CHAPTER III

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The Islamic world faced a major challenge during the nineteenth century. Unlike the past,¹ the challenge came from an external world; i.e. the Christian European states whose industrial capitalist economy, search for raw-materials and markets, and their economic-political rivalry with each other led to the establishment of world-wide colonial empires. The Muslim states, (Ottoman, Safavid-Qajjar in Iran, Moghul in Indian sub-continent) too, could not escape the 'negative' impact of the so-called "civilizing mission" of the European powers. The technological and military power of the Christian West soon exposed the vulnerability of the Muslim states. Although the Muslim states (particularly Ottoman) suffered military defeats at the hands of Europeans throughout the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, the threat to Islam in terms of 'identity' and cultural loss was not experienced until the late nineteenth century. By the end of nineteenth century many Muslim territories came under direct European control, and much of the rest of the Muslim world was dominated by the West. The map of Muslim World after World War I revealed the extent of foreign dominance: the French in North, West and equatorial Africa and in the Leavant (Lebanon and Syria), the

¹ In past the threat or challenge to Islam was considered as "internal," and the remedy was sought in terms of religio-moral reconstruction of the society. On this, see the theme of the earlier reviver movements such as the Wahhabi (1703-92) in Arabia, and shah Wali Yullah (1703-1762) in Indian subcontinent.
British in Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq, the Arabian Gulf, the Indian sub-continent and in Southeast Asia the Russians in Central Asia and the Dutch in Indonesia. Where Muslim retained power, in Turkey and Iran, they were constantly on the defensive against the political and economic ambitions of British, French and Russians, whose inroads and machinations threatened their independence and stability.

Indeed the Christian Europe posed a singular most challenge, unparalleled in the history of Islam, to Islam - politically, economically morally and culturally. European colonialism and imperialism threatened Muslim political and religio - cultural identity and history. In short the European penetration of Islamic societies, changed both the historical context and intellectual perspective of Muslims. Expressing the inability of Muslim to grasp the contradiction of 'domination - subjugation' relationship between European and Muslim States, W.C. Smith remarked, - "The fundamental spiritual crisis of Islam in the twentieth century stems from an awareness that something is awry between the religion which God has appointed and the historical development of the world which He controls."2

The European penetration of Islamic societies profoundly affected the structure and values of Muslim societies. The secret of European progress and domination was discovered in

terms of elements of rationality, science and technology, separation of religion from state, patriotism, nationalism, democracy and constitutionalism. With these considerations the Muslim rulers in the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and Iran initiated the military and administrative centered reform based on European model, ostensibly in order to enhance their own state power and to counter the threat of European expansionism. Accordingly, European teachers and schools were imported. Educational missions were sent to Europe, where Muslim students studied foreign languages, science and politics. Translation bureaus and printing presses were established to translate and publish Western works. Later on, under the pressure of colonial powers the scope of reform was extended to encompass political, legal, financial and educational institutions. Coupled with the change in the economic structure of society these Western-inspired reform led to the creation of new elites - Westernized in outlook but conscious of their Islamic identity. The elites comprised of political managers, soldiers, technocrats, comprador merchants, intelligentsia, intellectuals, commercial farmers, lawyers and industrial workers - which became important political forces in Muslim societies. In fact this class became the carrier of imported European ideology - Nationalism, Democracy, Constitutionalism and Socialism - albeit couched in the Islamic terminology. In other words, this class provided the social basis for the emergence of the ideology of Islamic modernism, a term coined
Under the impact of internal reforms and European expansionism the Muslim territorial states experienced far-reaching changes. In terms of political structure and values the Ottoman ruler shifted in the direction of national political entities advocating notions and norms of citizenship and patriotic allegiances. This trend was given the shape of official policy during 1850's and 60's in the form of ideology of Ottomanism. Hisham Sharbhi, commenting on the nature of Ottomanism said, ... it embraced within its political framework all the different nationalities, religious and ethnic elements in the empire and provided them with a basis for a workable political and social system. As the embodiment of a concrete political reality, Ottomanism had special significance for the upper social strata of all the various groups (millet). It was in the interest of these stratas to protect and maintain the established system ..... For many Muslims and Christians, Ottomanism appeared as autonomous and decentralized. One could be Arab and Christian but identity was defined in terms of Ottomanism. In fact, Ottomanism was an attempt to blend Islamic characteristic of the empire with the ideas of Western liberalism. As Kemal H Karpath noted, "Young ottoman thus


4. Hisham Sharabi, Arab Intellectuals And the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914. (Baltimore, Maryland, 1970) p. 108
became an Ottoman nationalism rooted psychologically in Islam.\textsuperscript{5} The liberalism of young Ottoman finally led to the promulgation of constitution (1876) which remained suspended during the autocratic Hamidian rule (1876 - 1908).

