CHAPTER 1
ROOTS OF ARAB NATIONALISM

The body of ideas of oneness and unity from which Arab nationalism later emerged, developed only gradually during the second half of the 19th century. The earliest notion of the Arabs as a separate ethno-linguistic entity was essentially secular, and derives initially from the writings of Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals who were themselves inspired by European nationalism, liberalism and constitutionalism. Many, though not all, were either Christians or had been educated in the schools and colleges founded in Greater Syria during and after the 1830s and 1840s. A little later Muslim writers like Abd-al-Rahman al-Kawakibi and Rashid Rida, under the inspiration of European liberalism and the ideals of Islamic reform put forward principally by Mohammad Abduh, sought to identify the Arabs more closely with Islam, asserting that only the Arabs could purge the Islamic polity of the corruption into which it had fallen during the centuries of Ottoman control. Naturally, both these notions were a direct challenge to the 'Official' ideology of the Ottoman Empire as the universal Islamic State (dawla) ruled over by the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph. In this state, religion rather than language or ethnicity was the primary focus and indeed the only means of identity. Further in the course of his long reign Abd al-Hamid attempted to encourage the association between Pan-Islamism and Ottomanism.\(^1\)

The aims of Arab nationalism were never formulated in a set of principles at the time Arabs grew aware of themselves as a group separate from others in the Ottoman Empire. Before World War-I, while the Arab idea of nationalism was mingled with the idea of Islamic unity, Arab nationalism scarcely aimed beyond the rehabilitation of Arab race in multinational empire. The aim of Arab nationalism was merely to restore the Arabs to their lost role in Islam to which they felt entitled. Even the early Arab Christian thinkers, who advocated complete separation from the Ottoman union, were ready to compromise their extreme nationalist views to Islamic unity so as to maintain solidarity with their Muslim compatriots ².

Muslim liberal thinkers who advocated the idea of nationalism did neither demand that Arab lands be detached from the Ottoman Empire nor indeed that religion be separated from the state. ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1849-1903) ³, the most radical thinker who attacked Ottoman rule, called for the restoration of the Caliphate from Turkish to Arab hands, but not for a break in Ottoman unity ⁴. He


3. Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi belonged to a family of Aleppo, of Kurdish origin. He had an old-fashioned Arabic and Turkish Education in his native city, and then worked there as official and journalist until he Fell foul of the Turkish authorities and found it best to move to Cairo in 1898.

4. Al-Kawakibi’s argument that the Turks usurped the Caliphate from the Arabs was based on the doctrine that one of the qualification of the Caliph must be his descent from the Arab tribe of Quraysh, according to authoritative legal texts.
failed, however, to define his frequent references to the Arab nation in clear nationalist terms, and his idea of nationalism represented but a transition from the ecumenical to the national stage.

Al-kawakibi was, in truth, a revolutionary in spirit and inclination and that he often used to say; "if I had an army, I would have overthrown the government of Abdul Hamid in twenty-four hours". This estimate is confirmed by the 'Characteristics of Tyranny'. In this book al-kawakibi attacks political and religious tyranny and its nefarious effects on science, morality and progress. "True Islam", he argues, "is incompatible with tyranny, and it must lead to the just state in which individual lives happily, at one with his nation, completely free, yet completely owned by it". It is only a just political order, he says, that makes possible science, morality and progress. In this book Taba'i al-Istibdad (the characteristics of tyranny) which was and still remains very popular al-kawakibi gave currency to a secular view of politics which holds that the only just government is government according to the will of the people, that any other government is tyrannical and can be removed by the governed. He held the tyrannical nature of the Ottoman state responsible for the stagnation of Islam and declared the Ottoman Empire unfit to protect the faith. Thus, the regeneration of Islam could only be undertaken by the Arabs of the Arabian peninsula.

since only they were free of racial, religious and sectarian bias.

