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Islam, nationalism, and emancipation: the formation of modern Islamic political theology in colonial India, 1857-1947: a semiotic analysis

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Dissertation

**ISLAM, NATIONALISM, AND EMANCIPATION:
THE FORMATION OF MODERN ISLAMIC POLITICAL THEOLOGY
IN COLONIAL INDIA, 1857–1947:
A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS**

by

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to

Mustapha Elturk, Sherif Nasr, and Sayed Ziauddin Qazi

who encouraged and supported; and

Noor, Maahin, Momin,

who patiently endured, and

Amal

who reanimated a dying spirit.

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Theology

ABSTRACT

This study explores the semiotic development of Islamic nationalism as a form of political theology during its formative period of 1857–1947 as articulated in the writings of prominent Urdu-speaking theologians. The study presents Islamic nationalism as a project of Muslims’ collective emancipation from colonialism and the possible subjugation of Islam and Muslims to the post-colonial secular state. Islamic nationalism’s constructive task is to interpret Islamic symbols in political terms toward articulating a modern Muslim nationalism. Its critical task is to critique the modern ideas of secularism, nationalism, and colonialism, on the one hand; and Muslim history with respect to a historiography centered on the primacy of caliphate as a spiritual-political institution, on the other hand. Politically, Islamic nationalism seeks, albeit in modern forms, Muslims’ religio-cultural autonomy and/or political sovereignty.

In semiotic terms, Islamic nationalism integrates the Islamic symbols of *islām*, God, Prophet Muhammad, the Qur’an, *qaum*, *sharī‘at*, *millat*, *ummat*, and *khilāfat* with

the symbols of secular nationalism, namely, nation, freedom, equality, and popular sovereignty. The extent and nature of the integration is determined by the internal consistency of the Islamic symbolic system which requires the national symbols to be interpreted in light of Islam's sacred symbols. Islamic nationalism thus amounts to the desecularization/decolonization of Muslim imagination and the public sphere. Among the different forms of Islamic nationalism, the study explores the proto-nationalist Sayyid Ahmad Khan; the proponents of a secular post-colonial India, Abul Kalam Azad and *Jam 'iyyatul 'Ulamā Hind*; the critics of secular nationalism, Muhammad Iqbal and Sayyid Abu'l A'lā Maududi; and the advocates of separatism *Jam 'iyyat 'Ulamā-i Islām*. The study concludes that, despite the diversity of approaches to Islam and nationalism, nearly four decades of political theology proved decisive in popularizing the idea that Muslim nationality (*qaumiyyat*) was based on religion, that Islam as the consummate religion brooked no division between private-religion and public-politics, and that the obligation to implement Islamic law and ethics (*sharī'at*) necessitated territorial sovereignty.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

INC	Indian National Congress
JUH	Jam'iyyatul 'Ulamā Hind
JUI	Jam'iyyat 'Ulamā-i Islām
ML	Muslim League

GLOSSARY

<i>Allah</i>	the Arabic word for God
<i>Amīr</i>	<i>leader</i> a synonym for <i>khalīfah</i> , in reference to which the full title <i>amīr al mu'minīn</i> (<i>leader of the faithful</i>)
<i>Ḥizb</i>	<i>party</i>
<i>Islām</i>	<i>submission, surrender</i>
<i>Jāhiliyyat</i>	<i>ignorance, foolishness</i> (a) behavior, people, ideas, and lifestyle contrary to the Islamic ideals; (b) temporally, the period and culture of the pagan Arabs before the advent of Prophet Muhammad
<i>Jamā'ah</i>	<i>party, organization</i>
<i>Jam'īyyat</i>	<i>association, assembly</i>
<i>Khalīfah</i> (pl. <i>khalafā</i>)	<i>successor, deputy, caliph, vicegerent</i> (a) the title given to the ruler of a caliphate; (b) the Qur'an refers to Adam, the first human created by God, as a <i>khalīfah</i> ; (c) each of the first four Muslim leaders succeeding Prophet Muhammad
<i>Khilāfat</i>	<i>successorship, deputyship, caliphate, vicegerency</i> (a) the act of God's bestowal on Adam of earth's custodianship; (b) Muslim polity, ideally global in scope, governed according to Islamic law and headed by a caliph; (c) the society created by Prophet Muhammad in Medina is considered by some to be the first Caliphate, followed by the Caliphates of the four 'rightly guided Caliphs'
<i>Millat</i>	<i>religion, faith, confession, religious community</i> the Qur'an calls Jews, Muslims, Christians, and pagan Arabs to commit to the "millat of Abraham"
<i>Qaum</i>	<i>a people, any body of people, nation, a class of people who belong to a same category (e.g., professional artisans)</i>
<i>Qaumīyyat</i>	<i>nationality</i>
Revivalism	(a) another term for the modern Islamic political theology popularly known as 'Islamism;' politically, revivalism's objective is to create an Islamic polity; intellectually, revivalism is better understood as a particular hermeneutic tradition based on two basic principles: the primacy of the Qur'an as the basis of

