members to realize themselves in an authentic manner. Autonomy is the goal of every nationalist (Smith 1991: 77).

One of the predominant causes of nationalism has been thought to be the economic aspect or economic exploitation. This is so particularly in the case of colonialism. Gellner points out the link between nationalism and the processes of colonialism, imperialism and de-colonization. The European conquest of Asian and African territories was largely the result of the Western nations' inclination towards industry and trade rather than military conquest. In a similar fashion, a diffusion of this technological and economic might led to the loss of the European empire. What it left was new nationalisms which had emerged as reactions to Western colonialism and imperialism, and which evolved into unified

nationalist aspirations which, prior to the onset of colonialism may not have existed, or at least may not have surfaced.

The context in which Afghani and Abduh were writing, particularly in Egypt, was colonial. However, the kind of reactions that were evoked from Afghani, Abduh and many other scholars of the time was not caused by economic exploitation alone. As Kedourie has argued in *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, economic backwardness or exploitation was only one of many causes of nationalism. This applies largely to the belief that nationalism necessarily results from colonialism alone. Kedourie cites the example of the West itself, stating that French Revolution, the German nationalism and many other forms of European nationalism had already occurred before European countries assumed colonial and imperial powers. Thus it was something else, something bigger which evoked such strong reactions from Arab and Islamic scholars. It was a sense of subjugation of the Arab peoples' identities, an assumed and implied superiority of the West- the whole idea that the West could rule what was then identified as the Orient, that evoked a strong reaction from indigenous scholars. It was reinforced by the fact that those persons of indigenous origins who identified with and were loyal to the European culture did not find complete acceptance, as was the case with George Antonius, and they in turn became some of the most vocal critics of colonialism and supporters of Arab nationalism. This reaction took up many forms- religious opposition, economic reactions, philosophical debates etc. but most of all it was a reassertion of the identity and selfhood of a people who had been ruled.

The idea of 'nation' is not simply geo-political in nature. It has a great impact on identity. This impact is even greater when nationalism, which leads to the creation of a nation, is provoked by colonialism. Colonialism provided, apart from foreign imperial rule over non-Western lands, an interaction between the Western and non-Western societies. The European society had their perceptions of these non-Western societies, as in the case of Muslim society. Interestingly, these perceptions were also imposed on the colonial subjects, that is to say, they came to view themselves as colonial subjects through the prism of colonialism. Thus the Western-centric approach of viewing themselves as the

‘self’ and the colonial subjects as the ‘other’ was taken up by the Muslim society too. This ‘otherisation’ had a significant impact on the notions of identity.

In this context, many scholars and thinkers of the nationalist programme began to question this notion of ‘otherhood’. Edward Said has written one of the most seminal works on orientalism. Orientalism according to him stands for Western colonial notions of superiority over the East. This idea of Western superiority was based on the colonial attitudes of Europeans towards the people of the Arab land. It was their Euro-centric perceptions that made them powerful and the Orient weak in their own discursive tradition. The strategy of orientalism was one of positional superiority, that is, to place the Westerner in a superior position in all his relationships with the Orient: “...Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’)” (Said 1981: 43).

But in the nineteenth century, the process of orientalism had not been so clearly defined. People in the Muslim society had begun to view themselves through these colonial lenses as the ‘other’, and the process of ‘otherization’ had begun. In this scenario there emerged certain scholars, who, owing to their exposure to both the Western attitudes to the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ were able to see its impact on the Arab land and the Muslim community. It was imperative for them to challenge this ongoing process of ‘otherization’ and the identities of the Muslim people created by it. It was just the beginning of the process of questioning identities which had been imposed on the Muslim society by their colonial rulers in Egypt and elsewhere. Given this background, the most significant achievement of Afghani and Abduh, and other Islamic thinkers of that time, was the imagination of new identities. It was the first significant attempt to throw away the yoke of ‘otherhood’ imposed on them by colonial rulers, and assert the identity of the ‘self’. This was by far the greatest contribution they made to the process of nationalism. The imagination of the self in alternate ways and envisaging a ‘national’ identity for the self led, on one hand, to the opposition of colonialism in its entirety (i.e. not just the political authority but also the imposition of colonial ideas and perceptions), and on the other hand, to a reformation and reassertion of selfhood.

This idea of a new identity was also very important because reformers like Abduh and Afghani thought of the traditional and religious aspect as a part of this new identity. As has been said above, Western notions of modernity necessitated a break from the traditional past, and a separation of religion and politics was thought to be essential to the process of modernization. However, with the assertion of the self, indigenous scholars worked both towards the reform of the pre-existing Islamic system and simultaneously adapting modern ideas that their society could benefit from, such as the learning of science. Thus, rather than make a complete break from the past, they were to retain elements of it through reforms and this in turn meant that the notion of the 'self' for them was no longer dictated by Western notions of modernity.

In his discussion on the Indian national movement, Kedourie notes,

Modern India, we may say, was impaled on the horns of a dilemma which no man could surmount, a dilemma consisting of two propositions, one that India was two nations and the other that India was one nation. *This dilemma dominated Indian politics because Indian politicians came to speak a Western political idiom.* It was not, to be sure, the only Western idiom of politics; but it happened to be influential and widespread in Europe at a time when Indians were much impressed with all things European, and hence they came to speak it. In this they were like many other Asians and Africans who also picked up this idiom. But in picking it up, did they know what the idiom assumed or entailed? Did they have a clear view of the syntax or some idea of the etymology? It is safe to say that most who spoke this language rather took it for granted, accepted it unquestioningly, in the belief that it was the only possible language in this world, coeval with humanity itself, and unprofitable therefore much to examine and scrutinize (Kedourie 1970: 61) (emphasis added).

The accusation that Kedourie makes most of Asian and African nationalists can be equally applied to Afghani and Abduh. At a time when European society itself had undergone many upheavals, through their interaction Afghani and Abduh tried to speak the nationalist language which was prevalent though relatively new to Europe itself. However, it would be wrong to say that they did so without scrutinizing this idea, its appeal and impact on their own society. The insistence of both Afghani and Abduh in their treatise on reform, that mere imitation of the Western political institutions would remain ineffective, bears testimony to their deep scrutiny and understanding of these modern ideas. Moreover, Abduh's proposed resolution- the co-existence of a traditional

umma with multiple modern Muslim nation states signifies a maturity in his political theory to which the *umma* and nation state are compatible. This is no mere imitation, it is a synthesis of a traditional religious society and a modern form of governance and polity which can sustain the traditional moral fibre of the society and simultaneously counter the imperialist threat from the West.

*

Chapter 3

Afghani on Nationalism: Convergence of Religion and Politics

Jamaluddin al-Afghani's work has primarily been associated with pan-Islamism and religious reform as a response to colonialism. However, what has largely been left unremarked is his considerable exposure to the West and his interlude with modernity. This took the form of a very interesting dialogue with the West, sometimes in the form of exchange of general ideas and sometimes as a strong reaction to the Western perceptions of the Muslim and Arab people. This is significant because this dialogue was extremely nuanced as well as multi-layered and can be used to study Afghani's interpretations, reactions and adaptations of modern ideas that originated in the West. One such idea was nationalism. There are many theories about the origins and causes of nationalism as a concept, however one of the most common theories has been that of anti-colonialism. Afghani's conceptualisation of nationalism was also based on his anti-colonial sentiments. In Afghani's work, it is possible to find an indigenous interpretation of the idea of nationalism in reaction to the colonial rule to which Egypt, India and many other countries with substantial Muslim populations were subjected. Also, contrary to general belief, his ideas of pan-Islamism, religious reform and the idea of *umma*, were essentially a part of, rather than being opposed to, this indigenous idea of nationalism. His work as an Islamic scholar is significant because his use of religion as the basis for solidarity and the sense of primordialism of the Islamic community in his discourse gave a new perspective to the dialogue on Islam and nationalism. It was an indigenous understanding of nationalism, based on the strongest foundations of community in the Muslim world, that of religion. On the flipside, this also highlights the tension between the Islamic concept of a unified *umma* and the modern entity of the nation. In the following chapter an attempt has been made to understand Afghani's ideas and

contributions to the concept of nationalism, through his dialogue with the West, his ideas of pan-Islamism, his call for religious reform and his political activities.

Responding to the Challenge of Western Imperialism

Of all the scholarly legacies of the Muslim world left behind, Jamaluddin al-Afghani's is possibly one of the most intriguing ones. In studying his works, one can either see him as one of the most eminent Islamic scholars who contributed immensely to Islamic modernism- the practice of rethinking Islam in the contemporary context- because of his deep understanding of Islamic theology and his work on religious reform and *ijtihad*; or one can be led to question his fame as an apostle of 'Islamic scholarship' owing to his efforts to internalise modern ideas of the West. The un-bridged gap between these two extremes deepens much more if the study of Afghani's works is extended to his political life. What makes the paradox much more prominent is the urge to read what one wants to read in Afghani's works.

The aim of this work is to study the contribution of Afghani to political thought, specifically in the realm of nationalism. The root of nationalism in Afghani's ideas lies in his antagonism toward Britain as a colonial entity, the contextual background to his political life. One becomes aware of one's own 'nation-ness' or national identity only when confronted and, more importantly, suppressed by another. Afghani's resentment of Britain's colonial power, be it in Egypt, Iran or India, is emphatic and recurring. It is reflected in both his works and in most of his political life. A strand of the above-mentioned paradox is present even in this aspect of his thought, but will be discussed later. His works in the journal *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* bear the greatest testimony to this anti-colonial attitude.

How this anti-colonial attitude develops into a philosophy of nationalism and what shape this theory takes in Afghani's ideas, is the primary concern of this study. Besides the paradox of Afghani's dual standards, the difficulty in understanding his ideas is made even greater by the fact that Afghani's choice of words to express his ideas is not very explicit. This is more so because his ideas were penned down more frequently by his

disciples and followers (like Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida) than him. Further, in certain cases, discrepancy is found between the original and the translated versions of his works, most probably a result of attempts by his disciples to protect his reputation as an Islamic scholar.

As has been said before, Afghani's conceptualisation of nationalism was founded on anti-imperialism, or responding to Western imperialism. Afghani's sense of nationalism comes from a consciousness of the 'other'. Due to his exposure to the West and his experiences in the Western world, his awareness of a philosophical culture, alien to his own world, gave rise to the need to respond or react to it. Up until his time, people in the Islamic world, on encountering the Western world, chose either to shun it or imbibe it through sheer mimicry. This may not have been the rule but was largely the norm. Afghani chose a middle path between these two extremes: that of understanding and contemplating the Western ideas and responding to them by rethinking the culture and traditions of the Islamic world.

Afghani clearly places the 'nation' (based on Islamic tenets or the *umma*) before the individual. He views doctrines like socialism, communism, etc. as theories which focus only on individual interests even though they talk about the common good; as theories which will fail to promote national interests. To him, every individual and class has their role to play in the society; incentive in the form of social privilege and distinction is the real motivation for people to struggle and work hard; and, most importantly, social good without the foundation or sanction of religion cannot be sustained and is not useful to the society (Ali 2002: 90-91).

In his work 'Refutation of the Materialists', Afghani has strongly opposed the *neichuries*, or to use his term materialists, including the likes of Darwin, because they denied God's existence in their explanation of the universe. But in doing so Afghani also contradicted his own idea of imbibing and learning from western sciences as he openly refuted some of the scientific explanations given at the time. Apparently, science and rationality were important to him but not to the extent of denying the existence of the Divinity. This entire practice was very significant at the time because although Afghani was refuting scientific explanations he professed an independent and indigenous stand on a variety of issues.

Whether or not it created a temporary setback in the field of science, it did make possible the idea of an alternate and indigenous identity- alternate to the perception of the imperial West.

His opposition of the methods of Sayyed Ahmed Khan too is significant in the same way. Afghani opposed the idea of replicating European progress as much as a reaction to the West that was based on appeasement and finding favours with the imperial rulers. Rather, he proposed a deeper reform movement combined with science and rationality to achieve the same level of progress. The most important thing about his reform programme was that while he wanted to reform Islam and the society, it consequently led to the reform of Islamic perceptions of their own identity and that of the colonisers. Thus, whether the people followed Afghani's methods of opposition or not, an indigenous process of viewing their 'self' and the 'other' differently from how the West viewed them had been initiated.

Afghani has stated in various documents that the aim of Western imperialism was to undermine the religion, traditions and culture of Islam, even in India where Muslims were just one part of a larger mixed population. Probably what he meant by the "undermining of Islam" was the undermining of an independent and indigenous Muslim identity. Afghani's strong reassertion of the Muslim identity and the whole unprecedented imagination of a new identity for the Muslims was largely a consequence of this factor. His antipathy to imperialism was due not just to its political and economic subjugation of Muslim lands and people but also for the subjugation of the Muslim identity as it existed at that time. This identity was already challenged by the social and political evils of the then Muslim society. Emerging during such a time, Western imperialism, looming over the Muslim society, found it very easy to first subsume and eventually crush this Muslim identity. Afghani probably saw the ills of a kind of "communal orientalism" or the perceived inferiority of the Muslim identity by the West and strove to counter it while advocating the creation of a new identity.

Placing Islam and Nationalism Together

In his quest for uniting Islam in the face of a common threat posed by Western imperialism, Afghani embodied a blend of religious and national feeling syncretised into his ideas on pan-Islamism. As has been noted by Albert Hourani,

The greater part of his life was given up to a defence of the Islamic countries threatened by the danger of European expansion, but his thought was not exclusively political. The central problem of it, the problem which gave it its form, was not that of how to make the Muslim countries politically strong and successful; it was rather, how to persuade Muslims to understand their religion aright and live in accordance with its teachings (Hourani 1983: 112-113).

Hourani views Afghani's political contributions as separate from his religious contributions. Though his statement about how Afghani wanted to persuade Muslims to understand their religion aright is correct, it may not necessarily be separate from his bigger goal of infusing pride in the Arabs in defiance of the colonial powers. Rather than saying that his thought was not exclusively political, it must be understood that, in fact, his political and religious views developed simultaneously, influencing each other significantly.