The ideas that he expressed in his other book, Umma al-qura, were even more revolutionary. This book attempts to explain the stagnation of Islam and to provide a remedy for it. The Muslim, he says, "are now a dead people with no corporate being or feelings. Their stagnation is the result of the tyranny, of the decline of the Islamic culture, and of the absence of racial and linguistic bonds among Muslims, and partly for this reason the Ottoman Empire is not fit to preserve Islam. The Muslim Kingdom is made up of different countries professing different religions and divided into numerous sects, and their ministers are drawn from different nationalities. Thus the Ottoman Empire cannot effect the regeneration of Islam. Regeneration should be the work of the Arabs who would supply a Caliph, residing in Mecca, and acting as the spiritual head of an Islamic union. Al-Kawakibi also provides a list of twenty-six different reasons to prove the superiority of the Arabs and why the Caliphate should devolve upon them.\[6\]

There were no half measures in his attitude, he saw the Arabs as better Muslims than the Turks. As such they deserved to have their position of primacy in Islam acknowledged and recognized by other Muslims. Here lies the most glaring contradiction that has plagued Arab nationalism as an ideology of the Arabs. For the question that has

\[6\] Ibid., p. 27.
remained unanswered is! ‘which Arabs?’ It was obvious, since the call was made on religious grounds, that Kawakibi, being a Sunni Muslim and a Syrian, meant that it was the primacy of the Sunni Muslims which out to be acknowledged. This fact in the evolution of Arab nationalism has been completely overlooked. Moreover, subsequent works on Arab nationalism especially, strangely as it may seem, by Christian ideologues of Arab nationalism have come to subscribe to this view7.

Al-Kawakibi, then, may be considered as the first intellectual precursor of modern secular Pan-Arabism. He was the first to declare himself, without ambiguity, as the champion of the Arabs against the Turks.

The intellectual milieu of Istanbul in which many an Arab nationalist grew up was dominated by young Ottoman secular thought and most of the leaders who opposed Sultan ‘Abd al-Hamid’s Pan-Islamic tried to keep the nationalist movement immune from Islamic influences. Most Arab nationalists were not prepared to accept the young Ottoman view of Islam, because Islam was regarded as a product of the Arabs cultural heritage from which they did not want to depart; indeed, most of them, including Christian thinkers, took pride in Islam because it laid special emphasis on the Arabic character of the Qur’an and on the Arabic language8.

It is this significant cultural element which prompted Arab thinkers to regard Islam as a component of Arab nationalism. To the Arabs, Islam came into being in Arabia, the cradle of the Arab race, and Muhammad was an Arab Prophet and a national hero. The Qur'an was not only revealed in Arabic language but all believers, Arabs as well as non-Arabs, had it as their obligation to recite it in Arabic. The Arabs were the first believers of Islam and they struggled to spread it and establish the Islamic Empire. It was the Arabic language and Arab cultural heritage which superseded the racial bond and made possible the Arabization of people who adopted the Arab tongue and identified themselves as Arabs, especially the people of the Fertile Crescent.

It was the Arabic language and culture which inspired Arab thinkers, Muslims and Christian alike, to develop Arab national consciousness and call for an Arab identity separate from Ottoman identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a product of the Arab heritage, Islam has been looked upon as a spiritual force and a set of moral values necessary for life. But if Islam is seen as a component of nationalism, it no longer remains the exclusive loyalty in the traditional sense.

Perhaps the representative thinker whose primary loyalty was to Islam but who accepted nationalism as

10. Ibid., p. 181.
a basis for the Islamic state was the reformer Rashid Rida (1865-1935). Rashid Rida left his native land Syria and came to Cairo in 1897 where he published the review Al-Manar (The Beacon) until his death in 193511.

If, on the one hand, Mohammad Abduh (1849-1905) makes no concession to nationalism or patriotism as a factor in achieving unity, Rashid Rida represents yet a second trend. While opposing Ottoman rule, he rejected any tendency towards establishing separate Arab states based on non-Islamic solidarity in the Islamic World. But the Arabs, for him, had a special place within the Islamic nations. "The Other Muslims", he held, "were pupils of the Arabs". This opposition to Ottoman rule was counterbalanced in Egypt by a strong pro-Ottoman movement with comparatively less interest in religion12.