The change in the political structure and values was accompanied by the integration of large sections of Muslim social and economic structures into a hierarchy of Western dominated international production and exchange. European economic and capitalist penetration usually led to increased and often exploitative trade and stimulated production of raw materials and decline of local industries. In short, like any colonial nation, the Middle Eastern economy was reduced to the level of producers of raw materials and importer of manufactured goods, in accordance with the needs of industrial capitalism in the West. However, it did not necessarily evoke an economic response, but rather a broadly conceived response that blended the conjoined economic, political and cultural interest of the Muslim elites. Partly, the reason lies in the fact that like other Third World nations, the economy in most of Muslim societies was embedded in and regulated by tribal, communal, associational and state political structures and, secondly, imperialism did not induce structural changes in the economy or far reaching changes in terms of class - structure\textsuperscript{6} and partly in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Kemal, H. Karpath, Social and Political Thought in Middle East Rev. Ed., p-xxv.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Samir Amin, The Arab Nation And Class Struggle, (London, 1978), ch. 2.
\end{itemize}
retaining the 'sense' of Islamic history. Thus Ira.M. Lapidus has observed "whatever the economic forces which impinged from without, in Muslim countries these elites had primarily a political or cultural orientation and tended to define the problem of European intervention in socio-cultural rather than economic terms."  

The two dominant Islamic response to the internal decay of Islam and the dominance of European states and its ideological mascot of domocratic liberalism and socialism came from Jameleedin Afghani's Pan-Islamic-rejectionist / absolutist and Muhammad Abduh's synthesist/assimilationinst-nationalist model, during the second half of the nineteenth century. The latter model is also called Islamic modernism, Islamic liberalism and Islamic reformism. Although a great many western as well as oriental scholars have placed both Afghani and Abduh in the same model of Islamic modernism/reformism, a closer analysis reveals significant difference between the two. They differ significantly ranging from the political role and position of Islam in Muslim societies to the broader question of attitudes towards Western civilization. Though both laid great emphasis on the right to 'ijtihad' (i.e. the right to interpret the Islamic doctrine in the changing context) to meet the new challenges and problems, there were different interpretations. Afghani

sought the remedy to the moral degeneration and political decline of Islamic community in the political unity of divided (sectarian) Islamic community under the single banner of Islam and rejected completely the Western political values, ideas, politico - administrative set up and rationalism by declaring the Holy Quran and the interpretation of Four Rightly Guided Caliph as the only authentic source of all sorts of political ideas and rationalism. Though his influence on Urabi movement in Egypt, (1881-82) the constitutional movement of Ottoman Turkey (1876) and Iran (1906) can not be denied, but his image as the propagator of a constitutional regime or the ideology of the constitutionalism is disputable. Niyazi Berkes classifies him as anti-contitutionalist, and notes that in the Turkish version of the Refutation of the Materialists, Afghani called the Turkish constitutionalist, like Midhat and Suleyman, traitors who deserved their punishment. He even declared that the people of the East cannot function with a constitutional government and favoured a benevolent and enlightened ruler against the representative form of government.

Keddie also noted that while in Egypt, 1871-79, Afghani at one time advocated a parliamentary rule, but "there is no evidence that Afghani ... gave any particular attention to


working out constitutional plans." In fact, Afghani was more concerned with the "political" assertion of Islam and led ceaseless agitation against the corrupt and despotic Muslim rulers, polemics against the conservative theologians and aroused the political consciousness of Muslim masses against the corruption and inefficiency of decaying traditional Islamic institutions and the external danger of European colonization. In the process, he came to espouse the cause of "popular Islam" as against the "official Islam" (a common theme in the contemporary Islamic revivalist movement). He declared that "Islam was the one true, complete and perfect religion, which could satisfy all the desires of human spirit" and found justification for political revolution in the saying of Quran "verily God will not change the state of a people until they change their own state". Thus, he said, "the traditional and orthodox view is that the Muslims are Muslim because they believe in the revelation of God to Muhammad, and because they order their lives according to divine law. They are not Muslims because Islam constitutes a powerful political force which enables men to band together in a strong state and successfully withstand their enemies. Afghani, it can be said,

transformed Islam into an ideology which the shrewd statesman can utilize to effect his hands. 14