Afghani links religion and politics by stating that politics is an essential part of Islam, and cites the examples of the Prophet as well as the first four Caliphs who were religious as well as political leaders. He stressed that religion and politics are deeply interdependent; Islam shows the path to attaining a perfect polity and this in turn ensures the success and life of religion. He believed that the political structure of Islam is basically democratic, and used this argument to criticise the monarchical regimes of Egypt, Persia and the Ottoman Empire (Moazzam 1984: 19). By placing Islam and politics together he laid the foundation to advance the nationalist cause by preaching for religious reform and religious reinterpretation. By trying to prove that politics is an essential element of Islam and that Islam supports the principles of democracy he successfully used religion to promote the cause of nationalism.

An important feature of Afghani's nationalist programme is his call for national language and linking it to national unity is very significant. According to him, national unity achieved through national language lasts even longer than religious unity. Afghani, thus,

deems translation of Western works of sciences to the national language very important for the people to be able to imbibe Western sciences as he was opposed to foreign languages, at least for the study of science. He was particularly opposed to the English language and the British practice of exporting their language to achieve the subservience of the colonised people as in the case of India (Ali 2002: 98-99). Afghani's call for a national language, to assert the self, as opposed to foreign rule or supremacy resonated of Johann Gottfried Herder's indignation¹ at the use of French by the German people and in later times found resonance in Ben Gurion's call for promoting Hebrew as the Jewish language for the Zionist movement.

Keddie points to an inherent contradiction between the two parts of Afghani's programme- pan-Islam and the reform of Islam. While Afghani envisioned it as a two-part programme for Muslim solidarity and progress as well as resistance to the West, the call for nationalism is considered largely incompatible with the revival of religion. It is true that at that time religious identification was stronger than national, but this mixed programme contained competing identities and ideologies- national and religious, with the religious one perpetually threatening to overcome the national and vice-versa. Keddie views Afghani's call for pan-Islam and the nationalist appeal as completely different and fundamentally contradictory.

Pan-Islam and the reform of Islam could seem to him as two sides of a programme for strengthening the Muslim world and defeating imperialism. But there were contradictions between them, even ignoring for the moment the developing nationalism that was ultimately to render pan-Islam abortive (Keddie 1983: 43).

The difference here between pan-Islam of Afghani and the "developing nationalism that was to ultimately render pan-Islam abortive" is the more secular character of the nationalist call which was not restrained by or limited to the religious outlines and boundaries, even of a modernist interpretation of a reformed and revived Islam. The rise of this later nationalist movement marked a clear and complete separation from religion which had never existed in Afghani's discourse.

¹ Herder's strong feelings on this issue were aptly captured in his poem 'To the Germans.' Cited in Kedourie 1961: 59.

Pan-Islamism

Afghani is seen mostly as an architect of what is known as pan-Islamism, and his contributions are categorised mainly as contributions to religion. Pan-Arabism is also associated with his thought but to a much lesser extent, although he was not an Arab himself. Scholars disagree on his ideas of nationalism in the pan-Arab context and the extent of his contribution to the development of pan-Arabism. Most of them mark a clear line of difference between the two phenomena; pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism. However, one must argue that his contributions to the idea of nationalism and the nationalist debate are considerable, and his ideas of pan-Islamism are an important part of them. When Afghani spoke of pan-Islamism, in the context of the colonial challenge combined with the state of the Islamic society, he promoted an idea of unity based on religion to counter these two challenges. What is important to note is that he did not really marginalise the non-Muslims or deny their Arab identity in his discourse (for example in his letter to Ernest Renan he clearly refers to non-Muslims as Arabs), and in no way did he exclude them from what is otherwise considered an essentially religious movement. The need for reform of society, and of redefining identity on the basis of reason and rationality were applicable to the non-Muslims also, and were an attempt to consolidate these otherwise divided groups. Afghani's argument is both nuanced and multi-layered, but while it includes extensive debate on the status and the need for reform in the Islamic religion, it also talks about the Arab civilization and the sense of pride that was once held in the Arab identity.

Afghani's hopes with the pan-Islamic idea were indeed very high. In his letter to the French newspaper *L'Intransigeant* (*Letter about Hindoustan* published on 23 April 1883)² he decried the British domination. This is one of the instances where his high hopes from the pan-Islamic idea are clearly visible as he states that the cooperation between the Indian Muslims and other Muslim countries could easily overthrow the British rule. This certainly did not happen and was a rather far-fetched idea as most Muslim states at that time were colonised and the anti-imperialist sentiment was focused within their own territorial boundaries. Interestingly, in a land with a huge mixed

² Cited in Kedourie 1997: 70-74.

population, Afghani chose to talk of the Indian Muslims exclusively as if they were already a separate entity which would play a role in the bigger pan-Islamic idea.

Unorthodoxy in Afghani's Discourse

Afghani's education was based largely on the Islamic philosophy and the Shaikhi school of Shiism. This gives an understanding of the nature of his arguments to most of his disciples based on religious philosophy as well as the idea of reform. It also gives credibility to Kedourie's claim that Afghani lied about his origins³ to gain credibility with the Sunni followers he was trying to influence. He would not have had that credibility if he was known to be a Shia belonging to the Shia school of Islamic philosophy.

Keddie sheds light on the influence of Shia Islamic philosophy on Afghani because of which he reserved the 'rational truth' only for the elite class of intellectuals and philosophers, while using the medium of religion to propound his ideas in a simpler way to the masses. This style of imparting ideas was common to both his teaching as well as his written works.

One must note that in the initial part of his career, he did not talk much of religion or reform; the subject that occupied his primary interest was his strong anti-British stand. Though in the later part of his career he did sometimes contradict his own stand by seeking favours from the British (it may have arisen from his insecurities due to the nature of his political activities and perceived image as a political trouble-maker) though in the early days, starting from his visit to India, he was very assertive when it came to his anti-colonial ideas. This is an important factor in the tracing of his political ideas because this clearly demonstrates that, in his initial years, he had a strong anti-British and, thus, nationalistic attitude (though not particular at that time to any nation, just to the Muslim people). It was only later that he talked about religion and reform of and through

³ Though Afghani's origins still remain a contentious issue in academic circles, Keddie has presented strong evidence that Afghani was not born in Sunni Afghanistan, but in Shia Iran, in a village called Asadabad. The Iranian catalogue: *Iraj Afshar and Asghar Mahdavi, Documents inedits concernant Seyyed Jamal-al-Din Afghani*, (Tehran, 1963); and the Government of India documents showing that Afghani appeared in Afghanistan for the first time in 1866 have been cited by Keddie 1968: 6.

religion. It might seem like his ideas or political philosophy centred on anti-colonialism and he understood the importance of religion and mobilising the masses and, thus, started using it as the means to propound his ideas. This line of thought gains a stronger foundation if Keddie's assertion is accepted that in India Afghani became sceptical about all positive religions,⁴ which he saw mainly as means of consoling people over death and other problems of this world (Keddie 1983: 13-14).

Keddie, in her seminal work *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*, describe Afghani's work as a continuing reinterpretation of Islam, emphasising values such as activism, the freer use of human reason, and political and military strength. According to her, his style of thought had affinity with ideas ranging from Islamic liberalism to conservative Islamic revivalism which included pan-Arabism and various other forms of nationalisms in West Asia, all encouraged through his mode of reinterpreting the Islamic past in modern and nationalist terms. This line of thought became increasingly popular and was later developed into various movements in the Arab world (Keddie 1983: 3).

Though Afghani is still largely seen as an Islamic scholar and a figure of Islamic reform, incidents throughout his life, particularly those highlighted in Keddie's study of his early life, point to his unorthodoxy and often to his "irreligion", though his biographers and followers have made serious attempts to explain them away. This idea is supported by an available translation of Salim al-Anhuri's⁵ account,

He excelled in the study of religion, until this led him to irreligion (*ilhad*) and belief in the eternity of the world... (He claimed that) the belief in an omniscient Prime Mover was a natural delusion that arose when man was in a primitive state of evolution and corresponded with the state of his intellectual progress... The result of natural laws was a reaction leading to the conviction that all the above is idle talk that originates in desires, and that it has no truth and no definition (Keddie 1983: 13-14).

⁴ Positive religion refers to a religion with a definite historic founder.

⁵ Salim al-Anhuri knew Afghani in Egypt in 1870s' and gave an account of what Afghani came to believe during his stay in India.

This piece of writing combined with Afghani's reply to Renan⁶ confirms that he was at least sceptical about all positive religions and held an evolutionary view of religion believing that while prophetic religion was suitable to the less advanced masses, the elite needed a more rational, reformed religion. "His first well documented appearance on the stage of history was as a man with purely political, anti-British aims, and there is no evidence that he appeared then either as a religious figure or as a reformer" (Keddie 1983: 15).

In tracing his education, Keddie brings out some of the major influences on Afghani, which were visible throughout his life and his works. The prominent influence on Afghani remained the religious and political climate of nineteenth century Iran, especially the Islamic philosophy of the Twelver Shia school of thought. The concepts of *ijtihad* and *taqiyya* which were constant elements of his ideas, were derived from this philosophy, *ijtihad* being the reinterpretation of the religious texts and *taqiyya* meaning the precautionary dissimulation of his true beliefs i.e. one argument for the ignorant masses and another for the intellectual elite. Afghani was clearly influenced by the rational interpretation of religion common among the Shia scholars of eighteenth and nineteenth century Iran. Significant here is Afghani's familiarity with the Shaikhi sect and Babism, founded in the eighteenth century involving a more philosophical interpretation of religious texts which also contributed to his understanding of the power of religious appeals to the Muslim masses.

It is obvious that the strong anti-British sentiments fostered in Afghani's mind could not have evolved in this background, especially in Iran and Iraq where the British influence at that time was hardly felt. However, such ideas could easily have been influenced in India, on account of how the Indian Muslims suffered at the hands of the British, especially around the time of the mutiny of 1857. Keddie hints that Afghani's ideas of a strong anti-British feeling may have been derived from what eventually evolved into the Indian national movement, which is very likely considering those unaccounted years

⁶ The 'Answer' was written in response to Ernest Renan's lecture on "Islam and Science", given at Sorbonne and published in *Journal des Debats* on 29 March 1883. Renan's argument was that Islam was hostile to science and that science and philosophy had only entered the Islamic world from non-Arab sources. Afghani's reply was published in the same journal on 18 May 1883. Keddie 1983: 84-85.

around Afghani's visit to India. Even Afghani's later expressed belief that the British were out to spread Christianity and undermine Islam was clearly derived from a similar belief among some Indian Muslims (Keddie 1983: 10-12).

What Afghani did was to provide an indigenous ideology based on medieval Muslim philosophy which exalted reason above revelation and argued for a rational interpretation of the revelation, and non literal interpretation of those parts which seemed least rational. Such a style of interpretation could be used to establish the compatibility of Islam with science and rationality. This kind of Islamic philosophy brought out something in the indigenous tradition that could be developed into a movement independent of Western elements, to both bring reform in the Muslim society and to resist the Western imperialist forces. His contributions resonated throughout not just the Arab land but also in parts of the European world, convincing politicians, journalists and scholars of his time that "a native opinion exists, has means to find expression, and therefore is not to be utterly ignored" (London Times, Cairo, 20 August 1879).⁷

Afghani did not subscribe to the necessarily dichotomous and antithetical relation between national and religious solidarity, as believed in Western thinking. In the words of Sheikh Jameil Ali,

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani rejects the western concept of nationalism as a tool to divide and suppress the Muslim nations and their religion. He says: There is a belief current in Europe, that national solidarity is good in itself and conducive to progress while religious solidarity is always fanatical and prevents progress. It is here where the difference lies, it may be true in the case of Christianity but it is not true with Islam where religious fanaticism has been rare and religious solidarity is essential for progress. However it remains true that for Muslims, no sort of natural solidarity, not even patriotism, can replace the bond created by Islam. Real unity, in a Muslim nation, rests on common religious conviction (Ali 2002: 68).

Contradicting authors like Kedourie on the question of Afghani's contribution to nationalism, Anwar Moazzam contends that Afghani completely rejected the Western concept of nationalism as a dividing force to subjugate the Muslim nations and their religion. While noting and emphasising the importance of the Islamic identity and unity

⁷ London Times, Cairo, 20 August 1879, cited in Keddie 1972: 117.

of the Muslim people, Afghani places local or national identity below it, that is, an identity which can be easily subsumed by the bigger religious identity. In fact, having said this, Afghani saw that territorial unity was essential to resist Western imperial designs and form a strong united Islamic centre. It is important to note that Afghani glorified the Islamic identity and constantly spoke of pan-Islamism but was also quick to recognise local national sentiments where they were predominant and use them to forward his argument. There is a continuous parallel discussion on the traditional concept of *umma* as well as the territorial concept of nation, the *umma* versus the *watan*. The contradiction which frequently occurs in Afghani's discourse is also reflected in this Moazzam's claim that "pan-Islam and the struggle for local unities were coterminous" (Moazzam 1984: 26-27).

Afghani's ability to constantly switch from the argument of universality of Islamic unity to an appeal to local nationalisms as also his dialogue with the West, often seemed as a compromise with his Islamic stance and suggests that he was more unorthodox than religious. The extent of his "irreligion" varied with context but some of the texts, such as his reply to Renan, are most convincing of his unorthodoxy. This reflects to his stronger desire to foster an anti-imperialist unity among people- the nature of this solidarity was not always his primary concern.

Reform

As has been noted by Anthony D. Smith,

Nationalism demands the rediscovery and restoration of the nation's unique cultural identity; and this means returning to one's authentic roots in the historic cultural community inhabiting its ancestral homeland (Smith 2001: 33-34).

Contrary to the popular opinion of the time, Afghani sensed that the supremacy of the European powers was not so much because of their form of government, rather it was due to the social forces and the political culture reflected by those government institutions. It was clear to him that similar institutions or political systems could not be successful in the Muslim societies unless a similar political culture was created. Besides, Afghani

constantly insisted that it was not through mere imitation that these societies could stand up to the West, rather it was through the evolution and reformation of their own religion, culture and traditions that the Muslims could be integrated into a stronger social fabric.