Infused with the Arab nationalism Rashid Rida often showed more concern about Arab problems than those of other Islamic countries. In the true traditional Arab view of Islam, Rida spoke of the founder of Islam as an Arab Prophet, the Qur'ān as revealed scripture in the Arab tongue, and the Arabs as the carriers of the message of Islam beyond the frontiers of Arabia13. Giving reply to a question set by an Indonesian correspondent regarding 'what

is the attitude of Islam towards nationalism', Rida maintained that "As for the modern idea of nationalism, it is nothing but union of the inhabitants of a homeland who may be different in religion, who cooperate in the defence of their common homeland and in preserving its independence or in winning it back, when it is lost, and in increasing its prosperity. Such an idea does not manifest itself in Indonesia as it does in Egypt. Islam considers that it is the duty of Muslims to defend those of other religions who came under their rule and to treat them on a basis of equality, according to the just rulings of the Sharia'. As far the kind of nationalism that should adorn the Muslim youth, it is that he should set a good example to the inhabitants of his homeland irrespective of their religion and sects, and that he should cooperate with them in every legitimate action to further the independence of the homeland and to raise it up in learning, virtue, strength, and wealth, according to the rules of Islamic law which lays down that rights and duties devolve on the nearest relatives and then on those nearest to them. Further Muslim youth must not forget, while serving his homeland and his people, that Islam has honoured him and exalted his position by making him a brother to hundreds of millions of Muslims in the world; he is a member of a body bigger than his people, his own personal homeland is only a part of his religious homeland, and he must therefore seek to make the progress of the part a means toward the progress of the whole". 

The distinction between what he wrote and the action he was prepared to take is reinforced by his political record during his early years in Egypt. He came to Egypt as a radical, discontented with the situation of the Ottoman Empire and anxious for reform. And there significantly enough, he joined the party of the young Turks. It was after the young Turk Revolution, and indeed after the Balkan Wars, that Rashid Rida joined others in forming the decentralization party, when the Young Turks showed themselves bent upon a centralizing policy detrimental both to the Arabs and to the Empire.\textsuperscript{15}

According to Rida, "the Europeans are active and successful because they have abandoned their other worldly religion and replaced it by the principle of nationality, but Muslims can find such a principle of unity and loyalty in their religion itself. For the second distinguishing sign of Islam is that it has created a single community; not simply a Church, a body of men linked by faith and worship yet separated by their natural characteristics, but a community in every sense.\textsuperscript{16}

Perhaps the most forceful expression of this blend of Islam and nationalism by Muslim thinkers is to be found in the writings of Abdul Rahman al-Bazzaz. Abdul Rahman al-Bazzaz, educated in law at the University of London in the late thirties, imbued with humanistic

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., pp. 24-25.

\textsuperscript{16} Hourani Alber; op; cit, p. 229.
conception of classical western liberalism returned to his home in Baghdad in 1939. In his distinguished career first as a teacher and scholar and later as a diplomat and statesman, al-Bazzaz remained faithful to his fundamental conception of Arab nationalism in terms of a humanistic perspective of individual emancipation within the framework of evolutionary social progress. 

Much of al-Bazzaz's early writings are concerned with defining the relation between Islam and Arab nationalism. In Min Roh al-Islam (From the spirit of Islam) published in Baghdad in 1959, he advanced the thesis that "there is no real opposition between Islam and Arab nationalism: the Arab nation is the core of the Islamic community; most of Muslims are also Arabs; the Qur'an is in Arabic and embodies the traditional morality of the Arabs the Prophet was an Arab; Islam is the medium through which the Arabs made their contribution to history."

This conception of the essential unity of Arab nationalism and Islam runs through al-Bazzaz's early formulation of the four basis of Arab nationalism: language, history, literature and customs and character. Arab nationalism for al-Bazzaz, like Zuraiq and other liberals, is inextricably fused with Islam.

18. Hourani Albert; op, cit, p. 309.
According to Bazzaz contradiction between Islam and Arab nationalism which is still present in the mind of many people is, in the first place, due to misunderstanding, misrepresentation and misinterpretation, involving both Islam and Arab nationalism. This, he maintained, sprang from a western conception of Islam and of nationalism, and that so many Arab had accepted it showed the intellectual domination of the West over them.

The misunderstanding of Islam, maintained by Bazzaz is due to the wrong significance attributed to the world 'religion'. He says, 'We are influenced here as a result of the intellectual imperialism under which a group of us still labour by the western concepts which restricts religion within narrow limits not extending beyond worship, ritual, and the spiritual beliefs, which govern a man in his behaviour, in relation to his God and to his brotherman, in his capacity of an individual independent of society. Islam does not admit this narrow view of religion, but opposes it and the purpose it serves to the utmost. Many people still believe that Islam is similar to Christianity or Buddhism, and consists in devotional beliefs and exercises, ethical rules and no more. But, in fact, Islam, in its precise sense, is a social order, a philosophy of life, a system of economic principles, a rule of government, in addition to its being a religious creed in the narrow Western sense.'