It is because of his radicalism, his Islamic justification for the overthrow of corrupt, monarchial Muslim rulers, his rejectionism of Western political, economic and social order and his image of indefatigable fighter against western imperialism that since the late 1960's, Afghani, the sage of East, has been the object of particular attention and controversy in both the West and the Islamic world, particularly in Egypt. 15 As a political trend, Afghani's pan Islamic/rejectionist model could be extended to such thinkers and religio-politico activists as Maulana Maudidi in Indian subcontinent, Hasan-al-Banna and Sayyid Qutub in Egypt and Imam Khomeini in Iran.

Like Afghani, Muhammad Abduh was also concerned with the defence of Muslim people against Europeans but for Abduh, the central problem was not political but religious - how the Muslim, when they were adopting Western ways and Western values, could maintain the vitality of Islam in the modern world? While upholding the authenticity of the Quran and the teachings of the Four Salaf, Abduh sought the solution in infusion of Western scientific and political culture into the Islamic tradition and values. Accordingly he set about to

14. ibid, p.9

reformulate Islam, distinguishing the essential from the non-essential, preserve the fundamentals and discard the accidental aspects of the historic legacy. His Islamic modernism places great emphasis on Western-oriented modification in the Islamic legal and educational system and through it, sought to bring about change in the social and cultural framework. The counterpart of Abduh’s Islamic modernism could be found in such persons and movements as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98) and the Aligarh movement in India, the Tunisian statesman and scholar Khay-al-Din, Sangulaji (1890-1943) and Mirza Muhammad Husayan Naini in Iran, Namik Kemal (1840-1888) Abdullahak Hamid (1851-1937), and Tevfik Fikret (1870-1915) in Turkey and so on.

Abduh’s model of Islamic modernism exerted great influence in many parts of the Muslim World. Salaffiya, developed and more systematically articulated by Rashid Rida, was to become a basis for anticolonialist and anti-imperialist movement. The liberal ethos of the Salaffiya movement was the product of the impact of the nineteenth century European liberalism on the Islamic ethos of the Middle Eastern-societies. In fact, it was this model, and not the secular-nationalists as contended by many scholars, which dominated the political leadership in Egypt and other parts of Muslim world during independence, anticolonial and anti-imperialist movements. It is notable that secularism

essentially emanates from the basic liberal ethos of the society. Therefore, the degree of secularism varies from country to country depending upon the degree to which the social ethos of that country has been liberalized. The legal separation of Church and state in the industrialized West is the product of throughgoing liberalization of the Christian Society. However, Muslim Society has hardly undergone the process of liberalization. Hence, secularism in the Western sense of separation of Church from states has never had a substantial hold on the people's psyche of Muslim society except a microscopic section of liberal and leftist intellectuals. In fact, persons like Ahmad Lutfi al Sayyid (1872-1964), Taha-Hussein (b-1889), Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1889-1956), Ibrahim al Mazni (1889-1949), and Saad Zaglalu were greatly influenced by Abduh's polemics of Islamic modernism and by no means were secularist, but rather they were looking a more liberalized version of Islamic modernism. Hisham Sharabi noted that the Muslim secularist "while upholding Western political values and modern ideas; affirmed his separate Muslim identity".17 It is equally notable that the political behaviour of the Wafd, - a liberal - secular - nationalist party by Western accounts, were not guided by the secular considerations as shown by their speeches, debates, and discussion in Egyptian parliament over the issue of Sharia and the abolition of Caliphate by Kemal Ataturk.18

