Chapter I
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The modern idea of Al-quawmiyya al-arrbiya, generally rendered in English as 'Arab Nationalism' is not equivalent to the Arabic al-qawmiyya, the latter derived from qawm, is a newcomer to the Arab political terminology. Before the twentieth century, the word qawm had no political connotation, but as used during present time it has come to denote all the Arab speaking people, disregarding, in principle, the geographical and political boundaries which separate the Arab states. Thus, the term al-qawmiyya al-arrbiya stands, today, not only for 'Arab Nationalism' but also for the Arab unity.

Although there has been a language obstacle in understanding Arab Nationalism by non-Arabs, still attempts have been made by several western and non-Arab scholars to understand the phenomenon of Arab Nationalism. The study of Arab Nationalism by them has helped a lot for the better understanding of Arab world.

Arab Nationalism as an ideology and a factor in West Asian politics is a twentieth century phenomenon and comprehensive doctrine of Arab Nationalism emerged after World War I. However, it is not to say that its appearance in twentieth century is mere fortuitous event. On the contrary,
considered as a doctrine, and divorced from the accidents of the war and politics, which have facilitated its prodigious spread, it is possible to see in it the outcome of the severe intellectual crisis that Islam experienced during the nineteenth century.\(^2\)

The absence of a specific ideology of Arab Nationalism until the end of the First World War is indeed note worthy. It was not until the 1930's that a serious attempt was made to define the meaning of Arab Nationalism. In the manifesto written by the members of Decentralization Party, appeals were made to the non-Muslims to fight for the common cause with the Muslim Arabs against Turks.\(^3\)

In the early days of the twentieth century, two ideologies competed for the loyalties of the Arab inhabitants of Ottoman territories, which lay to the East of Suez. The dominant ideology, Ottomanism, defended the continuation of Ottoman empire. The challenging ideology, Arabism, proclaimed that the Arabs were a special people who possessed peculiar virtues and rights. Arabism, as propounded by its creators and advocates was a defence and vindication of Islam and the East in the face of the dominance of Christian West. Arabism in short was special manifestation of a general reaction against the failure of Ottoman territories to keep pace with the advancement of Europe.
The earliest significant manifestation of political Arabism within the Ottoman empire was the formation of the Ottoman Arab Brotherhood in 1908. After this, society was suppressed in 1909 its place was taken by the Arab Club of Constantinople. Although the public societies and activities of Arab Nationalism were directed towards no more than the attainment of Arab right within the Ottoman empire, many who participated in the movement had independence in mind and covertly worked for this goal. Some Arabs began to organize secret societies within a revolutionary programme. The two famous secret societies were the Young Arab Society (al-Fatat) and the Convenant Society (Al-Ahd).^4

No independent school of Arab political thought existed until Nationalism emerged as an ideological force towards the end of the nineteenth century. In the past, practically every Muslim intellectual in the West-Asia had tried to interpret social and political conditions according to Islamic notions of government and authority. It was mainly the Christian Arabs of Lebanon and Syria who had developed an interest in their local history as early as the eighteenth century. Muslim Arabs, did not experience a truly nationalist awakening until the end of the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century. The Wahhabi movement, founded by Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-
Wahhab (1703-87), was not a nationalist but a religious movement. Even the early nationalist writings, such as the manifesto of Faris Nimr and the poem of Ibrahim al-Yaziji (1879) addressed to the Arabs, were not so much nationalist appeals as exhortations to reject fanaticism and embrace a new outlook of life. The Secret Society established in Beirut to evict the Ottomans attracted no support among the Muslim and dissolved itself.5

The rise of Egypt as a separate political system in open defiance of the Sultan at the beginning of the nineteenth century had far reaching effects on the Ottoman government and eventually on the Arab world. Egypt, despite occasional appeals to the Arabs developed essentially as a national state. It took the banner of Arab Nationalism mainly after world War I.6

With the final disintegration of the Ottoman empire, western penetration became western domination, and Arab Nationalism, which in the World War I allied itself with Britain against the Turks, became the formula for resistance to Western economic and political power.7

The Arab National revolt of 1916 against the Ottomans directed by King Husayn, the Sharif of Mecca with the help of British, was a symptom of changing Arab world. Arabism was
not yet a popular creed, even in Arabia itself. The loyalty of Arabs to the Muslim nation was superior to every other loyalty. It was not the revolt in Mecca against Ottoman Turks that gave birth to Arabism. On the contrary, it was the defeat that befell the Turks in World War I that awakened the Arabs and stimulated Arab Nationalism, which thenceforth became an instrument of resistance. The frustration encountered by the Muslim in Arab and other lands as a result of collapse of the last Islamic Empire was another important factor, which stimulated Arab Nationalism and, indeed other national movements in other Islamic lands.