Although he called for a reform programme aimed at unifying the Islamic societies, Afghani spoke more as a nationalist and sometimes even a racist Afghani. According to Zaki Badawi,

It is significant that neither al-Afghani nor his students spoke as Muslims. His writings and those of his chief disciple reflect nationalist and sometimes racist rather than specifically Muslim inspiration. He further betrayed a hatred for Britain that was to characterise most of his activities (Badawi 1976: 21).

His hatred of the British has been his strongest and most consistent characteristic. Contrary to other writers who view Afghani as a religious scholar and religious reformer, to Badawi he was seemingly more interested in external defence, internal reform being the medium for it. As Afghani is known to have said to Makhzumi, “The Oriental Question would never have existed had the Ottomans matched the West in the field of civilization and coupled its material conquests with scientific power” (Badawi 1976: 21).

Badawi also points to Afghani’s political wisdom based on his recognition of the huge gap that existed between the modern societies of the West and the Muslim societies at a time when all the focus was centred solely on constitutionalism. Different scholars take up different viewpoints as far as Afghani’s views on constitutionalism are concerned, but it is clear that Afghani saw that a constitutionalism that lacked a basis of social reform would be far from successful. He also knew that the way to reform was only through religion, which had a grasp on the masses as well as the intellectual elite. Thus, by using one kind of argument for the masses and another for the elite he wanted to propel them towards reform. This was more so because the clash between constitutional government and the precepts of Islam remained unresolved (Badawi 1976: 22).

In Badawi’s work on Afghani, the centrality of religion is noted not only as the medium of reform and change but also to the idea of nation. The author makes it clear that for Afghani religion, or specifically Islam, was not just essential to reforming the Muslim society but that Islam had all the features or tenets around which a successful ‘nation’

could be built. The sense of nationalism in Afghani's ideology comes partly from resistance to the West and partly from going back to Islam- not the Islam that was being preached and practiced at the time but one that came from a reinterpretation of the religious text based on science and rationality. To him, European civilization was worthy of emulation only in terms of the idea of modernity including science and technology. However, simple imitation would never be sufficient, the Western ideas of modernity would have to be adapted to a more indigenous culture or a more indigenous sensibility, specific to the epistemological foundations of that society (Badawi 1976: 22).

In describing a society and culture more suited to the needs of the time, Afghani makes many references to the traditional concept of *Umma*. There is a sense of dichotomy in Afghani's nationalist ideas because he aims for the unity of the traditional *Umma* through religion and simultaneously talks about the Muslim society as a 'nation', which is essentially a Western concept. There is an inherent tension between these two concepts of extremely different origins. However, it is probable that Afghani, a modernist, not bound by the limitations of our times and imaginations, did not sense this tension because he did not find the two incompatible. "For a nationalist, what is indigenous is ipso-facto popular" (Smith 2001: 34). For Afghani, the way to popularise nationalism was by linking it to something close to people, which they most readily identified with, which at that time was religion.

“Arab” Identity, Civilization and Nation: Questions in Modern Muslim Identity

In his response to the lecture of Ernest Renan, Afghani himself discusses the compatibility of religion with science vis-a-vis the intellectual history of the Arabs in the field of science and philosophy. To quote Hourani,

Renan maintained that Islam and science-and therefore, by implication, Islam and modern civilization-were incompatible with one another... Renan admitted indeed the existence of a so-called Arabic philosophy and science, but they were Arabic in nothing but language, and Graeco-Sassanian in content. They were entirely the work of non-Muslims in inner revolt against their own religion; by theologians

and rulers alike they had been opposed, and so had been unable to influence the institutions of Islam. This opposition had been held in check so long as the Arabs and Persians had been in control of Islam, but it reigned supreme when the barbarians- Turks in the east, Berbers in the west-took over the direction of the *umma*. The Turks had a total lack of the philosophic and scientific spirit, and human reason and progress had been stifled by that enemy of progress, the State based on a revelation. But as European science spread, Islam would perish, and elsewhere Renan prophesied that this would happen soon (Hourani 1983: 120-121).

Afghani makes a strong case for the intellectual contributions of the Arabs. There are two striking notes in his response. First, Afghani attacks Christianity equally, as he does Islam (for that matter all positive religions) blaming it for the fall of Arabs. While ceding a point to Renan's argument about Islam, Afghani goes on the defensive to state that the same can be said for Christianity and other positive religions. He takes up a note that denounces all religions in general. Secondly, the strong defence of Islamic intellectual tradition that is expected from an "Islamic" scholar does not appear at all in Afghani's response to Renan. If anything, Afghani returns an equally scathing criticism of the role of Islam in the downfall of the Arab scholar who originally was inclined toward science and rationality. In this, there is also an undercurrent of Afghani's exasperation with the way Islam was being preached and followed in his time- through the old and obsolete interpretations of religion which held no relevance in the current time.

What comes out very strongly in this position taken up by him is a sense of pride not for Islamic history but for the history of the Arabs, marked by numerous intellectual achievements. In this, he also includes non-Muslims like the Transoxanian and Syrian priests, who had converted to Christianity, and the Harranians, to whom the Arabic language had belonged several centuries before Islam and who had preserved their religion, Sabaeism. What Afghani chose to defend was not the Islamic religion, of which he himself was critical at least in this context, but the Arab identity or as he called it the "Arab nationality", which to him included the non-Muslims too. This is significant as it reflects on Afghani's idea of nationalism more so because it comes in reaction to Western critique, underlining the colonial context which provoked a strong reaction from Afghani. Contrary to the general view that Renan's words were a critique of Islam, a

religion, Afghani perceived it as an attack on the Arab identity, a nationality to him, and responded in kind.

The emphasis on Arab civilization and the mention of the term “Arab nationality” is remarkable at a time when there was no clear definition of an Arab identity. It is important to note that in a time when the Ottoman Empire was disintegrating and the colonial rulers were usurping power, an Islamic scholar like Afghani who was not himself an Arab by origin put forth the idea of such a singular, unified Arab identity in print, i.e. in a public space for the masses to read. In the colonial context, he chose to use the ethnic/national and not the religious identity or medium to remind readers of the strength and capability of the Arabs as a people. The usage of this term may have been very small and in passing, but for a writer like Afghani with his astute political sense, no written word or statement could be completely inconsequential (or indeliberate as far as Afghani was concerned). This piece of writing conveyed a strong message of Arab unity, one in a line of many given by Afghani. And the message was to unite on the basis of the idea of nationalism rather than stay divided and ignorant on the lines of religion as it had become in that time.

Ideas like this were very important at a time when there was no definite Arab entity because, as has been said by Gellner, “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (Gellner, 1964: 169). It is the idea of nationalism which gives rise to the nation. In case of the Arab land at least this was true. There never could have been one unified Arab nation or state but this idea of Arab nationalism did give rise to the later trend of pan-Arabism, which continued to influence later politics in a big manner.

National identity is generally perceived as a bigger or mega identity which subsumes other smaller identities like ethnic, linguistic or religious identities. In this sense, it is a modern idea, sometimes very violent or insensitive to other identities. Afghani tried to overcome this problem by placing the national identity at par with the religious identity, the one that people truly identified with at that time.

Afghani's contribution to nationalism and Arab politics was very important because it was a nationalism before a nation; an ideology of unity against a common enemy. Fostering pride in the Arab identity when the Arab identity itself was challenged and the primary identity was the religious one was a very significant contribution of Afghani, especially as it paved the way for the idea of pan-Arabism which dominated the region for decades.

In Keddie's words,

He is not seen as compromised by pro-western positions, as for example, is his ex-disciple Muhammad Abduh. *Nor is he today generally tied to the now-declining cause of nationalism, even though in the 1870s and early 1880s he in fact wrote many articles in support of nationalism*, including praising the unity of Muslims and Christians in Egypt and of Muslims and Hindus in India. These writings, although significant in number, are far lesser known than his pan-Islamic and pro-Islamic writings of the 1880s (Keddie, 1994: 25) (emphasis added).

Keddie makes a clear distinction between the religious contributions of Afghani and those to nationalism. This has largely been the perception of Afghani as an Islamic scholar. However, his religious and nationalistic contributions may not necessarily have been separate. It must be noted that Afghani's (and Abduh's) contributions to the religious debate were not purely theological in nature. Most of them propounded the idea of revival through reform, which forms an important part of Afghani's ideology. Although he did not directly address the cause of nationalism often enough, what he did was to bring a sense of unity among the Muslim people based on their religious identity. Moreover, he made the betterment of society and the political system a possibility through reform in religion. This is crucial because it contained that thread of modernity which was an important element in learning from and reacting to the influences of the West. His major contribution, based on reacting to the 'other' and reflecting on the 'self', was that he enabled the imagination of the 'self' in new ways, breaking free from all the traditional moulds. And though this was done through the medium of religion, it gave impetus to the national imagination of some primordial sense of existence which is visible throughout Afghani's thought. To imagine one's self in a new way was to reconstitute one's identity, and by reconstituting or reshaping the religious identity of the

Muslims, Afghani imagined them in a ‘national’ way, a new way, in keeping with the changes occurring in the contemporary times. It was not so much the idea of a nation as it was a sense of continuation of the nineteenth century *nahda*⁸ or Arab/Islamic tradition that led to the Arab awakening to which Afghani contributed immensely.

The religious reform that Afghani preached had sufficient ‘modern’ content because it inspired the Muslim people towards the cause of nationalism, which was till then an essentially Western concept, one of the outcomes of Western modernity. Through *ijtihad* he wanted the religion to be interpreted in keeping with the contemporary times and its challenges. He wanted the practice of *ijtihad* to be based on the Western principles of science and rationality, and was willing to do away with that which did not agree with these principles. He believed that through this practice the Muslims could perceive themselves in a new way, and redefine their identity. By imbibing the modern concepts with the traditional images of the ‘self’ he paved the way for nationalism.

“Pan-Islamism was a movement in many ways analogous to nationalism, uniting different classes and bringing conservatives and reformers together in order to defend the homeland” (Keddie 1968: 26). Despite the separation between the two in her works, Keddie does note the similar effect of Afghani’s pan-Islamic ideas on the Muslim society facing the challenge of colonial rule. This was also clearly visible in Afghani’s way of using religious appeals to unite all segments of the population against government policies, as in the case of his stay in Iran (Keddie 1983: 29). As pointed out by Sylvia Haim, Afghani made Islam into the basis of solidarity, thus placing it on the same footing as other solidarity-producing beliefs (Haim 1962: 15).

A document cited and translated by Keddie presents Afghani’s views on nationalism and his scheme of using religion for this political goal most eloquently. This is a letter by Afghani to a high Ottoman statesman with an appeal that Afghani be used as a Pan-Islamic emissary. It was sent at an opportune time, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 followed by the European imposition of terms at the Congress of Berlin, when pan-Islamist sentiment was on the upswing. In this letter Afghani places “the new spirit of the

⁸ *Nahda* refers to the Arab cultural renaissance that began in the nineteenth century.

love of nationality” within the purview of religion i.e. pan-Islamism. He also contradicts his anti-British stand convincing the addressee that in bringing about Islamic unity he would gain British support against the Russians. This, however, may not be very significant as Afghani was known for his political opportunism in order to achieve the desired end. What is more interesting is the fact that he was seeking favour and support in the Ottoman rule despite the staunch opposition of the Ottoman Empire he has expressed in other documents.⁹ Though Afghani remains faithful to the anti-colonial national sentiment, he clearly did not hesitate from switching alliances to achieve this goal as befitted the changing political climate of the time (1880s).

Afghani says that the spirit of nationality (*jinsiyya*) of the Eastern peoples has been weakened, and this has caused the weaknesses of all classes of the body politic. He states that members of the audience are descended either from the ancient Egyptians or from the Phoenicians or Chaldeans (Keddie 1994: 109).

He glorified the history of ancient Egypt in order to evoke the pride of the Egyptians by talking of the Phoenicians and the Chaldeans. This is a typical example of how Afghani evoked the nationalist sentiments of the people, either by challenging or playing up the feeling of pride common to all Egyptians on the question of ‘who they were’. Praising their ancestral lineage, the historic achievements of their races, etc. were classic ways employed by Afghani to stir the masses and direct them to the cause of nationalism. Religion, culture and heritage were not causes in themselves, rather they were instruments used to push the people toward the cause of nationalism; a method well recognised and elaborated by scholars like Elie Kedourie and Anthony D. Smith.

Smith has also explored the idea of nationalism without nation. This very appropriately explains Afghani’s concept of nationalism, as he preached it. He spoke of and glorified the Arab identity and Arab civilization at a time when there was no concept of an Arab nation and which never ever materialised. Similarly, he spoke of the Egyptians as a people, as a race, fostering a sense of pride in their ‘Egyptian’ identity at a time when Egypt was very much in the grasp of the British clutches. This style of evoking pride in a

⁹ For example see the letter (*Le Mahdi*) written by Afghani to the French newspaper *L’Intransigeant*, published on 11 December 1883. Cited in Kedourie 1997: 79-83.

'national' idea of identity is a constant theme in Afghani's work- his writings, lectures and speeches, be it in India, Afghanistan or Egypt.

As Keddie has noted,

Afghani also seemed to believe that Westerners were bent on undermining the Muslim sense of identity by turning their conquered subjects away from their own proud traditions...For Afghani, however, it was important not to lay undue stress on the Western origin of what he was borrowing...Thus for Afghani as for many other Asian modernists and anti-imperialists, there was good reason not to admit the Western origin of what he was borrowing, but instead to find origins within his own community (Keddie 1983: 41-42).