17. Hisham Sharabi, n. 3.

Moreover, the scholars who previously hailed the advent of Western liberal values and parliamentary democracy in Egypt in 1920's not only became critical of those values but produced voluminous literature on "Islam" in the wake of rise of Ikhwan in 30's and 40's -- a period wrongly described by Safran as "The Reactionary Phase." Hence one scholar has rightly remarked, that "the cultural revival movement in the second half of the nineteenth century known as 'Nahada' and the various nationalist parties that became active after the First World War were not anti-religious, but they were looking toward a much more secularized type of society and culture than Salafiyya. In the wake of abolition of Caliphate (1924) by the Kemalist state and fearful of the negative impact of Western liberalism and constitutionalism on the Islamic culture and tradition Salafiyya, in the hands of Rashid Rida (towards the end of his life), was subjected to more orthodox interpretation of the sayings of the Four Salaf and led him to support of the Wahhabi Kingdom of Ibn Saud as the only 'Islamic state' in the whole of Muslim world. It was against this background that Rida constructed a systematic theory of Islamic state.

Abduh's synthesis / Islamic modernist model was

19. ibid, pp. 209-228.
increasingly came to be identified with the Western notion of nationalism, liberalism, constitutionalism, and later on, socialism but ideological justification was found in the Islamic doctrine. In fact the whole ideological expression of this model vis-a-vis the Western model of liberal democracy and socialism was marked by "apologitical" character - a tendency to demonstrate that Islam possess all those "best elements" which have made the European states so progressive and dominant. Thus, both Afghani and Abduh took great pain in demonstrating that "Islam is compatible with the principle of rationalism and science." Thus, in terms of political principle; the practice of 'Shura', enjoined by the Quran on believers as a worthy activity, and which meant mutual consultation, with no clear institutional or procedural machinery, was rediscovered and turned into parliamentary democracy. 'Ijma' a concept used by jurists to denote the consensus of their colleagues or that of the companions of the Prophet, was held to be synonymous with public opinion. Maslaha, indicating the necessity of arriving at new interpretations of the Sharia in the absence of a conclusive text or precedent, as long as the well being of believers was kept in sight, developed into the liberal notion of utility. Bay'a, the act of allegiance performed by the members of the community to a new Caliph, became equivalent in meaning to the right and process of universal suffrage, while ahl al - hall waal - agd, a loose appellation alluding to prominent individuals in society, were transformed into a full fledged body of elected
representatives. Finally, *ijtihad*, a jurisprudential device used to elucidate obscure injunctions or solve new problems within the strict requirements of the *Sharia*, was recast to stand for freedom of thought. 22

Being closely connected with the governmental institutions, Islamic modernism emerged as the principal ideological instrument in the hands of state - regimes - whether liberal democratic, Nasserism or Arab socialism - to legitimize their policies. Islam was not the central principle but rather it emerged as 'a' component in the state's ideology. 23

Apart from democracy, nationalism and socialism were two other European notions that confronted the Muslim thought structure in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century. Though the responses to these ideological issues also stemmed from the concern to defend Islam, they differed greatly in 'tone, spirit and content' depending upon the ideological position of the concerned social group. Thus, Afghani's model of Islamic rejectionism / reaffirmism sought for 'pan-Islamic unity' against localized nationalism. He declared that "true Islamic solidarity was far more effective than national solidarity .... In the case of the Muslim, a revealed religion came to create a higher solidarity transcending different national solidarities which the

Muslims have abandoned. He even sought change in the then existing political regimes, by any means - violent or non-violent, as a prelude to achieving the wider goal of Muslim unity. It was in this background that his views on common language as a basis of national unity or his saying that "men may easily change their religion, but not so easily their language" and his involvement in the Urabi movement in Egypt (1881-82), constitutional movement in Turkey (1876) and Iran (1905) were - (mis)interpreted as espousing the cause of nationalism and constitutionalism. In fact, it seems, that he never entertained the idea of a 'Muslim nation-state', his prime concern was the 'unity of Muslim Umma' - a bulwark to counter the external threat of European Imperialism. A more severe, articulated and systematic denunciation of European secular nationalism and urge for 'Pan-Islamic unity' can be seen in the writings of Maulana Maududi, Sayyid Qutub and Imam Khomeini. The clearest expression of this trend can be seen in Khomeini's statement, "Muslim should unite around the sovereignty of Islam and the Quran and in monolithic opposition to 'the front of blasphemy', they should also form a political union that obliterates prior national division and serves as the prototype of the world state.