Once started through the medium of literary revival the Arab national movement soon became political. Its steady progress during the later half of the nineteenth century, though under the depotism of Abdul-Hamid it had necessarily to work in secret. Abdul Hamid's policy of Pan-Islamism was particularly design to attract the Arab element in the Empire, and thus assumed a special significance for Arab Nationalism. A rival, doctrine, of Islamic revival under Arab leadership and Arab caliphate, was preached by a Syrian, Abdul-Rahman Kawakibi (1849-1902), whose books published in Cairo, were secretly circulated among Arab nationalists in Syria.
When the Ottoman caliphate collapsed, a lack of authority and a sense of community was bound to be felt and Arab Muslim in particular were affected by this loss for a long time. At the same time the experience complicated the problems of political and social change, which arose from the challenge of the modern world especially of an expanding modern Europe. When Arab Nationalists looked for political ideas or the philosophies, they found complex pattern, which was new to them. However, the principal source of inspirations was undoubtly Arab Nationalism. Even the most conservative Arab thinkers felt inspired by it. Various movements with varying shadows of nationalism, Islamic revivalism and Marxism rose during that period.

The assault which Islamic world had to endure in the nineteenth century was two fold. It consisted, in the first place, of military attack on Muslim states or their political subjugation by different European powers, and in the second place, criticism of Islam as a system of beliefs and a way of life. The latter attack was perhaps ever more dangerous and insidious than political and military subjugation, for it could penetrate the spiritual defences of the Muslim community and of its intellectual leaders, there by effecting a dissolution of Islam such as foreign rule, by itself, could hardly accomplish.
In so parlous situation, Islam was bound to make many attempts at its own defense, and of these attempts the most significant, and the most influential, was that of Jamal al-Din al-Afgani.¹²

Both the activities and teachings of al-Afghani contributed to the spread of revolutionary temper and a new attitude towards politics all over the Muslim East. He was deeply involved in Afghan politics, he lived among Indian Muslims and his short stay in Egypt ended in expulsion because of his subversive activities. In Paris, where he lived for a time, he edited an influential newspaper, *al-arwat al-wuthqa* (The indissoluble link) and preached Muslim unity and solidarity in the face of European encroachments. He was never the less instrumental in engineering a successful boycott of tobacco in Iran, in protest against the Shah's granting the tobacco monopoly to a foreign concessionaire. He spent the last few years of his life, busy with intrigue and politics, as the pensioner of the Sultan, in Istanbul.¹³

The *Salaffiyah* movement of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had arisen as a conservative religious reaction within Islam to a perceived corruption of Islamic faith. This corruption was more often than not, seen to be primarily internal in nature, the result of Ottoman decadence and the declining zeal of *ulama*. In contrast, the Islamic intellectual
reformers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were motivated by an external challenge to Islam: the decline of Ottoman empire and the concomitant expansion of European influence in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{14}

Jamal al-Din Afghani (1839-96), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Rashid Ridha (1865-1935) played a fundamental role in formulating an Islamic response to the twin problem of domestic development and western imperialism. Their doctrines, formulation at a time when European pressure on the Islamic world had reached new heights with the Russo-Turkish War (1877), French occupation of Tunis (1881), and the British occupation of Egypt (1882), were to have a lasting effect on social and political thought in the Islamic world, and one which can be seen to the present day.\textsuperscript{15}

Muhammad Abduh was born in Egypt in 1849 and educated at Al-Azhar University, the centre of higher Islamic studies in Muslim world. A friend and ideological ally of al-Afghani, Abduh struggled for revolution in Egypt. He actively supported Ahmad Urabi's revolution in 1882 and, on its failure was jailed briefly, then exiled for six years. While in exile in Paris, Abduh joined al-Afghani in secret society and helped him in publication of his newspaper. Abduh's revolutionary activism was focused on Egypt, though his ideological
perspective derived from the broad framework of Islamic *Ummah*. His primary concerns were with nation building and British imperialism.\(^\text{16}\)

Rashid Ridha was the most prominent and dedicated disciple of Muhammad Abduh. Born in Tripoli in 1865, he pursued religious studies and Journalism in Syria until 1897, when he moved to Cairo there he established a periodical, *al-Manar*, through which he disseminated, interpreted and elaborated the ideas of Muhammad Abduh and others. Ridha's main contribution to Islamic political thought was his dissemination of the ideas of al-Afghani and Abduh. He also championed the cause of the *Wahhabi* doctrine in his Journal.

A feature apparent in the writings of many Islamic modernization reformers concerned the role of nationalism and its place in development. European nation state centred conceptions of national identification were relatively new to an Islamic world, which had historically been united by the transcendent appeal of Islam itself.

The fundamental centrality of Islamic unity and Pan-Islamic cooperation in the works of al-Afghani and Abduh reduced nationalism to a secondary element. They regarded Islamic *ummah* as a superior basis for cohesion and commitment to European nationalism. *Al-arwat al-wuthqa*, the
influential Paris-based Journal edited by al-Afghani and Abduh observed that religion is the strongest bond that unites the Arabs and Turks, the Persian and Indian, the Egyptian and Moroccan.