In giving an indigenous face to modern ideas most important was the way Afghani problematised identity itself. By attacking age-old religious interpretations, practices, traditions, beliefs and superstitions, as also by talking of 'reinterpretation' based on rationality and science, Afghani put forth the idea of a new identity. One kind of new identity that Afghani tried to popularise was the national identity. By glorifying the past of the Muslims he tried to evoke their national consciousness. Afghani's attempts at creating such a consciousness and identity find resonance in Smith's proposed definition of nationalism as

The processes of 'reinterpretation' of the pattern of memories, values, symbols, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations... This process of 'ethno-symbolic reconstruction', involves the reselection, recombination and recodification of previously existing values, symbols, memories and the like, as well as the addition of new cultural elements by each generation. Thus, the 'heroic' vision of national identity, with its themes of struggle, liberation and sacrifice typical of newly independent nations or 'state-nations', may in the next generation, cede place to a more open, pragmatic and utilitarian version of the nation's identity, stressing such themes as entrepreneurial ability, organizational skills and tolerance of diversity, themes that can be traced back to alternative ethnic traditions in the nation's history. Hence, change is built into the definition of national identity, yet it is change that operates within clear parameters set by the culture and traditions of the nation in question and its distinctive heritage (Smith 2001: 20).

That Afghani was unapologetic about using religion to infuse nationalistic fervour among the Muslims is self-admitted and amply clear in his words:

When does a man give his life for this kind of sensual pleasures of the *Amir* and the governor... but if they fight for the defence of religion and the preservation of the faith they would either have the crown of martyrdom on their heads or the robe of honour on their breasts (Keddie 1972: 137).

The strong overtones of messianic terminology also conform to the mixing of pan-Islam and holy war with nationalist appeal typical of Afghani. As Keddie has noted

Throughout Afghani's life such political actions as clearly documented concern primarily the problem of getting out the foreigners, and particularly the British... To some degree the pan-Islamic programme is simply a logical adaptation of this primary goal. He was reasserting the importance of political power in Islam and, like nationalists elsewhere, stating that independence was a prerequisite to meaningful reform (Keddie 1972: 140-141).

Having said this, it must be accepted that there lies a dichotomy between the two themes of Islam and nationalism, as is visible in his discourse. If they are not completely incompatible as ideas, they are also not very well attuned. What is interesting is how he negotiates a position between these two apparently irreconcilable ways in his works, which remains his most significant contribution to the cause of Arab nationalism.

Afghani's various commentaries on pan-Islamism and nationalism signalled the onset of a "dialogue" with the West and an engagement with Western modernity as opposed to a one-sided orientalist and chauvinist commentary from the West and the uni-dimensional Eurocentric ideas of modernity that had existed till then. It was a two-way exchange with the Muslim/Arab world making its own stand, rather than a one-way reception of modern ideas. It was important not so much because it allowed them to be different from the West as much for the fact that it allowed them to take up an indigenous position on modern ideas, closer to their own political and social realities.

*

Chapter 4

Nationalism in the Works of Abduh

Abduh, as an Islamic scholar, contributed immensely to modernity, reforms and nationalism in the Arab and the Muslim world. His contribution was not so much directly to the nationalist movement as it was to the debate on nationalism, and to the discussion of ideas at a time when Muslim people were mostly used to replicating either their own tradition from the past or Western modernity which they adapted without question and contemplation. Abduh's nationalist agenda is reflected more in his reform programme than in his political activities. His stint as a political nationalist during the publishing of *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* was more an amplification of Afghani's ideas than his own. It was as a reformer that Abduh tried to bring about structural changes in order to prepare the social and political system for a change of rule. Rather than taking a sentimental approach to nationalism to evoke the feeling of nationalism in the people, Abduh took a more planned approach. His motive was not simply to throw out foreign rule by any means because as a visionary he had the foresight to know that the Muslim community could not survive even under Muslim rule unless the society was reformed.

In order to understand Abduh's role as a precursor to nationalism and the significance of his contribution in Islamic revival and reform, the prevailing conditions of his time must be understood. Colonialism was a challenge not just to the sovereignty of the Muslim lands, but also to the Muslim identity. The colonial perceptions of the Muslims as the 'other' was being rapidly imposed on the Muslims, and in this context there was need for not just religious reform but, through it, also a redefining of Muslim identities. In the words of Samira Haj,

In Abduh's times, Islamic discourses were experiencing difficulty in retaining control over a (social, political and economic) reality being rapidly taken over by

more powerful discourses centred in Europe and armed with stronger modalities of power. Egypt conscripted to Europe's colonizing and modernizing project was undergoing dramatic transformation, including the reorganization of its political and social structures. Along with these new arrangements, a new idiom articulating this change emerged denigrating earlier forms and social structures as old, nonrational and nonmodern and the newer forms and ways of life (market-economy, secularism, nation-state, nuclear family etc.) as rational, progressive and modern. With this new articulation, religion came to be defined as primarily nonrational and inconsequential. It is in the context of colonialism and Europe's prescriptive definition of the modern as the site of universal rationality, progressive history, and emancipator politics and of tradition as the locus of autocratic religiosity and backwardness that Abduh's reform project came to unfold and acquire its particular meaning and significance (Haj 2009: 89-90).

Abduh did not take either the extreme positions of a conservative traditionalist or a modernist who accepted all things modern (and European) without question and examining them. "A modern society according to him demanded along with scientific knowledge, morality and a legal code" (Khoury 1976: 32). He wanted to strengthen the society in both science and religion so that the British would eventually be automatically ousted and Muslims would be capable of ruling themselves. It was for this reason that he did not even hesitate to cooperate with the British. It is important to note that he did not completely oppose or reject the most conservative faction of the society- the *ulema*. His intention was not to bring about a revolution that would lead to chaos and suffering and further subjugation of Muslims. That is why he opted for gradual change through reform. While he embraced scientific knowledge, he simultaneously worked on reforming the ideas of morality and the legal code to adapt them to the changing times.

Abduh's views on the idea of secularism are also very important, as they are relevant to his conception of the traditional *umma* and the role of the Caliph, which in turn occupy an important place in his imagination of a reformed Muslim community. It was also a significant factor in his reaction to Western modernity as secularism was central to Western modernity and democracy. Western scholars often equated the role of the Pope in Christianity with that of the Caliph in Islam, and proposed ideas of secularising Islamic societies on this assumption which Abduh opposed vehemently. It was also significant because his understanding of both secularism and Western colonial perceptions of Muslim identities, to which he reacted, were also factors that shaped his own imagination of alternate identities. Though he was very vocal in his criticism of the idea of

secularism, he did not completely reject it, and it was a part of his approach to the political system in Islam. This view led to a secular modern identity of the Arab world, which was more adaptable to modern ideas and his conceptualisation of nationalism, and which became significant for Arab nationalism.

Abduh's Reform Programme

Reform is an essential part of religious revivalism. In an era when the Islamic community was beginning its exploration of modernity, an internal examination and analysis of the Muslim community was crucial, in order to adapt Western modern ideas to its prevailing conditions. Furthermore, while the concept of nationalism had originated in the West, Abduh's and Afghani's basis of nationalism lay in the primordial sense of existence and the religious and cultural revival of the Islamic civilization. This required an alignment of the culture and its elements in order to then unify the Muslims into a single community (Smith 1991: 6). In the words of Smith,

Nationalism demands the rediscovery and restoration of the nation's unique cultural identity; and this means returning to one's authentic roots in the historic cultural community inhabiting its ancestral homeland (Smith 2001: 33-34).

Abduh's programme of reform was an important aspect of the struggle against British colonialism, but it was located primarily in the Islamic discursive tradition. This programme examined the internal problems of the Muslim society as well as the external challenge of the invasive colonial rule. The internal examination was aimed at a revival of Islamic traditions while simultaneously identifying the problems of religious and social practices. The external examination, on the other hand, was aimed at fending off the invasive influence of colonial rule on the structure of the Muslim society and polity through its "Europeanizing mission" (Haj 2009: 77). Samira Haj has put it very aptly

Abduh's project of renewal was double-faceted, engaging an internal front as well as an external one. The internal involved reconstituting Islamic orthodoxy by reordering fend off the colonizing and Europeanizing mission of Europe and its singular view of modernity. Within the tradition of Islamic revivalism, Abduh saw himself as a reformer with a duty to revitalize a morally decadent, socially

stagnant Muslim community on the verge of collapse under pressure from an invasive colonial Europe (Haj 2009: 77).

Abduh's programme was based on the opposition of the tradition of *taghrib*¹ or Europeanisation which involved both a blind adoption of the European value-system as well as a complete renunciation of one's own. Abduh condemned the practice of *taqlid*²; he was strongly opposed to the practice of an unreflective, blind imitation, be it of traditional religious orthodoxy or of Western norms and values. "He deemed 'unreasoned following of authority' the 'enemy of Islam' regardless of whether the authority was Islamic or European" (Haj 2009: 71). As opposed to this, he promoted the practice of *ijtihad*, a process which involved an evaluation of the vast body of knowledge of Islam, retaining that which is relevant, and discarding the non-relevant parts. In this way, the factor of current time and changing social and political circumstances could be given due consideration and importance. To him, *ijtihad* was a crucial element of the discursive tradition of reform, because it enabled Muslims to find solutions to problems and challenges which had no precedence in history.

In this struggle, Abduh was opposing not just the colonial rulers, but also the conservative and orthodox faction of traditional religious authority i.e. the *ulema*. He was particularly opposed to their tradition of submitting to *taqlid*, which he opposed vociferously. In his words, in commanding Muslims to submit to *taqlid*,

They command us to follow their words blindly; and if one attempts to follow the Kuran and Usage of the Prophet, they oppose him with denial, supposing that in so doing they are preserving the religion. On the contrary, nothing else but this has vitiated the religion; and if we continue to follow this method of blind acceptance, no one will be left who holds this religion. But if we return to that reason to which God directs us in this verse, and other verses like it, there is hope that we can revive our religion. Thus it will be the religion of reason, to which all nations shall have recourse (Adams 1933: 130-131).

However, unlike Afghani, Abduh did not confront this orthodox faction openly, his effort was to direct it towards reform and the process of Islamic modernisation based on scientific inquiry of the existing body of knowledge. This he attempted to do through the various offices he held during his lifetime, most importantly as the Mufti of Egypt. It is

¹ *Taghrib* here means Europeanisation (Haj 2002: 72).

² *Taqlid* in this context means unreflective following of consensual precedent (Haj 2002: 72).

significant that while he continued his reform programme through *fatwas* and policy-changes, he avoided openly contradicting the *ulema*, as he was aware that a direct confrontation between the *ulema* and the colonial rulers could lead to the complete banishment of this body; which would have been totally contrary to Abduh's plan of including them into the mainstream of Islamic reform.

Adams gives an account of Abduh's views on science, reason and philosophy vis-à-vis religion in which he also includes a brief account of the degeneration of Islam and rationality in Muslim countries. This history is interesting because much like Adams' estimate of Abduh's work, Abduh in turn has also reviewed the effect of the works of scholars like Al-Baidawi and al-Adud and the lack of scientific teaching and inquiry, and how this led to the ignorance of the Muslim people, both towards science and towards their own religion. He describes how their understanding of Islam was far from what Islam actually means.

What comes across most clearly in Albert Hourani's work on Abduh in *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* is that Abduh was aware of the socio-political circumstances of the Egyptian society and had some insight into what he called its decay. Moreover, Abduh had a distinct idea of Islam, i.e. the 'true religion' that he envisioned, which was different from Islam as it was being preached and practiced at that time. This idea of true religion carried solutions to the problems that existed at the time in the Egyptian society. This was based on the assumption or premise that Islam was essentially compatible with all ideas and concepts modern, and that the question of incompatibility of Islam and modernity simply did not arise.

Hourani points out that in strongly supporting the idea that Islam and modernity are compatible, and in doing so often, Abduh knowingly or unknowingly distorted the basic tenets and principles of Islam. For example, "*maslaha* gradually turns into utility, *shura* into parliamentary democracy, *ijma* into public opinion; Islam itself becomes identical with civilization and activity, the norms of nineteenth century social thought" (Hourani 1983: 144). Thus, "identifying certain traditional concepts of Islamic thought with the dominant ideas of modern Europe" led to the distortion of those traditional ideas. This

distortion occurs both in Afghani's work and ideas as well as Abduh's (Hourani 1983: 144).

The strong anti-imperialist sentiment that marked Afghani's life and work is not as visible in Abduh's thought, though it is present. What comes out more strongly is the depth of Abduh's engagement with modernity and his recognition of the backwardness of the Muslim society vis-à-vis the European society. Thus, his efforts, for most of his life, were channelled towards the reform of society through religious reform rather than towards a direct engagement with the idea of nationalism. This was not to be a purely theological work because Abduh wished to introduce many modern ideas to the practice and understanding of religion. His whole programme of *ijtihad* or religious reinterpretation was based on the idea or belief that religion and rationality can co-exist; rather rationality should be the basis of religion.

This affected his idea of nationalism as there was a constant confusion between the traditional Islamic concept of a single unified *umma* on one hand, and the modern concept of nation on the other. This confusion is also visible throughout Afghani's idea of nationalism. However, Abduh's work is more theoretical, more nuanced and does propose to resolve this conflict.

As a reformer, Abduh believed that Islam was not only compatible with but also facilitated development. He emphasised the use of *tamaddun* which can be described as

A concept of 'balanced development' which Abduh derives from the Koran. While this concept includes the Western emphasis on technological progress, *and does not prohibit the diversification of political institutions*, it insists on balancing that with the development of social justice, family structure, a strong social fabric, all through belief in and the worship of God. *Development in this perspective does not follow from an estrangement from religion, but on the contrary, bases itself on religious ideas and thrives on them* (Khoury 1976: 5) (emphasis added).

Abduh was open to the "diversification of political institutions" as he realised that the political system required changes in accordance with the changing times, but he did not necessarily see that as a complete break from religion. Rather, he propounded religion and religious reform as the means to achieving reform of both the society and the political system. Abduh places great importance on political development, which can also

be understood as nation-building, the building of a democracy, administrative and legal development and stability (Khoury 1976).

Having tried to prepare his government for a republican form of government opposing Turks and Europeans who did not wish to give Egypt its independence, Abduh is regarded today as an early founder of Arab nationalism... In Abduh's thought there were signs of the strain between pan-Islam and Arab nationalism which grew and developed after Abduh's time, mainly in Syria and the Arabian Peninsula (Khoury 1976: 18-19).