25. ibid, p. 14.
Abduh's model of Islamic modernism / synthesism, having its social base in the emerging 'petty bourgeois middle class' - which was to occupy the centre stage of political arena during and after independence; - tried to accommodate the Islamic doctrine with the emerging reality of nation-state in the Middle East and elsewhere. Thus the term 'Umma' (i.e. traditionally the body of all Muslims) was to be identified with Arabs in the context of emerging Arab nationalism against the background of Pan-Turkism. As Rashid Rida asserted, "the greatest glory in the Muslim conquests goes to the Arabs, and that religion grew and became great through them; their foundation is the brightest and they are indeed the best umma." At one point he even commented, "the Umma consisted only of Arab Muslims." Later on a great deal of literature was produced on the compatibility of Islam and Arab nationalism. With the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the imposition of the Mandate system in the Fertile Crescent; Pan Arabism became the principal ideological tool in the hands of political elites in each of the mandatory states to wage anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle. In this context, Islam by fostering the growth of local nationalism became only an 'element' in the over-all identity of emerging nation-state.

Egypt has been an exception to this trend. It derives its nationalism from its historic existence as a nation. In

29. Ibid.
fact the homogeneity and isolation of the country, its long history of central government, and its distinctive cultural past encourged a consciousness of Egyptian identity. In Egypt, more than in any other Middle Eastern country, the modern national state is based on the Egyptian people and an Egyptian state. Colonialism did not create an Egyptian nation, but it only politicized the identity of Egyptian nation. It is notable that till late 30's Egypt did not identify itself with the ideology of Pan-Arabism.

Like nationalism, the virtues of socialism were discovered in the Qur'anic notion of sharing wealth, the institution of Zakat, ("an annual levy collected by the state for distribution to the poor"), and the prohibition of riba ("interest taking). The Islamic modernists / synthesists came out with their own version of socialism - called Islamic socialism. Its most coherent and systematic ideological expression can be seen in the work of Dr. Mustafa al Sibai's. The Socialism of Islam, (Caiso, 1960) which is considered to be a major statement of ideology for Egyptian socialism. In fact, for all practical purposes, Islamic socialism was the principal ideological instrument to justify the policies of the so-called socialist regimes - Nassirism in (Egypt), Bathism (Syria and Iraq), Bourguibism (Tunisia) and others in Islamic terminology. An Egyptian academician put the situation of Islamic socialism in these terms: "while the crypto-secularists (in the government and the intelligentsia)

30. Lapidus, n. 8, p. 622.
strive to vindicate socialism through Islam, the shaykhs are trying to prove Islam through socialism."

It seems that socialism did not receive much attention in Agfhaní's thought, perhaps due to his preoccupation with liberating 'Muslim lands' from the European colonial power. Therefore, it is difficult to formulate his precise response to socialism. Though on one occasion he did criticize Western socialism as essentially negative, the reaction to gross inequality and unjust laws, whereas Islamic socialism grew out of the positive provisions for equality designed by "God the Great Legislator." On another occasion he said - "Any socialism which is at variance with Islamic socialism in spirit and in fundamentals must end up in bloodshed .... Glib talk of socialism may be a catchword which will benefit some, but it is a good word misused. To repeat, Islamic socialism is truth itself". Though Afghani used the term Islamic socialism but unlike the synthesist model of Islam his response was not marked by any apologetic consideration. In the twentieth century it was sayyid Qutub, the ideologue of banned Muslim brotherhood in the sixties who provided reasoned and most systematic critique of socialism whether European or Islamic. In fact, he did not approve of such terms as Islamic socialism or Islamic democracy which as he

31. Quoted in Enayat, n. 21, p. 142.
33. ibid, p. 32.
said could only result from the confusion of a divine order with man made systems.34

Thus, the two models, - Afghani's Islamic rejectionism and Abduh's Islamic synthesism - which aroused in the wake of external threat of Europe and perceived internal decay of Islam, - represent two dominant trends in Islamic thought. The existence of these two trends can be found in every major political development of Muslim society- whether it was the constitutional movement in Iran (1905)35 or the debates with regard to the nature of Islamic polity in Pakistan36 or the controversy surrounding the reform of Al Azhar in Egypt during inter-war period37 or the demand of the current revivalist movements to make Sharia as "the" source to legislation.

Though the prominence or recession of 'Islamic factor' in any society depends on many other factors, (which will be discussed later on) peculiar to each individual state, yet these models provide a better framework in unfolding the inner - dynamics and conflicts in the Muslim societies.