21. Hourani Albert; op, cit, p. 308.

He further argues that there is absolutely no contradiction between Arabism and Islam. The two converge on many points, yet Islam can not be included as a "necessary" element in the formation of Arab nationalism. What is interesting in his view is that:

"If we equate religion and nationalism, we would exclude one-tenth of the Egyptian population, and one-fifth of Syria and about one-half of the population of Lebanon from Arab nationalism. We would also exclude a sizeable proportion of the Iraqis, Palestinians, Jordanians, and Sudanese, as well as a great number of Arabs who have migrated to America, Africa and other continents. But, on the other hand, when we lose these millions (of Arabs), the theory (that Islam is an essential element) would have us consider.... every Muslim in Asia.... brothers in the national sense, which means that the sons of the same nationality will have the same political destiny and one ultimate national interest, and requires the establishment of a social and political solidarity and association among them.... can the advocate of an Islamic nationalism imagine the consequences of
thinking and .... the responsibilities and obligations, which are beyond our power and resources?"23

Abdul Rahman al-Bazzaz revived the old arguments when he asserted that nationalism and Islam went hand in hand in many respects. In the course of doing so he was to expose the nature of Arab nationalism as a divisive and elitist movement and so to provide an affirmation of the nationalist belief in the necessity for the preeminent position of the Sunni Community in Islam. To him nationalism had to take on the activist nature of Islam since nationalism was an assertion by the Arabs of the resumption of the mission of Mohammad. Thus the Prophet becomes the founder of the Arab nation, and Islam is the product of the Arab national genius. This kind of analysis leaves out the non-Muslim Arab, the Christian and the Jew, the non-Arab Muslim, the Kurd and Berber, and the heterodox Muslim, Shi'ite, Druze, Alawi and Ismaili. But Bazzaz claims to provide a solution for this dilemma too. "These groups become true Arabs when they recognize Muhammad as the hero of Arab nationalism and venerate Islam as the religion that entitled the Arab nation to assert its place in the world. This seems to be an open invitation not only to the non-Sunni Muslims but to the Christians, and the Jews to acknowledge that the Muslim Sunni Arab has the right ordained in orthodoxy to enjoy a position of primacy and presumably-rule all non-Sunni communities.24


Strangely as it may seem, a number of Christian ideologues of Arab nationalism have accepted Bazzaz's thesis and condoned his pretensions. Indeed Qustantin Zuraiq, whom Bazzaz cites as a model Christian nationalist thinker, in contrast to the early Christian advocates of nationalism (who advocated the separation of religion and state), has also emphasized the compatibility between Islam and nationalism and called on his fellow Christians to accord Islam a special venenation.

Like Zuraiq and other liberal nationalists, al-Bazzaz's primary concern was with individual freedom and dignity. The role of the State, then, is to secure individual freedom while protecting social justice as he wrote in 'This is Our Nationalism', "a happy mean between the absolute individualism that gave rise to capitalism and Marxist --- inspired communism --- Our Arab nationalism strives for social justice in every sense of the term, while at the same time it seeks to reinforce the basis of social solidarity between the individuals of the entire community in order to prevent exploitation and class domination."

In the early twenties the assertion of secular ideas alarmed religious circles, and nationalist leaders, who needed the support of religious groups in the struggle for independence, sought to conciliate religious leaders by paying lip service to Islam. Moreover, the

25. Ibid.
26. Ismail, Tariq, Y; op, cit, p. 8.
growing interest in Arabic and Islamic studies both in native and foreign educational institutions, created an awareness of the overlapping elements of culture and religion and of the importance of Islam to Arab nationalism.\textsuperscript{27}

At the outset this trend disturbed Christian Arab thinkers who feared that the association of religion with nationalism might arouse religious fanaticism and restore the social exclusiveness of Ottoman days. Meanwhile, secular thinkers regarded the trend as a step backward, construed to please religious and conservative quarters rather than to serve the cause of modernism and progress. Very soon, however, it was realized that the religious and ethical values of Islam were so ingrained in Arab society that they could not be ignored as a basic ingredient of nationalism. It was at this stage that Christian thinkers, like Qustantin Zuraiq and Edmond Rabbath, began to explain the inescapable association of religion and nationalism.\textsuperscript{28} In his first volume of essay on National Consciousness (al-Wa'y al-qawmi), which appeared in late 1939, Zuraiq has discussed these ideas at length.