Reforms were a crucial part of Abduh's nationalist programme. Though the biggest challenge to the Muslim community in Egypt and elsewhere was that of colonialism, the problem was not entirely external. External aggression was the consequence of a problem that ran much deeper and had a much greater impact on the Muslim people. This was the problem of inner decay and stagnation in society. Abduh was one of the first Muslim thinkers to realise that these problems would continue to affect the larger community and render it completely defenceless against the invasive external influences unless they were dealt with immediately. Some of the major problems he identified were the most basic to the social structure. Abduh found the condition and status of women in the Muslim community extremely appalling. The way young girls were married off to men twice their age, the practice of polygamy for which people used Islam as an excuse, the clear bias against women in legal procedures like divorce, and the imposition of the veil were causes of grave concern. Many thinkers, scholars and reformers have tried to fight these evils against women for centuries. What distinguished Abduh from them was that as an Islamic scholar he was willing to wage a religious battle against these practices. Rather than renouncing and rejecting a religious and social system that treated women so abysmally, Abduh as a theologian could question the very premise that these practices were sanctioned by Islam. Perceived sanction by Islam was the common excuse of people who indulged in these practices and Abduh challenged it. As a theologian, he went to great lengths to prove that these biases against women were un-Islamic and unsanctioned by the Quran.

As a way of improving women's status in the Muslim society, Abduh suggested 'changed marriage relations', which were not based on abstract, natural rights but rights which were congruent with the teachings of Islam, since Islam gave women equal rights with

proper interpretation and application. Abduh observed that the system of arranged marriages was obsolete, and must be discarded. He criticised the marriage of two virtual strangers as completely unreasonable, especially in an age when the younger generation was more educated and progressive. He was particularly opposed to the coercion of younger girls into marriage as he considered attitudes and practices which led to forced marriages un-Islamic and a blatant violation of Islamic law. He recommended new courting practices where young partners could meet and ensure their compatibility in order to solidify the bonds of marriage.

Abduh attributed the inferior status of women to their lack of education. He was the most vociferous supporter of women's education. He argued that it was the women who shaped the future of the nation as they would be responsible for the upbringing of their children; thus it was very important that they be informed and educated citizens and "have a will of their own". He also argued against polygamy which was, according to him, intrinsically incompatible with the nature of marital life and family solidarity. According to Abduh, polygamy, as per the Quran, is a conditional right contingent on a man's ability to love and provide equally for all his wives; furthermore the *Sharia* forbids it barring exceptional situations. Abduh was equally against sex segregation as being in complete contrast with the sensibilities of his time. To him, the tenets of the Quran dictated modesty for men and women equally, making the practice of the veil for women redundant. The legal procedure of divorce, according to Abduh, was a sphere in which the societal bias against women was absolute. He sought to reform the procedure by giving the following recommendations:

1. A man wishing to divorce his wife should first appear before a *Sharia* judge and inform him of his intention and reason for it.
2. The judge should then point out that divorce is looked upon with disfavour by the *Sharia*, and that the man should take a week to think it over.
3. After a week, if the husband persists in his demand, one or more mediators would be appointed by the judge, usually from the couple's family, to try and resolve the quarrel.
4. If mediation fails then a report is given to the judge and the divorce is then authorized.

5. Divorce will not become legal until signed before a judge and witnesses (Khoury 1976: 176).

More importantly, Abduh insisted on the right to women to initiate divorce. He suggested two approaches for this: one was the Maliki position which granted women the right to divorce on evidence of harm with or without the husband's consent; the other was for all marriage contracts to include a conditional clause granting the women the right to initiate divorce. Abduh felt that the right to initiate divorce, along with proper education and abandoning polygamy would make a great difference in the status of women in the Muslim society, enabling them to have a more positive influence on the family and the society, and to participate in the political processes as responsible citizens of the nation.

Further, unlike most other reformers, Abduh was able to use his position as the Mufti of Egypt to fight these problems, often through his *fatwas*. In some of these, he addressed questions arising from the economic and social restructuring of Egypt. In 1899, he delivered a *fatwa* making suggestions on the role that the government should play in regulating the economy from an Islamic legal perspective. In another *fatwa*, answering a question from a woman, Abduh wrote that according to the *Sharia*, a woman holding stocks in a company had the right to buy or sell these stocks on her own, without the consent of the husband (Khoury 1976: 179). One of his more famous and controversial *fatwas* was the Transvaal *fatwa*³, opposing the belief that Muslims would forsake their faith by embracing non-Islamic practices in foreign countries. This often put him in a difficult position vis-à-vis the *ulema* because in opposing conservative practices so vocally, he was virtually confronting the conservative faction i.e. the *ulema*. However, he continued his reform activity despite their disapproval and opposition. While he was opposing them, and seeking favours from the British (who were in favour to getting rid of this conservative faction) in order to bring about some of the crucial reforms, he neither rejected religion as the nucleus of the Muslim community, nor did he attempt to place the

³ The Transvaal *fatwa* was Abduh's response to three questions posed by a Muslim from Transvaal: the first question was whether a Muslim living in a predominantly Christian country is permitted to wear European style attire; the second was whether a Muslim is prohibited from eating meat slaughtered by Christians; and the third was whether it was permissible for a Hanafi Muslim imam to lead public prayers for Muslims belonging to other legal schools. Abduh's response to all three questions was in the affirmative, based on his opinion that interiority and intention are the better criteria for measuring faith. This opinion was strongly opposed and contested by the orthodox Azhari *ulema* (Haj 2002: 147).

ulema in a precarious position against the British. His aim was not to get them banned as a religious body but to bring them over to the side of reform, renewal and revival. It is, thus, obvious that Abduh's goal was not to cripple Islam but to revive it.

The other major area of concern for Abduh was education. Abduh was against both obsolete methods of teaching and curriculum as well as the complete ignorance of science and technology. There were two factors that made Abduh unique as a thinker, theologian and reformer. Though Abduh had received traditional training in theology from al-Azhar, under the influence of people like Afghani, he came to question and reject it. He found the methods of teaching obsolete and was most vocal in opposing *taqlid*. He questioned theologians who wasted students' time in teaching them from texts which were long obsolete while ignoring important contemporary works. The fact that al-Azhar students were not encouraged to question or debate but blindly accept what they were taught exasperated Abduh. The other factor that made Abduh unique was his exposure to the West. When he spoke of reforming the education system, he spoke as someone familiar with modern academic and literary trends in Britain, France and the United States of America among other places. One of his most modernising reforms was to attempt to bring in the study of science which had long been ignored by the traditional religious educational institutions; and which he also identified as the root cause of the backwardness of the Muslim community and the most important factor behind the progress of European nations. In his opinion, a community in the process of nation-building at the turn of the nineteenth century could not remain ignorant of the innovations of science and technology.

Thus, Abduh made suggestions and recommendations to create a more effective educational system, which would imbibe both religious and scientific subjects to counter the polarisation that resulted from traditional religious schools teaching Islamic theology and Christian missionary schools teaching science and foreign languages. The idea was to provide both moral and scientific education, by ensuring that religious schools included science as part of the curriculum and vice versa. He insisted on the teaching of the Arabic language and Islam which he considered the key for defining individual and communal morality. He insisted on free education for all members of the society. He was

particularly concerned about the education of the lower classes of society. The government was to have the biggest role in this plan; in the establishment of schools, determination of the curriculum and guiding the educational system for the benefit of the individual and the society. Abduh came up with a Platonian plan to impart different kinds of education to different people, based on their capabilities, although this did not actually take shape. He also made recommendations for improvements in the al-Azhar system of education, incurring the displeasure of the teaching shaikhs in the process.

In suggesting these reforms, Abduh also criticised secular education vehemently. His criticism was based on the difficulties and dislocation of those exposed to it, especially without safeguards. According to Abduh, the duality that existed in the education systems of Egypt and other Muslim countries was a consequence of the secularisation of education (Badawi 1978: 74).

The inclusion of science in the academic curriculum of traditional religious schools was a very significant reform brought in by Abduh. Apart from being considered as essential to the progress of the Muslim people, it also facilitated the larger argument Abduh was making at the time about the compatibility of Islam and science. Although Abduh's approach was not completely scientific (for example, he could not completely do away with the concept of "miracles" in the Quran and, thus, tried to rationalise them), his approach was very progressive for his time. Time and again he had made the case that Islam supported rationality and science. His method of teaching religion and theology along with science was one step further in this argument. In his article *Philosophy and the Call for Modern Sciences*, Abduh expressed his astonishment with Muslims who still refused to teach logic

If this is our attitude towards such subjects... I dread to think of how we regard new sciences which have become everyday necessities and the basis of happiness, wealth and power in our modern era... We must go about acquiring these things in the proper manner following the lead of those of our own people who would have us be cognizant of our need for those sciences and of the danger of our ignoring them (Khoury 1976: 173).

One of the most significant contributions of Abduh to his time and to the nationalist programme was that of the press. He took the lead in promoting a vigilant press as a way

of bringing transparency and exposing the nepotism and weaknesses of the Ottoman government as well as the exploitative and invasive colonial nature of British rule over Egypt. He himself actively participated in the press, first as chief editor of *al-Waqai al-Misriya* and later when he, in collaboration with Afghani, published the journal *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa*, directly aimed at exposing colonial rule and evoking nationalist sentiment in the people. The use, in the latter journal, of Islamic doctrines to promote the cause of nationalism was a reflection on Abduh's nationalist ideology. Apart from playing a significant role in the press himself, he encouraged his students and followers to start newspapers and journals for greater mobilisation of the Muslims. He was critical of the misuse of Arabic language by journalists and thought that they should be better trained in the use of language. To him the aim of journalists was to educate and uplift the readers rather than capitalising on vulgar curiosity about rumours and scandals. He saw in the newspapers the means to cultivate national sentiment by developing their own cause and ideology.

In his position as the Mufti of Egypt, Abduh made considerable efforts to reform the *Sharia* courts (Islamic personal law courts). The *Sharia* courts at the turn of the nineteenth century were poorly managed, their administration was highly inefficient, the systems of record-keeping were obsolete, the legal procedures were slow and complicated and the staff was underpaid. Moreover, the judges presiding over these courts were barely qualified for their posts, lacking an in-depth knowledge of the theological and legal aspects of Quran which Abduh considered essential to jurisprudence in Islamic personal law. As the Mufti, Abduh tried to reform the *Sharia* courts at the structural and functional as well as qualitative levels to make them quick, efficient and effective. This was another achievement to his credit in terms of modernising the Islamic system in accordance with the needs of the changing times without abandoning the core of Islam. As noted by Samira Haj, "Abduh's critique of the status quo and his recommendations for change did not question the importance of sharia law for the advancement of Egypt as a modern nation-state" (Haj 2002: 137).

His suggested reforms, though procedural and technical in nature on the surface, were aimed at centralising, standardising and professionalising the court system. He insisted on

a certain level of autonomy of Islamic jurisprudence and its independence from state control. He also felt the need to specify standard qualifications for all court employees including proper knowledge of the Arabic language and skills of writing, proper editing and book-keeping; basic knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence; and a standard examination system with those scoring highest being selected for employment. He also gave a detailed account of responsibilities of the scribes as well as creation of strict standard rules and regulations to monitor the judges. He emphasised the need for new rules for the election process and appointment of judges to their respective seats. Most importantly, Abduh opined that the old cadre of judges trained in *taqlid* should be replaced by better qualified judges who could apply *ijtihad* forms of reasoning. He criticised the existing policy of favouring the Hanafi school, which he described as a violation of the fundamentals of a just Islamic system, and proposed that, in making rulings, judges should be free to choose from the four schools based on strong reasoning and most conclusive evidence.

More than anything else, Abduh felt that the understanding and the practice of religion had become polluted by superstitions and orthodoxy and more than anything else, it was this Abduh fought the most through his reforms. He criticised the practices of *tajdid* and *taqlid* very staunchly as he was opposed to blind acceptance of old and obsolete interpretations of the theological texts. On the premise that Islam was not only compatible with, but also promoted the use of, reason and rationality Abduh could not help but oppose the unquestioned acceptance of these orthodox teachings. Thus, one of his most important instruments of reform was the practice of *ijtihad* i.e. the reinterpretation of theological texts based on reason and rationality in accordance with the changing times. As a Muslim reformer who was critical of both traditionalist religious authority and colonial perceptions of modernity, Abduh sought to reconfigure Islam to both accommodate and challenge the changes of his time. To him the spirit of Islam was consonant with change and progress. Thus, the Islamic reform programme was crucial to the survival of the Muslim community. And this was the only means of warding off colonial aggression without simultaneously having to reject the ideas of modernity that the West had to offer. The idea of *ijtihad* provided an important instrument of change to him, through which he could incorporate modern ideas into Islam, at the same time doing

away with the rigidity and irrelevance of certain obsolete practices encouraged by the orthodoxy. In the words of Haj, the right to *ijtihad*

Enabled him to reconfigure orthodoxy as a space within which he could integrate elements of colonial modernity (e.g., the nation-state and agents) and remain within the parameters of the Islamic tradition. Far from a simple process of emulating earlier historical moments and discursive arguments or fabricating a new Islam, Abduh drew on multiple tendencies and arguments within the tradition in order to establish a counter-discourse that could vie with established Islamic orthodoxy, on the one hand, and Europeanization, on the other (Haj 2002: 72).

In underlining the importance of *ijtihad*, Abduh highlighted the significant role of disagreement in Islam, that is, the practice of using reasoned arguments and disputing over strategies and practices to sustain the community- a tradition largely ignored by mainstream scholarship in his time. In the context of the Islamic tradition, which consists of a set of authoritative texts, beliefs and practices from which Islamic forms of reasoning are derived for the Muslim to make reasonable and persuasive arguments, by seeking new insights into contemporary questions and concerns within the Islamic discursive reasoning, Abduh only took forward this tradition, enabling its survival and continuation. Therefore, Abduh showed the way to place human reasoning and *ijtihad* alongside the revealed knowledge and consensual precedent to make the discursive tradition of Islam stronger. Contrary to claims that Abduh sought to modernise Islam by ‘Europeanising’ it, his reform programme was more internal, with its roots of origin within Islamic precepts. His programme of religious reform and its centrality to nationalism validates Smith’s assertion that organised religion in itself is not sufficient to sustain nationalism, making reform essential to self renewal and revival (Smith 1991: 35).