Literature highlighting the role of religion in anti-colonial independence movement are many and diverse. More

34. Enayat, n. 21, p. 151.
35. Hairi, n.10, p. 238.
36. Leonard Binder, - Religion and Polities.
recently Dawa Norbu\textsuperscript{38} has conclusively shown the potential role of religion in shaping the emerging nationalism in most of the Third World countries. It is worth quoting him, "Religious symbols are not only potent but by their very symbolic nature possess universal appeal to the people belonging to that value system. When they are manipulated with sensitivity and skill, as done by many nationalist leaders, symbols at once arouse such public passions and emotions that no amount of economic interest appeal can motivate. It is in this affective way that the manipulation of religious symbols for political ends has become the most effective instrument of social communication and mass mobilization in all the tradition bound societies in the Third World".\textsuperscript{39}

Islam has been no exception to this trend. Coupled with its strong identification with Arabs, Islam was bound to play an important role in the development of anti-colonial-independence and modern nationalism in the Middle East. It proved a factor to varying degrees in the development of local and regional nationalism - Arab, Egyptian, Algerian, Tunisian, Iranian and so on. The appeal to Islam varied regionally and from country to country, conditioned by local context. In some areas Islam was a prominent ingredient in nationalism, while in others it was subordinated to semi

\textsuperscript{38} See, \textit{Culture And Politics of third world Nationalism}, (Routedge London & New York, 1922)

\textsuperscript{39} ibid, p-134
secular nationalism. These variation in the role of Islam owes to variation in the socio-cultural, economic and political structure of individual Muslim state and partially is determined by the intensity and scope of the Western inspired reform. Thus, whereas in Iran, the virtual indentification of Shiism with nationalism, its autonomy and financial stability, the primacy of doctrine of illegitimacy of temporal ruler, and its close association with the merchant class allows ulama to play the leading role in the tobacco movement (1890-1892), the constitutionalist movement (1905) or in opposing the British economic penetration and the Russian expansion. In Egypt, due to the historical subordination of ulama to strong centralized state, at least since the time of Mehmet Ali, its liberal ethos and its "historicity" of Egyptian nation, Islam was less prominent in its nationalist movements until the rise of Ikhwan in 30’s. In the Certile Crescent, the nationalist movements owe its existence to the call of restoring the glory of Arabism. Further, in Egypt, the ulama belonged to the lower classes, mostly coming from the villages and the poorer strata of urban society. In the fertile crescent, however, a substantial number belonged to higher economic strata and many came from well known and established families. In fact, difference in the socio-economic position of ulama also accounts for the variation of role of Islam in different societies.

40. Sarabi, Arab Intellectuals And the West, p-11.
and independence movement is centrally linked with the evolution of idea of Arab nationalism. As Smith pointed out "the synthesis is close: an identification, at times unconscious, of Islam and Arabism." Arab nationalism, dubbed as negative for its lack of coherent social and political programme, had its origin in the modernist concern to restore the glory of Islam i.e. Arab Islam, which had fallen into the hands of Turks. This led to the revival of classical Arab literature as well as of the Salaffiya movement in the hand of Abduh and Rashid Rida which provided the social, emotional and religious basis for the development of Arab nationalism. Abduh considered the intensive revival of the classical Arabic literary and religious studies as the basis of the necessary religious revival. He said that "Qur'an is close to its student when he knows the Arab language." Similarly Rashid Rida stated that "..... The book of the omnipotent and the Sunna of his Prophet .... Both are in Arabic no one can understand Islam if he does not understand them both correctly, and no one can understand

41. Smith, Islam in Modern History, p-94. The role of Islam in the Arab World during anti-colonial

42. ibid, p-74, also Khaduri, Political Trends in the Arab World, p-12


44. Dawn, n.43, p.383.
them correctly if he does not understand their noble language". \(^{45}\) However, it was Abdul al Rahman al Kawakibi (1849-1903) who added a political content to the theory of Arab nationalism. He made much of the pre-eminence of the Arabs in Islam and concluded that the Arabs were the sole medium for religious unification, and went beyond his predecessors in singling out the Arabs of Arabia as the best of the Arabs because they were the closest to the original Muslims. \(^{46}\) With this consideration of Arabs as more "holier" than other, he even proposed the establishment of an "Arab Caliphate" in Mecca, not as a successor to the historical caliphate but as a means of facilitating the reform of Islam and as a symbol of Islamic unity. Perhaps he was echoing the spirit of Wahhabism, whose founder, Ibn Abd al Wahhab (1703-91), also denounced the Ottoman (Turk) rule for the degeneration and corruption of Islam and concluded that Arabs alone were the true bearers of the tradition of Islam. \(^{48}\) In this sense one may trace the origin of Arab social consciousness with the overtones of Arab nationalism directed against Ottoman rule in the origin of Wahhabism.

