

## The First Stirrings Of Nationalism

### Nationalism in Europe

The essential feature of Nationalism is that it provides a sense of social or cultural identity conforming with *limited* geopolitical formations. Historically, the ultimate basis of social organization in the Holy Roman Empire had been the Church. Catholicism was the official religion and anyone who was not a Catholic was not a full citizen. The pope was in charge of legitimizing the emperor. Since the time of Saint Augustine, the political formation had been guided by religious orthodoxy. One was not so much French, German or Italian as one was, first and foremost, Christian. As the Empire began to weaken and regions began to pull away, their primary concern was economic, military and political. They had to assert their independence from the Christian Empire. Only then could they re-identify themselves under a new criterion of citizenship. Citizenship could no longer be primarily a religious affair, "religious" states could no longer be confined to geographical boundaries and Europe had seen that in its history. A new cultural identity had to be devised to answer the question, "What does it mean to be French, German, or Spanish?"

### Muslims Catching the Drift

Amidst such "intellectual" atmosphere in Europe, Muslim students began to pour in to find European scholars discussing the origin and nature of civilization. Arguments about whose language was most pure, whose literature was most remarkable, or which nation state symbolized "true" civilization were common place among European thinkers of the time. Rousseau, for instance, felt that the best devotion was the *love of one's country*. People must be educated in virtue, trained in the joys of patriotism. However that *patrie* was now limited and aptly defined for the first time. It was very important to the Europeans to define each unit distinctly from others. In Europe, much of political philosophy was articulated after the fact that geopolitical limited states were already free and independent. However in the Muslim world, the ideas were being discussed at the same time independence was being sought. The colonization of many Muslim lands by European powers created both political and educational institutions to help advance the ideas of the "enlightenment" period within the populace of their colonies. As early as 1816, the works of Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu could be found in Muslim libraries.

### The Myth of a Decadent Khilafah

Europeans used all means to implant doubt and discord within the body of the Muslim Ummah. One way this was done involved the distortion of history. If Muslims could be led to believe that the centuries old Khilafah (that for the most part reflected political unity of the Ummah) was barbaric and immoral, they would become more susceptible to an alternate form of political existence. Another method is clearly visible in Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and the following re-writing of history by Muslim historians such as Abd al-Rahaman ibn Hasan al-Jabarti (1756-1825). His work is full of references to "Egyptian" suffering and examination of past tribulations suffered by the Muslims under an Islamic polity.

There was discontent in Egypt, for example, with Ottoman rule. This became a convenient point in time to widen the gap between the Ottoman Caliphate and "Egyptian" people. Racial and Nationalistic propaganda would serve rather effectively to deepen the resentments. Instead of bolstering a meaningful dialogue with the willing Ottoman Khilafah, political puppets of the French and British hastened to get out of the situation by way of defining national identity. Nationalism was to serve a more crucial role in the years to come in exploiting the Muslims. Unfortunately there were few Muslim leaders who understood the magnitude of the ramifications that were to follow after the destruction of the Khilafah in 1924. Strikingly enough, there are some individuals and organizations even in our times who lack the political insight as well as the foresight to call for the restoration of the Khilafah on the path of Prophethood as a necessity and a matter of the highest priority. Perhaps this is also a legacy of colonialism !

## Education as Catalyst

Under the protection of France, for example, Catholic schools and monasteries were established throughout Syria. Early in the eighteenth century, new Christian education was generally carried out in Italian or French. Christian learning in Aleppo generated an intense interest in Arabic language and literature. Perhaps, more significant was the establishment of US missionary schools that embodied both Arabic culture and western philosophy. One of the prominent schools in Syria was established by Butrus-al-Bustani who was a maronite under the name Al-Madrasa al-Wataniya, the National school. The National school symbolizes, in essence, much of Bustani's message of *Hubb al-Watan*, Love of homeland. Similarly in Egypt, Rifa'a Badawi Rafi' al-Tahtawi (d. 1873) called for *watannya* and secularism. The term 'watan' in this context is of utmost importance, because it refers to a geographic area rather than the Islamic Ummah. The source of *hubb al-watan*, says al-Tahtawi, is freedom, and its center, Egypt. The sense of communal brotherhood cannot be defined in terms of creed and beliefs but should extend to include all those who share a common '*watan*'. One can still see Muslims taking great pride in their nationalities, as if the meaning of their lives was truly defined by virtue of their lineage, land and language. Indeed the effects of Western intellectual propaganda continues to leave its scars on the already fragmented and vulnerable Ummah.

## Europe's Blueprint for Muslim Instability

After intellectually corrupting, supporting nationalist movements and colonizing the Muslims, the European powers had to make certain that the Muslim Ummah would not return to the glorious days of the Khilafah. The first World War, Arab revolution and finally, the demolition of the already weakened Ottoman Khilafah with the rise of Turkish nationalism in March of 1924, are all events that should remind us, of our unfortunate past. More importantly, however, there is a lesson to be learned from history. In order to understand the implications and consequences of these events, we need to acquaint ourselves with the role of the European powers, namely France and Britain, in the aftermath of these events. A critical study of our relatively recent past should leave no doubt in anyone's mind that we live in a world hostile to Islam...a world that hides behind the facade of peace, liberty and human rights only to protect their financial interests in the face of a resurgent Islam. Perhaps nowhere is the imperialist west more clearly visible in exploiting the Ummah as it was in the Middle East in the early part of this century.

A devastating aspect of the *Sykes-Picot* Agreement was its division of the Arab (Muslim) lands. France and Britain agreed that each would divide its holdings into two areas, one directly administered by the occupying power and the other semi-autonomous but controlled economically by the occupying power. Beyond the fact that this assumption of control was totally against the will of the inhabitants of the land, the respective divisions (borders) were brilliantly designed to keep the regions fragmented and therefore weak. This led to the evolution of limited nation-states, specifically in the Middle East.

Maintaining secular, modern nation-states in the Muslim World is the key to exploit the Muslim World at present. Reducing Islam to principles of morality and substituting democracy as a political form and ideological determinant continues to be favored by the West in our times. Many Muslim scholars distract Muslims from the kind of work needed to consolidate the Ummah as an effective force under the rule of Islam. For example, Fazlur Rahman, a contemporary Islamic scholar asserts that the goal of Islamic Political Unity is quite unsuitable for today's world of geographically limited and independent nation-states.

In the aftermath of the world wars, the geo-political dynamics including the emergence of various international institutions of politico-economic exploitation, such as, the United Nations were devised by the powerful Nations of this century to subdue among others the challenge of Islamic resurgence. Unfortunately the contemporary political arrangement has become a dilemma for many Muslim

activists...many continue to reverberate the same slogans and rhetoric that the West uses to exploit them. Secularism, nationalism, democracy and pluralism continue to be the hallmarks of many contemporary political organizations among the Muslims thereby causing much harm to the already ailing body of the Ummah.

### ***Global Islamic Khilafah***

The present call for a ***Global Islamic Khilafah***, void of any Nationalistic or territorial definitions, remains Islam's answer to the Church's theocracy and Western Secularism. Contrary to the compromise reached between clergy and state in the case of Europe's continued degeneration, there will be no compromises with the Universalism of Islam. Islamic principles remain applicable to all societies, not merely as moral standards but more significantly as politico-socio and economical reality . . . . shaping the New World Order in the near future. Qur'an remains universal not by limiting the human Crown as the British and the French would like us to believe, but by eliminating it altogether! Statelets like Saudia, Egypt, Jordan...etc. are not guardians of Islam but enemies of it.

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