Emergence of Arab Nationalism as an ideology after World War I played a greater role for the self-determination, independence and the active participation of indigenous population (civil society) in deciding its general well being. The total Ottoman collapse was followed by the failure of various local Arab movements to achieve full independence, or devise viable political systems and sustainable economic growth. Indeed, in one single decade (1920-30) one Arab rebellion after another, all directed against European colonialism, was either utterly defeated or achieved partial and ephemeral success. This was the case in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, the Sudan, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco. Additionally, the question of Palestine, particular the failure of the Palestinian revolt in 1936 against British occupation and Zionist settlement, served to sharpen the need for solidarity among Arabs throughout the region.17

It was in this period that the concept of Arabism and the Arab Nations were elaborated in more rigorous terms. Although patriotism, confined to a particular Arab country, remained a
powerful force, it began to be increasingly submerged, by the desire and drive for a wider Arab unity. In 1930s it was argued, that the overwhelming domination of European powers could only be encountered by pan Arab, well-organized movement. Political parties, with hierarchical structures, were consequently formed in a number of Arab countries.

During the twentieth century, Islam played a great role in the politics of Muslim world, inspiring anti-colonial, nationalist movements and their struggle for independence. The ground had been prepared by the late nineteenth century Muslim reformer Jamal-al-Din Afghani, the father of modern Muslim Nationalism.

In the Arab East countries such as Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, Islam's role was more limited since a significant, well educated, and articulate Christian minority had been a major force in the formation and development of an Arab Nationalism that emphasized Arab ethnic/linguistic bonds. Despite this, Islam played an important role in the formation of nationalist ideology. The legacy of Afghani and Abduh's Salaffiyah movement would develop in many directions. However, during this period, whether in the writings of Rashid Ridha, Sakib Arslan, Lutfi al Sayyid, or Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, Islam remained an important factor in defining national identity and
ideology. Emphasis was not placed on Islamic unity or Pan-Islam. Rather, religion was seen as a foundational source of Arab Nationalism.

The Palestinian debate in 1948 boosted the revolutionary trends of Nationalism, in place of the liberal Nationalism. The wars of 1948 and 1956 showed up military weakness of Arabs and their disunity. This again increased their desire to cling together, to form one mighty state that could deal with Israel. Palestinian question thus has acted as a catalyst by which Arab Nationalism inflames itself.

In the late 1950s and 60s, Islam again can be clearly identified as a factor in the Muslim politics as Syria and Egypt gained their independence and radical government came to power. In these countries, old regimes were overthrown and replaced by more radical groups (Socialist in orientation) and committed to Arab unity. The old Liberal-Nationalism gave way to Arab Nationalism /Socialism (Nasserism in Egypt and Ba'th in Syria). These radical governments distinguished themselves from their predecessors by rooting their ideology in Arab/Islamic heritage. They insisted that unlike previous regimes, theirs was not a borrowed or foreign ideology. In the first years after the revolution of 1952, Egyptian Nationalism continued along a secular path; yet after 1955, as Nasser sought
to propound an ideology that would both unify the Egyptian people behind him and strengthen his position as the spokesman for the Arab world, he increasingly broadened Egyptian Nationalism into an Arab Nationalism, rooted in a common Arab/ Islamic past. Nasser's Nationalism provided a sense of common history, identity, and solidarity that served as basis of Arab unity.\textsuperscript{19}

In the 1950s, with the advent of Nasserism and the rise of Ba'th party to power, the question of relation between Arab Nationalism and Islam became once again a topic of intense debate. In the early years of Nasser's rule, there was a distinctive trend towards interpreting Arab Nationalism in terms of political and economic unity of Arabs. But this only lasted until the end of 1950's, when a sudden resurgence of emphasis on the affinity between Islam and Arab Nationalism became the theme of hundreds of books and articles, the cultural factor and more specially the religious factor, was still alive in Egypt and consequently capable of providing a theoretical and emotional foundation for Arab Nationalism.\textsuperscript{20} It is difficult to trace, a sustained theory of Arab Nationalism in speeches and writings of Nasser. In practice, however, he wavered between emphasizing a secular and Islamic approach
of Nationalism according to the dictates of political realities in the Egypt of his day.

The fundamental ideological principles of Aflaq's Ba'ath party are more advanced and more elaborate than those of other nationalist parties in the Arab countries, but it is curious that while the party's constitution stresses the historical continuity of Arab Nation, it makes no mention of Islam. This does not mean that its leaders are less concerned with the question of religion. In fact there is a great similarity between the concept of Michell Aflaq and earlier views of al-Huri and others. For Aflaq, Islam was the beginning of Arabism. In his book *Fi Sabil al-ba'th* two lengthy articles are devoted to religion.²¹

Radical Arab governments also made major use of Islam to justify socioeconomic reforms. Turning to a rich Islamic heritage, they interpreted Quaranic texts and Prophetic traditions in order to legitimize and gain popular support for their Islamized brand of Socialism. In addition, Islam and Islamic institutions were used to support government programmes and politics. Egypt founded the Islamic congress in conjunction with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and created the supreme council of Islamic affairs which, among other activities published *minbar al-Islam*, a leading Journal that espoused religious reforms in the Muslim world and served as
primary source for articles supporting Nasser's Arab Socialism.\textsuperscript{22}

Since Aflaq and Nasser interpreted Islamic concepts to advance their own ideologies, they will not be part of present study as the main thrust of this study is to analyse contemporary Islamic Political thought and place of Arab Nationalism in it.
References