In dealing with the fundamental issue of the relationship between Islam and Arab nationalism, Zuraiq argued, "that a basic problem of Arab society is that we have no convictions; having no convictions, we cannot

\textsuperscript{27} Khadduri, Majid, op, cit, p. 183.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 184.
subordinate our individual desires and passions to an organisation rooted in a principle; therefore, we can not act successfully as a group. Nationalism is the conviction we need; that is to say, a sense of collective responsibility, a feeling of belonging to a nation, but one of a special sort, a nation which draws its inspiration from a religion. For the Arabs this religion can only be Islam.\textsuperscript{29}

However, he draws a sharp distinction between "the religious spirit" (al-ruh al-diniyya) and "sectarian fanaticism" (al-asabiyy al-lai'fiyya). The assumptions underlying this distinction appear to be two-fold: first that all religions contain the same core of truth, accessible alike to all men; and secondly, that the moral principles of religion are those which are necessary to build a stable and prosperous society. In this sense, then, "sectarian fanaticism" consists of the dogmatic assumption by adherents of a particular religion that their particular religion has a special claim to moral validity, while "religious spirit" means participation of the individual in the moral truth inherent in all great religions.\textsuperscript{30}

Nationalism, therefore, spiritual movement as it is, must converged toward religion and draw from it strength, life, sublimity and excellence. Such is Arab nationalism in its true character; it does not in any way

\textsuperscript{29} Hourani, Albert; op, cit, p. 309.
\textsuperscript{30} Ismail, Tariq Y; op, cit, p. 4.
oppose or negate any religion, but it accepts all religions in order to draw from their sources the cups of purity and liberation, of strength and immortality. If nationalism does contradict anything, it is not the religious spirit but the destructive fanaticism, which makes the communal tie stronger than the national tie and refuses to dissolve itself in the all-consuming crucible of the nation; for it is the fanaticism which often exploits innocent religious feeling for its own Partisan ambitions and inclinations. Thus fanaticism is the chronic disease of the land, and its authors are the enemies of Arab nationalism and destroyers of its unity. True religion, however, which aims to develop the forces of the spirit, springs from the same sources as nationalism, and they both go in the same direction, towards the same end. It is, therefore, incumbent on the Arab nationalists to go back to the sources of their religion in order to draw from them spiritual excellence and strength of soul, and to seek inspiration, among other things, from the history of all their Prophets so as to enrich their souls with the strength and the purity which overflow from these religions.

It was at that time the Arab intellectual and political activists realise that the cultural and political aspirations of 'the Arabs' would be better served by the separation of the Arab provinces from rest of the Ottoman Empire or by the creation of an Arab State under an Arab

King. As a result of a number of Arab societies and political parties were formed by enlightened and educated young Arabs to defend the Arab cause and to protect the Arab rights (there were several of these but two came to dominate the movement. These two were the young Arab society (commonly known as al-Fatat) and convenant Society (commonly known as al-Ahd).  

On the eve of the first World War, therefore, there was a strong tide of opposition to Ottoman rule, although a more general changeover to Arabism only took place when the Ottoman Empire was finally defeated in 1918. Apart from the Arab Revolt there was no generalized anti-Turkish rising by Arabs in the course of the First World War, those Syrians who might have wished to lead one were either hanged in Beirut in 1916 or forced into exile.

The period following the First World War, which on the one hand coincided with Socialist revolution in Soviet Union, and on the other with the direct involvement of Western imperialism in West Asia, also witnessed the rise of the first nationalist movement in the Arab world. Having been betrayed by the French and British in their promises of independence, the Arab masses, especially in levant and


34. CARDRI, op, cit, p. 90.
Palestine rose in a tremendous movement for national liberation.35.

The experience of the ex-Ottoman provinces in the next two decades was not uniform, which goes some way to explain the different forms which nationalism came to assume in Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, the British continued the direct rule which they had been extending over the area since 1914 until 1920, while in Syria an Arab government, admittedly financed and supported by Britain was actually running the country. However, in July 1920 the French defeated the Arab government by force of arms and introduced a system of direct rule. In Iraq, in response to the national uprising known as the Revolution of 1920, the British introduced a system of indirect rule, under which Arab ministers and provincial governors backed by British advisers managed the national affairs. However, those who held office under the monarchy, men like Nuri al-Said, Jafar al-Askari and Ali Jawdat al-Ayyubi, would have regarded themselves as nationalists in the sense that they had indeed fought to liberate the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire from the Ottoman, and were participating in the government of an Arab country.36.