Abduh and Secularism

Abduh gave considerable thought to the question of separation of religion and politics, i.e. secularisation and its possibilities in both Christianity and Islam. According to Abduh, in Christianity, secularisation was not just possible but a necessary prerequisite for achieving the levels of modernity, industrialisation, science and learning that had in fact made the Western society prosper. However, on the question of secularisation in

Islam and the Islamic society, Abduh's ideas are much more complicated. It is not a simple question and has no one simple answer- it plagues and puzzles Muslim and non-Muslim scholars till date. Abduh's answer to this question too was rife with nuances and complexities.

On one hand, Abduh openly criticised the concept of secularism and stated that secularism in Islamic society is not possible because the guide to humanity and every aspect of good living is the Holy Book- Quran, which also provides a source of law. Thus, religion guides and supervises politics, rendering a complete separation of the two impossible. He even goes so far as to say that the true nature of secularism in the Western society was not a total separation but political tolerance of religion and the fact that society was giving up religion (i.e. Catholicism). On the other hand, in going back to what Abduh identifies as the 'true Islam' and explaining its features, he lays down the powers and duties of the Caliph and the rights of the ruled. It is very clear from all his writings that his conception of the Caliph was as a political leader. According to Abduh, as far as religion was concerned, a Caliph's position was the same as that of any other Muslim, in that every Muslim had a right to interpret religion. No single interpretation of religion could be forced on the followers of Islam.

There is a subtle duality in Abduh's approach. The harsh criticism of secularism mentioned earlier comes more from a theological perspective in terms of what ideas and concepts are compatible with the tenets of Islam and the Quran. The description of the powers and duties of the Caliph and his position vis-à-vis the ruled is the pragmatic approach of a politician who is more concerned with the practical problems related to the ruling of a people through and by the principles of Islam. This pragmatic approach is further testified by Abduh's clarification over the conflict between the traditional concept of *umma* and the modern nation-state. In saying that both are compatible and that a single *umma*, divided into multiple nation-states but unified under one Caliph, can exist, Abduh took care of both the theological as well as the practical and political aspects of the problem by validating both the *umma* as well as the nation-state. Thus, in Abduh's doctrine, one finds that the concept of secularism may somewhere be present but is also strictly limited. What is interesting is that Abduh has addressed and discussed this

concept as opposed to many other theologians who ignored it. It is indicative of the fact that Abduh was aware of the sub-textual conflict between the ideas of religion and politics, i.e. Islam and nationalism that he inherited from Afghani and expanded further with his own ideas.

That secularism has been acknowledged and discussed as an issue by Abduh has already been pointed out. The significant fact is that the discussion of secularism in Abduh's discourse can be subscribed largely to his ideas of politics and nationalism. That is to say, in some places Abduh has rejected and condemned secularism, in other places there is at least an attempt to delineate the role of religion in politics and vice versa. What this does is to show that the ideal rational type of political system that Abduh was talking about clearly needs to be in adherence with Islam, even though not solely and completely based on Islam. The difference is the thread of secularism that creeps into Abduh's suggested ideal type of political system, even as he criticises secularism. It has been clearly said that the model of the political system needs to be extrapolated from the Quran, but not restricted to it. Recognising that Quran may not directly answer many questions posed by modernity, both reinterpretation and use of rationality have been stressed by Abduh. This may not be the same as the idea of secularism prevalent in the West at that time, but is an indigenous kind of secular approach to religion itself, the whole activity aimed at demarcating and in some places limiting the role and influence of religion. For instance, in saying that the role of the Caliph is purely political, or that the *umma* and the nation-state can co-exist, he separated, to some extent, the theological concepts from the political ones, even while arguing that both are compatible.

Secularism in Abduh's discourse is significant not in the way that he has outwardly promoted it. Rather it is significant in the sense that as an Islamic scholar he had a somewhat secular approach to religion, if that could be possible. Criticism does not necessarily mean total rejection. Abduh may have openly criticised the concept of secularism, but that doesn't imply a total rejection of secularism in practice. When he spoke of reform in the social and political system and the constant reference to 'true Islam', the continuation of *Sharia* courts, imparting of religious education, etc. it was to make the whole political and social system adhere to Islam, but not necessarily be limited

to it. When he spoke of the compatibility of Islam and science; the reinterpretation of Quran based on rationality and doing away with that which could not be rationally explained; when he referred to the questions and challenges thrown up by changing times which had not existed before and had not been directly addressed in the Quran and the need to answer these questions based on rationality, he was delineating the role and influence of religion in the political system. This may not be the same as secularism in the Western sense, but it was an indigenous secular approach more suited to the Islamic society.

Interestingly, despite his numerous attempts to prove the compatibility between science and Islam, Abduh opines that “philosophy and the secular sciences should not be mixed up with questions of religion” (Adams 1933: 125). According to Abduh,

The two fields should be kept distinct, partly because in the field of religion, particularly in regard to the nature of God, there are well-defined limits to what reason can accomplish, or even attempt, whereas, in the natural world, no such limits are imposed; and partly because the handicap of religious intolerance and sectarian bias may throttle the spirit of independent investigation, as the history of Islam has shown (Adams 1933: 125-126).

Abduh’s separation between the moralities that should guide the individual on one hand and the group on the other is extremely significant. In the words of Kerr,

His treatment of these questions follows one course for individuals and another for groups. For the individual the starting point of Abduh’s thinking is man’s ability to distinguish for himself between good and evil- to determine the norm of right behavior- through a combination of esthetic instinct and rational calculation of utility... For the group, the starting point is perception not of the norm but of the sanction, from which the norm can be inferred. The sanction in the case of the group is material and worldly, and can therefore be rationally perceived, whereas for the individual this is not the case (Kerr 1966: 121).

When one reads further into this doctrine given by Abduh, one understands that for the individual Abduh prescribed a strong religious morality whereas for the group it is one based on rationality and a sanction that is “material and worldly”. This indicates a separation between religious and, what can be seen as, a more secular ideology for the individual and the group, respectively. It is important because when Abduh talks of a group, he is mostly referring to the traditional community or the “nation” which often

mean the same thing. Thus, the inference is that religion and religious morality cannot dominate the “nation” or the community even though it is integral to the personal space of an individual. It also means that those tenets, the observance of which is binding on the individual, need not necessarily influence the community as a whole. That is to say that religion will not be a dominant force in the political role and functions of a community. As Kerr points out,

There is a sharp distinction to be drawn, however, between religious and secular-nationalist *ta'assub*. The former is “purer, more sacred and of more general benefit;” the “foreigners” have encouraged suspicion of religious solidarity because they know that it is the Muslims’ strength, while by vaunting secular nationalism they create divisions among the Muslims. “All intelligent persons know that *the Muslims know no [true] nationality other than their religion and belief*”... A proper religious attitude removes the psychological origins of nationalism (*ta'assub al-jinsiyya*) which lie in the necessity of self-protection amidst the conflicts caused by competing material interests (Kerr 1966: 138-139) (emphasis added).

Here, Abduh’s questioning of the whole concept of nationalism is contradictory to his earlier separation of the morality of the individual from that of the group because while that separation suggests that unity rather than religion would play the dominant role in guiding the community, a sentiment very similar to the modern concept of nationalism, here he totally rejects any such conception of nationalism. This problem is not limited to the nature of solidarity of the community. It goes further than that and presents a problem for the very identity of the individual i.e. he has to choose between a Muslim and a national identity as Abduh’s statement about nationality makes it not just incompatible but totally contradictory to the religious identity of the individual. A similar contradiction exists in the ideas of Afghani, but there the emphasis is on the idea of nationalism and he does not debate the theological aspect of religion and its significance to the question of identity. However, Abduh is actually dealing with this theological aspect and, thus, his ideas are even more nuanced, and as was the case with Afghani, often self-contradictory.

In his work *Al-Islam wa 'n-Nasraniyya ma' al-'Ilm wa 'l-Madaniyya*,

He seeks to prove that political powers in the Islamic constitutional organization are not ‘religious’ or ‘theocratic’ but purely civil. The distinction he draws is essentially that between theocracy and divine-law nomocracy: the ruler and his subordinates exercise their authority within the confines of a law over which they

have no exclusive power of interpretation, let alone formulation; as *mujtahids* they are on the same level as other *mujtahids* not holding office. The Caliphate must not be confused with what Europeans term 'theocracy', which would signify that the caliph receives the Law directly from God... It is the nation or its deputies that install him in office, and the nation that possesses the right to supervise him. It deposes him when it considers this in its interest. Thus he is a civil ruler [*hakim madani*] in all respects (Kerr 1966: 148-149).

Khoury also opines that according to Abduh, the Caliphate was essentially a political leader, and that it could not be equated with the position held by the Pope in Christianity.

If the Prophet himself had a limited function with respect to his followers, the Caliph, his successor, had even more limitations. The charge that Islam mixed political and religious power in one man has no basis according to Abduh. The Caliph is primarily a political leader. He is also a symbolic religious figure, serving as a good example to his people. The Caliph has no specific religious functions, and certainly no authority to interpret the Koran. Since the Koran itself is the final authority, a command of the Arabic language is what an ordinary man needs to understand it (Khoury 1976: 84).

Thus, Abduh's approach included a criticism of secularism which would marginalise religion and its role in society, but this criticism was not consonant with an opposition of the modern political system itself. As Kerr has noted,

Abduh manages to suggest that the Islamic system, being a civil one, is of the same general species as modern secular systems, and therefore presumably open to the same speculation, critical examination, and progressive development as the latter. Furthermore, by emphasizing that true Islamic government contains those virtues that are commonly recognized in the modern world- national sovereignty over the ruler, the conditional nature of authority, and regard for public interest; virtues that are supposedly of proven and universal validity- he hints, almost imperceptibly, that the Islamic theory coincides with natural law... The separation of secular and religious powers in Europe, Abduh claims, has only resulted in a struggle for power between the ecclesiastical and temporal authorities, since their jurisdictions cannot entirely be separated (Kerr 1966: 150-151).

When Abduh suggests that the Islamic system, meaning the Islamic political system and Islamic law, is similar to modern secular systems, it leads to a certain confusion, especially considering the fact that almost in the same text Abduh challenges the whole possibility of complete separation of religious and secular powers, decrying Christian secular systems of Europe. The way he envisages and defines the role of the Caliph in the Muslim society further problematises the question of whether secularism is possible in

Islam according to him or not. Abduh's ventures into philosophy and secular branches of education were not an escape from Islam, but rather an attempt to consolidate religious teachings, place them on more solid proofs, and assign them side by side with the demands of the modern world (Khoury 1976: 24).

In the words of Khoury,

In the visions and plans of many nationalists, there exists a definite sense of identity and a society in the making that has more in it than a bland modernization. It is in this sense that Abduh saw in Islam an ideology, a program of action that was flexible enough to accommodate change and yet solidly based on indigenous religious values that would provide the motivation and mobilization needed for the revival of the nation (Khoury 1976: 39).

While the journal *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* was often addressed to non-Muslim Asians to invoke the feelings of nationalism in Asia and Africa, Islam was invariably used as the foundation for solidarity as far as Muslims were concerned (Khoury 1976:103).

Convergence of Islam and Nationalism

There are interesting points of intersection between Islam and nationalism in Abduh's works. The sense of primordialism which is often attached to the history of the Islamic civilization, in this case, formed the very basis of Abduh's nationalist discourse. A commonly ascribed to tenet of nationalism is that religion has the ability to preserve a sense of common ethnicity (Smith 1991: 35). This was recognised and utilised by Abduh to preserve a sense of ethnicity and community among the Muslims, and to invoke nationalist sentiments. Kedourie has pointed out how Islam has, for many decades, been the primary medium for the spread of the idea of nationalism; a trend which was later reflected in the writings of eminent Arab scholars like Michel Aflaq, Costi Zurayq and Abdul Rahman al-Bazzaz. Al-Bazzaz has argued that Islam is the very manifestation of the Arab genius and Arab nationalism, and that the sending of the Prophet to the Arabs revived and resurrected the Arab nation in its entirety (Kedourie 1970: 68-69). As Gellner opines, it is an underlying cultural and religious homogeneity that surfaces in the form of nationalism. According to Khoury,

Symbolically and substantively, Abduh considered the Koran to be the unifier of Muslims. Not only is it one, unique and definite source of legislation but it also speaks to all Muslims and specifically urges them to unite and to vigorously oppose oppression. The confidence which the Koran should inspire in Muslims is ammunition against what Abduh and Afghani saw as an inferiority complex that caused Muslims to accept European domination. By continually referring to the Koran in their political writings, Afghani and Abduh were trying to revive a sense of pride and self respect amongst Muslims. The authors saw a direct relationship between such feelings and political liberation (Khoury 1976: 103).

There are some scholars who strongly oppose the practice of selecting parts of Islamic theology and making rationalisations about it to make Islam seem more compatible with modernity. These scholars view Islam as essentially monolithic in nature, and contrary to principles like secularism which are considered as a prerequisite for modernising the political system. As H.A.R. Gibb has noted in his seminal work *Modern Trends in Islam*,

The modernist writers in Islam are using too farfetched rationalizations to reconcile Islamic doctrine with the needs of a modern society. He criticizes modernists for employing reason to underpin their emotional reaction to Western attacks on Islam. He considers that theirs is an abuse of reason because it is a biased and ulterior motivated usage (Khoury 1976: 115).

Contrary to this assertion, Khoury argues that the compatibility of Islam with modernity is based on a completely rational premise. In his view, “The emotional appeal that links pride in one’s culture with a sense of nationalism benefits from the rational case made for Islam without interfering with its logic” (Khoury 1976: 117).

