

The Caliphate: The Awakening of Nationalism

In parallel with the military invasion of the Islamic world the European powers proceeded to invade the Islamic World by way of missionary activity, under the guise of education and humanity.

Well organised missionary activities paved the way for European imperialism to conquer the Islamic world politically after it had conquered it culturally. Missionary schools succeeded in corrupting the thinking of successive generations of Muslims. Those Muslims who graduated from missionary schools took up western culture, commenced teaching and writing history according to their syllabus and methods. Accordingly, many of the educated class of Muslims adopted western concepts, values from the western way of life. Enchanted with western culture they began to believe that Islam and Islamic culture was the cause of the decline of the Islamic society and its backwardness.

In addition, the Europeans secretly encouraged nationalistic movements, and aided in the formation of political parties, Turkish and Arabic, such as Al-Fatat (the Ottoman Decentralisation Society) and Al Ahd (the Arab Nationalist Movement).

Following the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, and the deposition of Sultan Abdal Hammid in 1909, Arab intellectuals and officers began increasingly to make a claim for Arab autonomy. These officers, many of whom had deserted from the Ottoman Army, had been westernised profoundly by their training and education, and nationalism was the first and foremost political ideal that they attached themselves to.

During the first world war, the British gave a great push to Arab nationalism in particular. They encouraged Sharif Hussain of Mecca to rebel against the Ottoman State in Hidjaz, which he did in 1916, alleging that the Arabs were being persecuted. This movement attracted many of those officers who had deserted from the Ottoman Army and they formed the nucleus of the post-war Arab nationalist movement.

The west directed Arab and Turkish nationalism in order to attain two goals; firstly, to isolate the Arabs from the Ottoman Muslim state, which they wanted to destroy and secondly, to untie the mighty bond of faith which held together the whole Muslim Ummah.

Whilst they realised the first goal, they failed to implement the second. For this cause, preaching nationalism among Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Persians etc. will remain the wedge which can disjoin Muslims unity.

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