	critique and reconstruction of Islamic thought, and a historiography that emphasizes the undifferentiated, non-secular integrity of Prophet Muhammad's society in Medina
<i>Sharī'at</i>	Islamic law and ethics based on the authoritative texts of the Qur'an and the ḥadīṣ (statements of Prophet Muhammad), interpreted and compiled by religious scholars (<i>'ulamā</i>)
<i>'Ulamā</i> (sing. <i>'ālim</i>)	<i>religious scholar</i> a graduate of a traditional Islamic seminary
<i>Ummat</i>	<i>community, people, followers of a prophet</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study explores the semiotic formation of Islamic nationalism as a form of political theology during its formative period of 1857 to 1947 in north colonial India as articulated in the Urdu language. The choice of this period rests on the fact that the year 1857 witnessed an anti-colonial popular uprising (Chapter 3), the aftermath of which provided the impetus for new ways of imagining the Muslim community in the region. At the center of the new discourse was the problem of how to define the Muslim community in relation to the majority Hindu population and the rising tide of Indian nationalism. Among the diversity of Muslim visions, two general responses emerged. One set of responses addressed themselves to the problem of Muslims' material and cultural advancement. The logic of its reasoning was pragmatic, cultural, and political. Religion remained an important element in its vision, but did not constitute its central frame of reference. The second set of responses was self-consciously religious, and its mode of reasoning primarily theological. I identify this second set of responses as *modern Islamic political theology*. Accordingly, I classify any theological rationale for Muslim nationhood as *Islamic nationalism*.

In the course of the formative period, the different discourses on Muslim nationhood intersected and interacted in different ways until late in that period one form of Islamic nationalism converged with the secular movement for separatism. This convergence proved a watershed in the history of the region as it paved the way in 1947 for the emergence of the first majority-Muslim nation-state of Pakistan. The partition of colonial India (hereafter, the Partition) into the two states of India and Pakistan thus

marks the culmination of the formative period of Islamic political theology in South Asia. This study is, however, not about the founding of Pakistan per se, but about the Two-Nation Theory on which the demand for Pakistan was based. The Theory claimed Muslims and Hindus to be two separate nations deserving of their separate nation-states. Using the trope of ‘partition,’ I wish to trace the evolution of the discourse that served to ‘partition’ the Muslim imagination into thinking of themselves as a different nation in contradistinction to Hindus. My general argument is that while the historical origins of the ‘partitioning’ of the Muslim imagination can be traced back to the events of 1857, the systematic theological discourse on the subject begins in the early twentieth century, and its various developments contributed, some directly and others indirectly, in strengthening the separatist cause.

The semiotic focus investigates the symbolic evolution of Islamic nationalism, and the structure and dynamics of the religious imagination responsible for their creation and interpretation. The semiotic significance of Islamic nationalism lies in that it brings together two disparate imaginations and interests that were to be kept separate by modern standards. On the one hand, Islamic nationalism invoked the familiar secular symbols of nation, state, democracy, sovereignty, freedom, and equality. On the other hand, it also invoked the religious symbols of God, Islam, the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad, *sharī‘at* (religious law), *ummat* (community), *millat* (religion), *qaum* (people), and *khilāfat* (caliphate). Islamic nationalism thus presents an integration of nationalism rooted in a secular consciousness and Indian Islam. The semiotic task of this study is to explain the logic of the symbolic integration that made Islamic nationalism possible and gave it its

peculiar form.

In what follows, I will review the scholarship, pertinent to my study, in the fields of Islamic political theology, nationalism studies, and semiotics of religion. The chapter closes with a summary of the overall argument and an outline of the dissertation's structure.