On the other hand, some scholars are critical of Abduh’s nationalist programme as this has been known to contain the use of selective history as well as its distortion, and the fact that the nationalist programme, as well as other ideas that Abduh picked from modernity, did not fit well with traditional ideas, practices and beliefs despite his numerous attempts. In the words of Zaki Badawi,

Like all nationalist ideologies, Muslim nationalism as propagated by *Al 'Urwat* was justified in terms of history, selectively presented. *Al 'Urwat* also attempted to activate the lethargy of Muslim communities by arguing against its theoretical foundation and by minimising the obstacles and powers of the enemies (Badawi 1978: 44).

Thus to Badawi, Abduh’s view of Islam is imprecise because his ideas were more like a continuing programme of action, not as easily implemented as he thought. Though Abduh

sought to initiate the learning of the sciences, this was not to interfere with the religious absolutism prevalent at the time among the orthodox and conservative circles of Islam.

The tension between Islam and modernity was thus obscured and not resolved... The scientific dynamic attitude was not, through his system, projected on religion. On the contrary, the rigid and final attitude of religion was conferred upon science (Badawi 1978: 94).

Haj sheds further light on this claim, highlighting how the religious beliefs were to remain outside the purview of science and modern ideas which Abduh hoped to imbibe from the West. While he was impressed by the modern nation-state and power structures, in his understanding of the adaptation of these ideas and concepts, there was to be no interference in the role that religion had played in the Muslim society, and which it was to continue to play. Thus, while he aspired to adapt the modern political structure of the West and also realised the need for an appropriate political culture to sustain them, the basis of morality and legitimacy to these structures was still to be found in religion. According to Haj,

Abduh accepted the modern nation-state and its disciplinary and regulatory forms of power, yet he rejected outright the binary construct that consigned religion to a world of the past and perceived Islam as uniquely nonrational, tyrannical and anti-humanist (Haj 2002: 90).

Abduh's nationalist sentiments from *al-Urwa* were also expressed and expanded in his reply to Hanotaux (then Cabinet Minister of France), who wrote an article in the French newspaper *Le Journal* dealing with the nature and problems of France's relationship with its Muslim subjects. Hanotaux criticised Islam as backward, despotic and insistent on the inseparability of state and religion, and attributed this to the thought that though Islam and Christianity shared a common origin of Semitic and Hellenistic cultures, Islam represented more of the Semitic mentality based on its contempt for man and the glorification of the deity, while Christianity reflected Aryan humanism that raises man's dignity to that of God. Though Abduh agreed with Hanotaux on the inferior state of the Muslim community, he contested its attribution to Islam. He saw this as an attack on the nature of Islam, and by extension, on the nature of the Islamic community, and vociferously refuted this thought. He argued against the theory that the Trinity was superior to transcendentalism. Furthermore, he argued that contrary to popular belief,

transcendentalism was not similar to fatalism and predetermination, and he laid the blame for the appearance of the latter on the Muslim society, or rather on the Aryan converts to Islam. He also pointed out that monotheism was a Hebrew rather than a generally Semitic idea. He further suggested that Hanotaux's ranking of religion was faulty. To Abduh, the higher the civilization of a community, the greater the intellectual capacity of the individual, and the closer they become to the belief in a transcendent God. Abduh also asserted that the idea that Muslims were antagonistic to science and scientific forms of knowledge was not reflected in Islam or its history, as Muslims were known to have made significant contributions to civilization in this field. On the basis of this, he also challenged Hanotaux's assumption that the European civilization was based entirely on the contributions and achievements of the Aryan race, pointing out that Hanotaux's ancestors, the Greeks, also had to borrow from the great cultures that had existed before them. Thus, this binary and racialist idea of the Aryan West versus the Semitic East, often used by orientalist and colonial administrators, was completely baseless and unreasonable. Most of all, Abduh criticised Hanotaux for stating that state and religion in Islam were inseparable, and also challenged his assumption that the Muslim community should necessarily follow the European path of secularisation in order to better themselves (Badawi 1976: 52-54; Haj 2002: 91-93). Interestingly, in his rejoinder to Hanotaux, Abduh rejected pan-Islamism not on the basis of being invalid but impractical. He did not conceive Islam without the Caliphate, as is very clear from his thought (Badawi 1976: 45).

Convergence or separation of the state and religion was also the issue of disagreement between Abduh and Farah Antun, a Christian Arab intellectual who owned and edited the journal *al-Jami'a al-Uthmaniya*, who defended Europe's civilising mission including the secular rationality. He claimed that the fusion of state and religion in Islam made it incompatible with philosophy and scientific knowledge, leaving the Muslim community backward and stagnating. Abduh disputed Antun's remark that the idea of separation of temporal and religious powers had no equivalence in Islam. He argued that Islam did not seek political power, because neither had there ever been a Pope-like politically dominating figure in Islam, nor did Islam encourage coercion. As Haj has noted,

“Religious authority lies not in its political power but in its moral guidance” (Haj 2002: 96).

Abduh clarified that a Muslim ruler only represented worldly power, not rule by divine right; thus an Islamic Caliphate form of government should not be confused with a theocratic or divinely derived government. Moreover, like the religious authority limited to its role of moral guidance, temporal or political sovereign power should also refrain from controlling religion (Haj 2002: 95-96).

Abduh’s major ideas on nationalism, secularism, education and role of science in the Muslim community have been aptly surmised in his own words where he says,

There is no religion without a state and no state without authority and no authority without strength and no strength without wealth. The state does not possess trade or industry. Its wealth is the wealth of the people and the people’s wealth is not possible without the spread of these sciences amongst them so that they may know the ways of acquiring wealth (Badawi 1976: 65).

Thus, the notions of religion, nationhood and modernity shaped his ideas of nationalism. As his engaging with Western ideas as well as his reaction to colonialism were based in Islamic discursive traditions, his contribution to nationalism in turn, significantly, led to the imagination and conceptualisation of alternate identities as opposed to the colonial perceptions of the West.

A New Identity

While Afghani was one of the first scholars to put forth the idea of an alternate identity, i.e. a new identity of the self (the Muslims) different from the identity of the “other” given to them by Western colonial perceptions, Abduh gave form and shape to this new identity. Through his various suggested reforms at the personal, social and religious levels, he attempted to give shape to the new political identity that Afghani had aspired for the Muslims. His educational reforms were aimed at preparing Muslims to take up political and civil roles in society in order to shape the political system. His reforms for the *Sharia* courts and other aspects of administration were an effort to enhance the system

and make it more efficient. Most importantly, his religious reforms were a strong assertion of religious identity. He was willing to cede that there were problems with the practice of Islam in the nineteenth century but unlike other scholars and thinkers he did not think that a total rejection of Islam was imperative. Rather he wanted to do away with the malpractices, the superstitions and problems so that Islam could once again be followed in its 'pure' form and the Islamic identity could be reasserted. While scholars like Kerr and Hourani have referred to Abduh as an apologetic, in this case he was far from being that. He admitted that there were many problems caused due to popular and often incorrect notions of Islam but he also emphasised that these problems were curable. It was to prove this point that he constantly argued and tried to establish the compatibility of Islam with science and rationality. In the new identity envisaged by Abduh, people would not have to give up the Islamic aspect of the identity, rather they would be able to uphold it with greater pride and it would foster a greater sense of unity.

As Khoury has noted,

Confusion sets in when a certain generation becomes estranged from its religion through the passage of time and the intrusion of corruptors. It is at this stage that Abduh placed Muslims at the close of the 19th century. This stage, however, cannot last forever. Society is a dynamic mechanism with religion taking a central position in it similar to that of a magnet or an axis around which other parts of the system are ordered. Consequently, it is only natural that such a central part of any system will eventually reassert itself (Khoury 1976: 100).

In saying that Abduh gave shape and form to the new identity, envisaged by scholars like Afghani before him, it is important to emphasise the intellectual direction that Abduh succeeded in giving to this new identity. It was not simply an assertion of identity against the West, but also a process of looking inwards and examining internally within the identity of 'self'. This led to the questioning of the very foundations of Islamic society, and a consequent rediscovering of the self. It was as much introspection into the self and its past as well as a reaction to the colonial perceptions to which this society was being subjected in the present. The product of this inward looking process was modern selfhood interwoven with religion. Rather than separating religion completely from the new 'modern' identity, Abduh thought of a religio-political identity that fit in with the modern national identity. This was a way of basing the identity on a modern, rational believing

self, which was not at all antithetical to the idea of a modern nation that was emerging across the globe throughout the nineteenth century.

The simultaneous separation and inclusion of religion in this identity is visible because when he spoke of the *umma*, it was a reference to the Muslim ‘community’ at large, not specifically to one nation or one singular political entity. This has been a cause of debate for later scholars and ideologues like Sayyid Qutb, to whom both terms mean the same. But Abduh’s credentials as a modern scholar are reflected in his idea of the separation, and the coexistence of the two. This was a significant outcome of his reform programme. On the practical level, it was the reform of society, administration, law, education, etc. but on the ideological level it also led to the emergence of a new subjectivity which is essentially what any reform is about. This was similar to the caste, religious and cultural reforms that India was undergoing in the nineteenth century. These movements were an attempt to redefine the caste- based, religious or cultural identities, in some cases even to do away with them completely, but was in no way completely antithetical to the simultaneously emerging larger national identity. These social reform movements were basically the imagination of a new social being, which also transcended into a new political being- not bound by tradition, not completely rejecting it either, but a flux of the two. In a way these movements and leaders were also the precursors of nationalism. While Afghani and Abduh were both social reformers, they were also political beings, and their work of social and religious reform reflected on their modern political ideas, including the question of identity. Making traditional spaces open to modern appropriation is precisely what reformers do, and it is in no way limited to the social sphere. The same can be said for the work done by Afghani and Abduh.

*

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The works and contributions of Afghani and Abduh are located primarily in the Islamic discursive traditions. Though Afghani, and to a lesser extent Abduh, were politically active, their primary contribution was in the field of ideas. They dealt with questions of colonial challenge, stagnation of the Muslim society, and the question of identity. By working on and grounding their ideas in Islamic theological discourse, they were able to resist religious orthodoxy, and at the same time propound new ideas and interpretations. The major catalyst which provoked their reactions and shaped their Islamic and nationalist thought was the context of colonialism.

Colonialism brought with it exploitation, subjugation and oppression on one hand, and modern ideas and orientalist perceptions on the other. Afghani's and Abduh's works were primarily a reaction to the subjugation and colonial perceptions of the West, but were also influenced by their interactions with modernity. The subjugation was not just political and economic in nature, it was a subjugation of the Muslim identities on which the colonial perceptions of the 'other' had been imposed. Modernity had a certain Eurocentric and orientalist connotation attached to it, which both Afghani and Abduh staunchly opposed. Their reaction was to imagine new identities asserting selfhood, as opposed to the orientalist and colonialist perceptions, through the process of internalising the logic of modern ideas. This created indigenous ideas of modernity, enabling future Muslim and Arab scholars and nationalists to imagine new selfhood.

The other major factor which provoked Afghani and Abduh was the state of Muslim societies and the effects of the continuous orthodox and obsolete religious beliefs, notions and practices. Their effort was not just to fight the challenge of colonialism and imperialism alone, but also to cure the Muslim community of its then prevalent stagnation. In order to do so, the way to the indigenisation of modern ideas and identities

was charted by Afghani and Abduh through religion. This was significant because it led to the grounding of modern ideas and identities in the existing religious and cultural context, a stand which was different from both extreme religious orthodoxy and blind imitation of the West, which had been the prevailing norms till then. That is why they are lauded as Islamic modernists. Their efforts towards imbibing modernity and progress did not involve a complete break from religion, unlike the Western notion of modernity in which a break from tradition was inevitable. At the same time, these efforts of Afghani and Abduh highlight the points of intersection between religion and politics.

These reactions of Afghani and Abduh to Western colonialism, as well as the changing circumstances that the Muslim society had to cope with, make them the precursors to nationalism as it shaped in later decades. Their realisation of the sense of community and nationhood based on religion; the use of religion as the most effective solidarity-producing belief; and the imagination of new identities alternate to the colonial perceptions imposed on the Muslims mark their contribution to the nationalist debate in the Muslim and Arab world. The new awareness of the 'self' that they introduced was significant not just to the Muslims, but also to the non-Muslim Arabs, who would later become an integral part of Arab nationalism. The imagination of new identities in turn made the creation of 'modern' Muslim national identities possible. The Muslims could now envisage themselves as a modern community with national aspirations, not alienated from, but with a greater identification with their religious roots.

The question of identity had been a problematic one; there was a perceived incompatibility between the religious and national identities. This was caused by an implied contradiction between the idea of a religious community, that is the *umma*, and the modern idea of the nation and nationhood. The tensions between the concepts of the *umma* and the modern nation-state were not completely resolved owing to the ambiguity in the ideas of Afghani and Abduh. However, this conflict was highlighted and addressed, and the co-existence of the two concepts was made possible in modern Islam.

Furthermore, what the Muslim community needed at the time was not just a formula to fend off the colonial and imperial threat temporarily, but a foundation on which to build the sentiments of solidarity, community and nationhood. The strongest bonds of unity

have always been provided by a sense of a shared culture. In the Muslim community, this sense was derived from Islam more than any other factor. Owing to the stagnation that was prevalent in the Muslim community, in its social practices and religious orthodoxy, it was in serious danger of losing this factor of unity and one-ness. Validating the hypothesis set for this study, it has been proven that the reform and revival which Afghani and Abduh brought to Islam, gave the Muslims the vital cultural and religious foundations which could sustain nationalism in the future.

*

Bibliography

(* indicates primary source)

Abu-Rabi, Ibrahim M. (2006), *Contemporary Islamic Intellectual History: A Theoretical Perspective*, Muis Occasional Paper Series, Paper No. 2, Singapore: Islamic Religious Council of Singapore.