Though the Turkification campaign of Young Turks in the beginning of the twentieth century did politicize Arab social consciousness, it (Arab) remained an autonomous

\(^{45}\) ibid, P.384, also, haim, p.23.
\(^{46}\) ibid, p.386.
\(^{47}\) ibid, p.386, Haim,n.13,pp. 26-27.
movement especially in matters of education, language, policy and the selection of local official, within the overall Islamic framework of the Ottoman Empire till the end of the First World War. Even the so called Arab revolt of 1916, the first political expression of Arab nationalism, was proclaimed in the name of preserving Islam, not in the name Arabism or the Arab nation.\(^49\) The Christian Arabs advocacy of 'separate Arab Homeland' based on the shared culture, tradition and language failed to attract the Mualim Arabs and were even accused of "Christianizing" the Arabic.\(^50\)

It was in the wake of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the imposition of mandatory system on Fertile Crescent (British in Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine and French in Syria and Lebanon, after the end of First World War that the idea of Arab nationalism was transformed into a coherent political ideology of Pan Arabism. Its emergence was linked with the maintenance of political 'fortune' or privilege status of Arab Ottomans, which was lost in the disintegration of Ottoman Empire.\(^51\) A few saw in Pan-Arabism


\(^50\) Dawn, n.43, p.381

an ideological response to the threat of Zionism. Whatever, be its origin, Pan-Arabism during the inter-war period became in practice a doctrine of legitimation for conservative national elites and a doctrine of the struggle of each of these states for freedom from their French or British colonial overloads. The primacy of Arabism over Islam can be clearly seen in the king Faisal declaration, (who was installed in Damascus for three years, before being expelled by the French,) - "We are Arabs before being Muslims, and Muhammad is an Arab before being a prophet,", ".............. There is neither minority nor majority among us, nothing to divide us, We are one body, we were Arabs even before the time of Moses, Muhammad, Jesus and Abraham".53

But it does not mean that Islam was not to play any role in the independence movements during the inter-war period. In fact in the minds of the common people, Islam and Arab identity could not be differentiated. Smith noted, "the driving forces of nationalism became more and more religious the more the movement has penetrated the masses. Even where the leaders and the forms and the idea of the movements have been nationalist on a more or less Western pattern, the followers and the substance and the emotions were significantly Islamic. In the realm of opposition to outsiders, there was decidedly no conflict between the two.54

53. Haim, n.13, p.35.
54. Smith, n.2, p.75.
Given the mass mobilising capacity of Islam, Arab nationalist leaders—(secular, modernist, or religious) and thinkers stressed the virtual identity of Arabism and Islam during the anti-colonial independence movement. In this context, Islam was given a new identity—i.e. the Arab character of Islam. Even Sat-al-Husri (1879-1968), who was hailed as the "Prophet of Pan Arabism", and who based his doctrine on the twin elements of language and history, conceded the role of Islam in the evolution and spread of Arab nationalism. 55 It was Abd al-Rahman-al-Bazzaz who provided the theoretical linkage between Islam and Arab nationalism. He said, "Islam, although it is a universal religion suitable for all peoples and has in fact been disseminated among many nations and races, is undoubtedly religion revealed first to the Arabs themselves. In this sense it is their own special religion." 56 "In another work he speaks of Muhammad as the hero of Arab nationalism and of Islam "as the religion which enabled the Arab nation to assert its place in the world". 57 Even the Christian Arabs, who earlier espoused the cause of secular Arab nationalism, came to accept the inseparable relation between Islam and Arab nationalism by the end of the thirties. Thus, Edmond Rabbath, a Syrian Christian, made the observation. "Islam is


56. Quoted in Haim, n. 13, p. 176.

57. ibid, p. 56.
the Arab national religion which has served to make the Arabs into a cohesive group”.58