From the end of the World War-I to the early thirties, the Arab nationalist demanding independence and Arab unity. It is not surprising, therefore, that Arab

35. Berindranath, Dewan: Iraq the Land of Arab Resurgence, India, 1979, p. 16.
36. CARDRI, op. cit, p. 91.
attention was devoted mainly to obtaining political independence from European control and not to far reaching discussion on social reform or the adoption of particular political systems.

As Arab intellectuals had not created a clearly defined concept of Arabism before the war, it was natural that they confronted in the changed circumstances and divided ideologically as they were politically.

The search to overcome these divisions led to a variety of proposals, none of which were fully realized, but all of which have contributed to the formation of Arab nationalism. The externally imposed political borders encouraged localism, especially in Syria, where the French administration divided the region into four separate states (Syria, Greater Lebanon, The Jabal Druze and the State of the Alwites) based on ethnic or Sectarian concentrations. Representative and advocate of this regional trend in Arab nationalism was Antun Sa’adah (1904-1949), a Lebanese Christian, who founded the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in Beirut in 1930’s.

Although Sa’dah sought to overcome the divisions within Greater Syria, he belonged to the regional current of nationalism for his out-spoken belief that "Syria was a distinct and complete entity which should not be part of a larger Arab nation". He saw in Syria’s identification with Arab nationalism as a surrender of its unique qualities.

and, in becoming part of a larger country that was less advanced or progressive than Syria, the acceptance of an inferior Status.  

Further complicating was the disinterested stance adopted by the majority of the Egyptian intellectuals. In the period between World Wars, Egypt was engaged in its own struggle for independence from Great Britain, and the foundation of Egyptian nationhood did not emphasize primarily Arab symbols. At the same time they did not identify themselves with Arabism, the idea of unity was projected by Syrian or Iraqi Politicians.  

The third major expression of Arab political and cultural identity was formulated by those who rejected regionalism and Islamic sentiments in favour of secular Pan-Arab nationalism. Their writings have kept alive the idea of a unified Arab nation bound by ties of Arab culture. This doctrine received its clearest exposition from the Turkish ideologue and educator Sati' al-Husri (1880-1968). Husri pleaded for a secular type of Arab nationalism which was completely divorced from religion. His arguments were based partly on the nature of Islam, which stressed universal rather than national values; partly on the historical experiences of the Arabs among whom nationalism emerged as a reaction against Islamic unity; and partly


39. Ibid.
because of the existence of the Christian Arabs in Arab lands, whose bonds of unity with other Arabs were language and history.

Arab nationalism certainly meant something different to Christian than to Muslims. Some West Asian Christians see nationalism as a secular movement. Arab nationalism does not mean Arab unity or Pan-Arabism to most Christians. They accept the Islamic background as part of a civilization in which they have participated since immemorial times, speaking the same language, living as separate millets in the same framework of laws.

Scholar Wilfred Cartwell Smith on the other hand cautions that, "some writers have been too hasty in assuming or concluding that a Western-type nationalism in this positive sense could be or has been adopted fairly easily or effectively into the Islamic world... it was the Islamic impetus that carried the Arabs from their obscure home into historic greatness, in conquest and creativity. Islam gave the Arabs earthly greatness; and vice versa, it was the Arabs who gave Islam its earthly success... The synthesis is close: an identification, at times unconscious, of Islam and Arabism. On the one hand, an Arab need not be pious or spiritually concerned in order to be proud of Islam's, historic achievements. Indeed, he need not even be a Muslim; Christian Arabs have taken a share in that pride".


In fact Christians have played an enormous role in the initial stages of the birth of Arab nationalism and some Christians, like Michael Aflaq, are still recognized as the leader of nationalist movement. For example the fundamental ideological principles of the Aflaq's Ba'ath Party are more advanced and more elaborate than those of the other nationalist parties in the Arab countries, but it is curious that while the party's constitution stresses the historical continuity of the Arab nation, it makes no mention of Islam. This does not mean that the party's intellectual leaders are less concerned with the question of religion than were the forerunners of the Arab nationalist movements. In fact, there is a great deal of similarity between the concept of Michael Aflaq on this topic and earlier views of al-Husri and others. For Aflaq, "Islam is the beginning of Arabism". He sees a spiritual affinity between the two; a view which is also held by an independent Christian nationalist, Qustantin Zuraiq. But Aflaq is an ideologue par excellence, who is mainly concerned with establishing historical foundations for Arab nationalism in order to further the interest of his party.