*Abduh, Muhammad (1966), *The Theology of Unity*, trans. by Ishaq Musa'ad and Kenneth Craig, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

* ----- (2002a), "The Necessity of Religious Reform", trans. by Kamran Talatoff, in Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talatoff (eds.), *Modernist and Fundamentalist Debates in Islam*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

* ----- (2002b), "The Sociological Laws of the Quran", trans. by Kamran Talatoff, in Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talatoff (eds.), *Modernist and Fundamentalist Debates in Islam*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

* ----- (2002c), "Laws Should Change in Accordance with the Conditions of Nations and The Theology of Unity", in Charles Kurzman (ed.), *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

* ----- (2007), "Islam, Reason and Civilization", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Abu-Rabi, Ibrahim M. (2005), "Contemporary Islamic Intellectual History: A Theoretical Perspective", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 4, pp. 503-526.

----- (ed.) (2006), *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Adams, Charles C. (1933), *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, London: Oxford University Press.

Aflaq, Michel (2007), "The Arab Personality between Past and Present", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ahmad, Aziz (1960), "Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muslim India", *Studia Islamica*, No. 13, pp. 55-78.

Ahmed, J.M. (1960), *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Ajami, Fouad (1987a), "The End of Pan-Arabism", in Tawfic E. Farah (ed.), *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, Boulder, Colorado and London: Westview Press.

----- (1987b), "The Arab Road", in Tawfic E. Farah (ed.), *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, Boulder, Colorado and London: Westview Press.

* Al-Afghani, Jamaluddin (1968a), "Lecture on Teaching and Learning", trans. by Nikki Keddie, in Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: The Political Works of Afghani*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

* ----- (1968b), "Answer to Renan", trans. by Nikki Keddie, in Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: The Political Works of Afghani*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

* ----- (1968c), "The Benefits of Philosophy", trans. by Nikki Keddie and Hamid Algar, in Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: The Political Works of Afghani*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

* ----- (1968d), "Refutation of the Materialists", trans. by Nikki Keddie and Hamid Algar, in Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: The Political Works of Afghani*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

* ----- (1968e), "Commentary on the Commentator", trans. by Nikki Keddie, in Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: The Political Works of Afghani*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

* ----- (1968f), "The Materialists in India", trans. by Nikki Keddie, in Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: The Political Works of Afghani*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

* ----- (2002), "Religion Versus Science", trans. by Nikki Keddie, in Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof (eds.), *Modernist and Fundamentalist Debates in Islam*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

* ----- (2007), "Islamic Solidarity", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

* Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din and Abdul-Hadi Ha'iri (1971), "Afghani on the Decline of Islam", *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 13, No. 1/2, pp. 121-125.

Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib (1993), *Islam and Secularism*, Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization.

Al-Banna, Hasan (2007), "The New Renaissance", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Al-Bazzaz, 'Abd al-Rahman (1965), *On Arab Nationalism*, London: Stephen Austin and Sons Ltd.

----- (2007), "Islam and Arab Nationalism", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Al-Husri, Sati (2007), "Muslim Unity and Arab Unity", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Al-Raziq, Ali Abd (2007), "The Caliphate and the Bases of Power", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Al-Tahtawi, Rifa'a Badawi Rafi (2007), "Fatherland and Patriotism", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ali, Sheikh Jamiel (2002), *Sayyid Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani and the West*, New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors.

Amin, Samir (1978), *The Arab Nation*, trans. by Michael Pallis, London: Zed Press.

Anderson, Benedict (2006), *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso Books.

Antonius, George (2001), *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, Safety Harbour: Simon Publications.

Arkoun, Mohd. (2009), *To Reform or To Subvert*, New Delhi: Viva Books.

Armajani, Yahya (1986), *Middle East: Past and Present*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Azmeh, Aziz Al (1987), *Heritage: Power and History*, Casablanca and Beirut.

----- (1993), *Islam and Modernities*, London: Verso Books.

----- (2007), *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic History*, Budapest and New York: Central European University Press.

Badawi, M.A. Zaki (1976), *The Reformers of Egypt*, London: Croom Helm.

Belkeziz, Abdelilah (2009), *The State in Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Historical Survey of the Major Muslim Political Thinkers of the Modern Era*, trans. by Abdullah Richard Lux, London: I.B. Tauris.

Bhaha, Homi K. (ed.) (1990a), *Nation and Narration*, London: Routledge.

----- (1990b), "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation", Homi K. Bhaha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, London: Routledge.

----- (1990c), "Introduction: Narrating a Nation", in Homi K. Bhaha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, London: Routledge.

Bhargava, Rajeev (ed.) (1998a), *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

----- (1998b), "What is Secularism for?", in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Brown, Leon Carl (1964), "The Islamic Reformist Movement in North Africa", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 55-63.

Brown, Malcolm D. (2008), "Islam and the Concept of the Secular", *Indian Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 43-60.

Bunzl, John (ed.) (2004), *Islam, Judaism and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East*, Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida.

Chalala, Elie (1987), "Arab Nationalism: A Bibliographical Essay", in Tawfic E. Farah (ed.), *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, Boulder, Colorado and London: Westview Press.

Choueiri, Youssef M. (2000), *Arab Nationalism: A History, Nation and State in the Arab World*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Cleveland, William L. (1971), *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati al-Husri*, Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Davison, Roderick H. (1988), "Jamal al-din Afghani: A Note on his Nationality and on His Burial", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 110-112.

Dawisha, Adeed (2003), *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Donohue, John J. and John L. Esposito (eds.) (2007), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- El-Ghazali, Abdel Hamid H. (2001), *The Way to the Revival of the Muslim Ummah: A Study of the Thinking of Imam al-Banna*, Cairo: Al-Falah Foundation for Translation.
- Engineer, Asghar Ali (2007), "Islam and Secularism", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Esposito, John L. (1984), *Islam and Politics*, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Euben, Roxanne L. (1997), "Premodern, Antimodern or Postmodern? Islamic and Western Critiques of Modernity", *Review of Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 3, pp. 429-459.
- Fakhry, Majid (2004), *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fanon, Frantz (1963), *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press.
- Farah, Tawfic E. (ed.) (1987), *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, Boulder, Colorado and London: Westview Press.
- Gellner, Ernest (1964), *Thought and Change*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- (1981), *Muslim Society*, London and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- (1983), *Nations and Nationalisms*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd.
- (1994), *Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Gesink, Indira Falk (2010), *Islamic Reform and Conservatism: Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam*, London: IB Tauris.
- Ghazal, Amal Nadin (1999), *Beyond Modernity: Islamic Conservatism in the Late Ottoman Period*, Ph. D. Thesis, Edmonton: University of Alberta.
- Gibb, H.A.R. (1947), *Modern Trends in Islam*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gole, Nilufer (2000), "Snapshots of Islamic Modernities", Accessed 9 Oct. 2011, URL: <http://www.social-sciences-and-humanities.com/pdf/snapshots-of-islamic-modernity.pdf>
- Gregorian, Vartan (2003), *Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith*, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Haddad, Mahmoud (1997), "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashid Rida's Ideas on the Caliphate", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 117, No. 2, pp. 253-277.

Haim, Sylvia (ed.) (1962), *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Haj, Samira (2009), *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality and Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Hanafi, Hassan (2009), "Reformist and Moderate Voices of Islam in the Arab East", in Shireen T. Hunter (ed.), *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity*, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Hashemi, Nader (2009), *Islam, Secularism and Liberal Democracy*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Haynes, Jeff (ed.) (2009), *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, London: Routledge.

Hobsbawm, Eric (1962), *Age of Revolution: 1789-1848*, New York: Hatchette.

----- (1975), *Age of Capital: 1848-1875*, New York: Hatchette.

Hourani, Alber H. (1981), *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

----- (1983), *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

----- (1989), "Islam in European Thought", Lecture delivered on 30 Jan. 1989, London: Clare Hall, Cambridge University.

----- (1991), *A History of the Arab Peoples*, London: Faber and Faber.

Hunter, Shireen T. (ed.) (2009), *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity*, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Husayn, Taha (2007), "The Future of Culture in Egypt", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ibrahim, Saad Eddin (1987), "The Concerns and the Challenges", in Tawfic E. Farah (ed.), *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, Boulder, Colorado and London: Westview Press.

Iqbal, Muzaffar (2007), *Science and Islam*, London: Greenwood Press.

Keddie, Nikki R. (1965), "Afghani in Afghanistan", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 322-349.

----- (1966a), "Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani's First Twenty Seven Years: The Darkest Period", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 517-533.

----- (1966b), "The Pan Islamic Appeal: Afghani and Abdulhamid II", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 46-67.

----- (1968), "Islamic Philosophy and Islamic Modernism: The Case of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani", *Iran*, Vol. 6, pp. 53-56.

----- (1972), *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

----- (1976), "Cultural Traits, Fantasy and Reality in the Life of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2/3, pp. 89-120.

----- (1983), *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: The Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani"*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

----- (1994), "Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani", in Ali Rahnama (ed.), *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, London: Zed Books.

----- (2003), "Secularism and Its Discontents", *Daedalus*, Vol. 132, No. 3, pp. 14-30.

Kedourie, Elie (1961), *Nationalism*, London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd.

----- (1965), "Further Light on Afghani", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 187-202.

----- (ed.) (1970), *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, New York and Cleveland: The World Publishing Company.

----- (1972), "Afghani in Paris: A Note", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 103-105.

----- (1997), *Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, London: Frank Cass.

Kedourie, Elie and Sylvia G. Haim (eds.) (1980), *Modern Egypt, Studies in Politics and Society*, England: Frank Cass.

Kenny, L.M. (1966), "Afghani on Types of Despotic Government", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 86, No. 1, pp 19-27.

Kerr, Malcolm H. (1966), *Islamic Reform: The Politics and Legal Theories of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida*, California: University of California Press

Khan, Sayyid Ahmad (2007), "Islam: The Religion of Reason and Nature", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Khoury, Nabil Abdo (1976), *Islamic Modernization in the Middle East: Muhammad Abduh, An Ideology of Development*, Albany: State University of New York.

Kudsi-Zadeh, A. Albert (1965), "Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: A Select List of Articles", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 66-72.

----- (1972), "Afghani and Freemasonry in Egypt", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 92, No. 1, pp. 25-35.

----- (1973), "Afghani on Afghanistan", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 367-368.

Kurzman, Charles (ed.) (2002), *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lahoud, Nelly (2005), *Political Thought in Islam: A Study in Intellectual Boundaries*, London: Routledge Curzon.

Laroui, Abdallah (1976), *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism*, trans. by Diarmid Cammell, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Lewis, Bernard (2010), *Faith and Power: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Marlowe, John (1961), *Arab Nationalism and British Imperialism: A Study in Power Politics*, London: The Cresset Press.

Martin, Richard C. et al. (1997), *Defenders of Reason in Islam, Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbolism*, Oxford: One World Publications.

Martinich, A.P. (1992), *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Masud, Muhammad Khalid et al. (eds.) (2009), *Islam and Modernity*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

- Mawdudi, Abu-l-'Ala (2007), "Nationalism and Islam", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Matthee, Rudi (1989), "Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Egyptian National Debate", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 151-169.
- Mehrez, Samia (2008), *Egypt's Cultural Wars, Politics and Practice*, London: Routledge.
- Moaddel, Mansoor and Kamran Talattof (eds.) (2002), *Modernist and Fundamentalist Debates in Islam*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moazzam, Anwar (1984), *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: A Muslim Intellectual*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Montada, Joseph Puig (2005), "Al-Afghani, A Case of Religious Unbelief", *Studia Islamica*, No. 100/101, pp. 203-220.
- Murphy, Caryle (2002), *Passion for Islam: Shaping the Modern Middle East, The Egyptian Experience*, New York: Scribner.
- Nafaa, Hassan (1987), "Arab Nationalism: A Response to Ajami's Thesis on the "End of Pan-Arabism"", in Tawfic E. Farah (ed.), *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, Boulder, Colorado and London: Westview Press.
- Peters, Rudolph (1989), "Idjtihad and Taqlid in 18th and 19th century Islam", *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 132-145.
- Qutb, Sayyid (2007), "Social Justice in Islam", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rahman, Fazlur (1982), *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rahnema, Ali (ed.) (1994), *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, London: Zed Books.
- Rejwan, Nissim (1998), *Arabs Face the Modern World: Religious, Cultural and Political Responses to the West*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Renan, Ernest (1990), "What is a Nation?", in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, London: Routledge.
- *Rida, Rashid (2007), "Patriotism, Nationalism, and Group Spirit in Islam", in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Roy, Olivier (1999), *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. by Carol Volk, London: IB Tauris.
- Said, Edward (1993), *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Chatto and Windus.
- (1995), *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, New Delhi: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Saikal, Amin and Albrecht Schnabel (2003), *Democratization in the Middle East: Experiences, Struggles, Challenges*, New York: United Nations University Press.
- Salem, Ahmed Ali (2004), "Challenging Authoritarianism, Colonialism, and Disunity: The Islamic Political Reform Movements of al-Afghani and Rida", *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 25-54.
- Selim, H.K. (1959), "Al-Urwa Al-Wuthqa, A Review", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 204-205.
- Sheehi, Stephen (2004), *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida.
- Smith, Anthony D. (1983), *Theories of Nationalism*, London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd.
- (1991), *National Identity*, London: Penguin Books.
- (1998), *Nationalism and Modernism*, London: Routledge.
- (2001), *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, London: Polity Press.
- Suleiman, Yasir (2003), *The Arabic Language and National Identity*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Tauber, Eliezer (1993), *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, London: Frank Cass.
- Taylor, Charles (1998), "Modes of Secularism", in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Tibi, Bassam (1981), *Arab Nationalism: A Critical Inquiry*, London: The Macmillan Press.
- (2001), *Islam between Culture and Politics*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vatikiotis, P.J. (1957), "Muhammad Abduh and the Quest for a Muslim Humanism", *Arabica*, pp. 55-72.

Wahyudi, Yudian (2006), "Hassan Hanafi on Salafism and Secularism", in Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Weber, Max (1948), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, London: Routledge.

Wood, Simon A. (2007), *Christian Criticisms, Islamic Proofs: Rashid Rida's Modernist Defense of Islam*, Oxford: One World Publications.

Zubaida, Sami (2003), *Law and Power in the Islamic World*, London: IB Tauris.

----- (2005), "Islam and Secularization", *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 438-448.

----- (2010), *Islam: The People and The State*, London: IB Tauris.