In a similar way, Najm Bezirgan concludes, "As is clear from this survey of the literature on the relation between Arab nationalism and Islam, religion has always been the idiom in which the overwhelming majority of nationalist intellectuals have expressed themselves. Recent Arabic thought has not known any militant attack on religion, although religious institutions and the clergy have been attacked, particularly by the Arab Marxists and the leftists.59"

The more the nationalist and anti-colonial independence movement acquired its localized shape, Islam was also reinterpreted according to the local national context, thereby giving the distinctive Islamic identity to each emerging nation state - Syrians, Iraqis, or Jordaniian. As one scholar has commented "the past of the Arabs or historical Islam, undergoes at their hands a process of redistribution and reallocation among the new political entities. In the Arabian peninsula, for example, the rise of Islam and the careers of the Rightly Guided Caliphs figure as dominant themes leading by a leap of imagination, to the development in the contemporary landscape. The Syrian


historians are more inclined to feel at home with the Umayyad dynasty (661-750) and its crucial role in shaping the destiny of both Islam and Arabism. Iraqis were generally preoccupied with the Abbasids (750-1258) as their country happened to be the seat of such an illustrious dynasty. The Egyptian academic historians display, for obvious reasons, a keen interest in the Fatimids (969-1171), the Ayyubids (1171-1250) and the Mamluks (1250-1517).60

As noted before, the nationalist movement in Egypt took a different course from those in the Fertile Crescent unlike the latter Egyptian nationalism derived its strength from the lower middle class, and its ideological formulations were moulded by resistance to Western political, social and economic domination. The nationalist spirit generally favoured both Ottamanism and Islamism on practical and theortical grounds,- they were netural allies in the struggle for independence and against Western domination.61 It is for the same reasons and not for any overt Islamic factor, as the case with Fertile Crescent that many others concluded that the pre-1918 nationalists had combined Egyptianism with Ottomanism and Islam.62 Owing to peculiar experience and conscious of its own Egyptian identity, Egypt avoided any


61. Sharabi, n. 4, p. 108.

identification with the idea of Arab nationalism as late as mid 30's C. Ernest Dawn says that "none of the major Wafdist leaders were early advocates of Arabism, and none were prominent in its advocacy even after it became established in the mid 1930's except for the least secure of them, the Wafdist Makram 'Ubayd". As late as in 1938, Lutfi al Sayyid described the idea as 'pure fantasy' and in the same year, the Shaikh al Azhar, Mustafa al Marghi declared that he had no faith in the plan of Arab unity and that he did not favour it. It seems that it was primarily the support for the Arab rebellion in Palestine (1935-1936), and partly the conscious attempt of Al-Husri that brought Egypt within the fold of Arab-world view. But Pan Arabism as official creed emerged only with the leadership of Nasser who saw in it a tool to make Egypt stronger, in association with Arab states extending from North-West Africa to the Indian Ocean. To Nasser, Egyptian interest appeared closely connected with Arab interests.

With this background of Egypt and given the subordinate role of Islam in national affairs, many commentators (mis)identified the Egyptian nationalist movement as completely 'secular' oriented. In reality and as indicated before, it

63. Dawn, n. 51, p. 81.

64. Haim, n. 13, p. 49.


was the model of Islamic modernism which dominated the Egyptian political leadership during the inter-war period. Hisham sharabi has rightly observed that the profound impact of Islmaic reformism (i.e. modernism) on the intellectual awakening during this period was the direct outcome of its success in establishing grounds for its leadership. In Egypt this position was achieved in part through the support of the large and entrenched conservative hierarchy. No other single factor accounts as much for the sustained influence of Islamic reformism on Egyptian social and political life until the revolution of 1952.67

To conclude, the common mass in the Arab World and other Muslim society remained Islamic in their socio-cultural ethos. They could not differentiate between the regeneration of Islam and the "freedom" of nation from the yoke of Western imperialism and colonialism. For them, to be an Arab is still primarily to be a Muslim, to share in the revelation of the Quran and the glory of Arab conquest. In this loyalty there is a strong instinct to defend Islam against Christianity and also a strong apologetic tendency to insist that Islam is a modern religion and a practical basis for modern society. The rhetoric may be nationalist but the emotional indentification are Islamic.

67. Sharabi, n. 4, p. 28.