In its politically meaningful phase,

42. Ibid., p. 50.
43. Op., cit., Curtis, Michael, p. 50.
Socialism developed in the Arab world almost entirely after World War-I and, especially, World War-II. Its birth was preceded and conditioned by the rise of nationalism and statehood, usually after monarchy or foreign rule were toppled by political revolutions. The beginnings of Socialism may be traced to the nineteenth century, when all nationalist thinkers and movements had social purposes.\textsuperscript{44}

The development of socialist ideas cannot be explained simply in terms of the Arabs' wish to improve their lot after independence. It is evident that Arab Socialism had adherents as early as the late nineteenth century. At that time major Arabic magazines and newspapers were engaged in heated debate about Socialism. Dr. Yakoub Sarrouf, owner and publisher of the influential magazine \textit{al-Muqtataf} (Selections), was an ardent advocate of Laissez-faire theory and arch-enemy of socialism in Egypt. Another influential opponent of the socialism was the magazine \textit{al-Hilal} (The Crescent), which branded socialism "immoral" and claimed it would kill private initiative.\textsuperscript{45}

The fact that the two major Egyptian magazines of the time declared themselves anti-socialist but suggested that socialism had a number of powerful adherents. Indeed, socialism had gained the support of influential men, one of whom was Dr. Shibli Shumayyit who may be regarded as

\textsuperscript{44} Karpat, Kemal H; Political and Social Thought in the Contemporary Middle East, Praeger, New York, 1982, p. xxx.

the first Arab Socialist. Shumayyil was a socialist Darwinist who believed socialism is the inevitable result of progress. According to Shumayyil "It [Socialism] does not [simply] teach the distribution of wealth .... but justice in the distribution of profits between labour and capital". He defined socialism as the reform of society through the reform of each individual within it.

As early as the first decade of the present century members of the Egyptian intelligentsia (e.g. Shibli Shumayyil, Salma Musa and Ismail Mazhar) discussed aspects of socialism in its European and particularly British Fabian and French continental sense and tradition. They considered it in the context of scientific rationalism, social reform and state welfare doctrines. A socialist party of Alexandria workers was formed in 1920 by Mahmud Husni al-Arabi, followed by a communist party in Alexandria two years later. Several Communist parties also appeared in the Fertile crescent and levant.

Socialism in the Arab world is an extension of nationalism. It aims to consolidate the power of the modern state through an internal reorganization of the productive forces and reassignment of roles and

46. Shibli Shumayyil (1860-1917), a Syrian Christian and a doctor, an early graduate of the medical School of the Syrian Protestant College. Studied medicine in Paris before settling in Egypt, where he practiced his craft and became a frequent contributor to the Muqtatatf and other periodicals of the type.

47. Abujaber, Kamel. S. op, cit, p. 3.

responsibilities, with the idea of creating a participant society. It proposes to create social consciousness, responsibility, and dedication to ideas above individual interests and loyalties\(^{49}\).

Another major Arab intellectual of the socialist school was Nicola Haddad. As a political activist he defended socialism in magazines, newspapers, and books and even published his own magazine influenced by the writings of Eugene Debs, the American Socialist, he established an Arab writers association in New York in 1910 and brought out the magazine al-Jami‘ah (the universal) on a regular basis. In 1920 he wrote a book defining his ideas on Socialism, al-Ishtirakiyyah (Cairo: Dar al Hilal). Haddad believed in democratic Socialism for he was convinced that economic democracy cannot be achieved without political democracy\(^{50}\).

Socialism in the Arab world has two facets. It may appear as a rejection of the Western economic System (capitalism), of excesses of individual economic power and of class differentiation. Socialism may also appear as an egalitarian movement to eradicate differences of wealth and position and thus pave the way for the social integration necessary for the survival of the modern state\(^{51}\).

\(^{49}\) Karpat, Kemal, H. op, cit, p. XXXI.

\(^{50}\) Abujaber, Kamel, S; op, cit, p. 3.

\(^{51}\) Karpat, Kemal H, op, cit, p. xxxi, see also Said Abdel Moghny 'Arab Socialism', London, Blandford Press, 1972.
As early as 1908 upon his return to Egypt from studying in France, Dr. Muhammad Jamal al-Din organized the Blessed Socialist Party (al-Hizb al-Ishtiraki al-Mubarak), which emphasize agrarian reforms but neglected nationalism. Despite some support from urban areas, this movement soon disintegrated. Further in 1920 Musa and a few other intellectuals organized the Socialist Party in the Arab world: the Egyptian Socialist Party (al-Hizb al-Misri al-Ishtiraki). This party continued its activities until 1930, when it too disintegrated.

At first Egypt was the centre of Arab socialist ideas and movements, but they were taking root in other parts of the Arab world as well. In Iraq in 1931 a group of Western-educated liberals formed what was later to be known as the Ahali Group.

Socialism is also a kind of modern moral system. It draws much of its ethical-moral strength from the Islam and the West. The Islamic ideas of charity, social justice and responsibility, mutual assistance and


54. First, the Ahali (Populist) movement made its appearance in the early thirties, first as an intellectual movement and then as a political party called the National Democratic Party. It was the first successful effort by a small group of thinkers and political leaders to break new ground in an essentially traditional Islamic Society for Socialist teachings.
communal solidarity, reinterpreted in the light of contemporary needs, provide powerful basis for socialist action. Even some conservative in the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Mustafa al-Siba'i, used the teaching of Islam to develop an Islamic brand of socialism. Other social-minded Muslim scholars, such as Mahmud Shaltut, the former head of al-Azhar, relied on Islamic idea to justify the social and economic policies of his government.\footnote{55. Karpat, Kemal H, op. cit, p. xxxii. See also Islamic Socialism by Sami, A. Hanna and George H. Gardner in "Arab Socialism, A Documentry Survey", Leiden, EJ Brill, London, pp. 64-78.}

Gerbran Majdalany lists two main currents of Arab socialism today. The first and more important is that of the Ba'th Socialist Party, whose aims to join the entire region of the Arab world, which it considers united by culture and aspiration. The second current is represented by certain parties who base their action on the present political possibilities without regard or commitment to ideology. The Progressive Socialist Party in Lebanon represents this tendency. In Iraq this tendency was represented by three political parties that came into existence in 1946; the National Democratic Party (al-Hizb al-Watani al-Demoqrati), the National Unity Party (Hizb al-wihdah al-wataniyyah), and the People's Party (Hizb al-Sha'b). These three socialist parties were very close and in fact agreed on most points in their programs. These parties called for social services, public education, agrarian reform, equality regardless of race or religion and
above all strengthening of democratic regimes in the region.  

Thus one may divide socialism in the Arab world first according to the country and second according to its ideological characteristics. Egypt advocated Nasserite or Arab socialism, Syria, Ba'th Socialism, Algeria, Algerian Socialism, various groups in Lebanon promote progressive socialism; while Islamic and Marxist Socialism are found among all groups throughout the Arab world. Only Islamic and Marxist Socialism have international goals or look beyond their own national boundaries.

After the Second World War, attention concentrated on what was called Arab Socialism (al-ishtirakiyya al-arabiyya) the main exponent of which was the Arab Ba'th Party, founded by Michael Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar in 1941-3, which later on in 1953 merged with Akram Hurani's Arab Socialist Party to be known as Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. In the periods 1955 to 1961 and 1961 to 1967, Arab Socialism broadly divided in two major groupings i.e. the President Abd al-Nasir's version of socialism of Egypt and in among the various Ba'th Party Organizations and regimes in the Fertile Crescent Countries, particularly in Syria and Iraq.

57. Karpat, Kemal, H. op, cit, p. xxxiii, See also Khadduri, Majid, op, cit, pp. 150-75.
58. Encyclopaedia of Islam, op, cit, p. 125.
As an ideological movement, the Ba'th Party epitomizes the agonies and hopes of a large number of Arabs who are intent on achieving change and modernization. Ba'th history is characterized by the often frustrated hopes of modern Arabs to bring about unity, socialism and liberty.\(^{59}\)

\(^{59}\) Abujaber, Kamel S, op. cit, p. 10.