DEFINING ISLAMIC POLITICAL THEOLOGY

The term 'political theology' invokes Christian associations as it is an established disciplinary lens of investigation in the Christian tradition. Hence, its use in the Islamic context requires justification. Reflecting on this very question in relation to Arab thought, Joshua Ralston clarifies that the Muslim meditations on religion and politics "do not map directly on to the frameworks developed by figures like Schmitt, Agamben, or Arendt or the legacy of Augustine, Grotius, or Locke."¹ Grant the caveat, Ralston finds the modern Muslim discourse on the problems of Islam and politics fecund ground for political theological analysis. In their recent work, *Islamic Political Theology*, Massimo Campanini and Marco Di Donato defining the nature and scope of political theology appropriate to the Muslim context. The contemporary revival of political theology in the Christian context is credited to the German political theorist Carl Schmitt who advanced the thesis that political concepts are derived from theology.² This thesis is reversed by Jan Assman's claim that theological concepts are in fact derived from politics.³ Giovanni

¹ Joshua Ralston, "Political Theology in Arabic," Political Theology Network, accessed September 28, 2021. <https://politicaltheology.com/political-theology-in-arabic/>.

² Massimo Campanini and Marco Di Donato, *Islamic Political Theology* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2021), 2.

³ *Ibid.*

Filorama adopts a more dialectical view that political theology poses the question of how political structures mirror theology, and how theology should be shaped so as to properly represent divinity and sovereignty.⁴ Campanini and Donato point to an added role of political theology in stating that “political theology is the legitimization of a political order.”⁵ Cavanaugh and Scott define political theology as “the criticism of political arrangements (including cultural-psychological, social, and economic aspects) from the perspective of differing interpretations of God’s ways with the world.”⁶ In differentiating theopolitical analysis and engagement from their secular counterparts, the authors speak of “theological excess,” that is, in contradistinction to Assman, they refuse to reduce theology to politics, and to prioritize the cause of salvation over power.⁷ This means that the interests of political theology do not and need not match those of realpolitik. I also take this to mean that political theology prioritizes religious ethics over realpolitik and the concern with power, for salvation is conditioned upon righteousness. It is this approach to political theology that I will subscribe to for constructing my own definition below.

In Campanini and Donato’s reading, what unites the various concerns of political theology in early Islam is the concept of the Muslim community (*ummah*): “which could be, at one and the same time, the privileged subject and object of political theology.”⁸

The authors contrast two different experiential realms of the early community: the

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ William T. Cavanaugh and Peter M. Scott, eds., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019). 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Campanini and Donato, 1.

“impossible to attain”, ideal, utopian realm of Mecca versus the “prosaically real” Medina, where Prophet in fact succeeded in his goal of building an *ummah*. In this background, “Muhammad’s biography witnesses the translation from prophecy to government [reference is made to Montgomery Watt], from the ideal to the factual, from theory to praxis. In this translation, theology mixed with politics, became political.”⁹ The Muslim community in Medina under Prophet Muhammad’s leadership was “was grounded upon a political covenant (the Chart or *sahifa* of Medina)¹⁰ and upon a wholly secular system of tribal alliances. The Chart of Medina is by no means conditioned by *religious* worries.”¹¹ Consequently, the authors conclude, “Islamic political theology did not operate at Muhammad’s time.”¹² The editors proceed to state that Islamic political theology was born in the civil wars (conventionally termed by Muslim *al-fītnah al-kubrā*, ‘the Great Tribulation’) during the reign of the fourth Caliph, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Campanini and Donato conclude that in view of the Prophet’s central goal of building a cohesive *ummah*, the *ummah* was later “corrupted by political theology” as its cohesion was shattered by civil wars. My exposition of Muslim nationhood will show that in the Indian Islamic political theology, the concern for *ummah* will remain, but will also add the concern for the Indian Muslim *qaum* (people, nation). In time, *ummah* will fade into the background and *qaum* will become the primary concern during the formative period.

⁹ Campanini and Donato, 8.

¹⁰ The Chart, also known as the Treaty of Medina, was an agreement contracted between Prophet Muhammad and various tribes in Medina for the joint defense of their shared territory. Different Muslim interpretations of the Treaty are addressed in Chapters 4-6.

¹¹ Campanini and Donato, 6.

¹² Ibid.

Addressing the political theology of “Islamism,” Campanini and Donato denounce it for using religion as a “political tool and instrumental to wholly mundane goals.”¹³ On the other hand, Faisal Devji has argued that political theology in relation to “Islamism” appears a misnomer due to its failure “to appropriate politics as a way of dealing with antagonism either institutionally or even in the realm of thought.”¹⁴ Devji targets one of the founders of Islamism, Maududi (Chapter 5), to expose Maududi’s anxiety over the possibility of the political to corrupt the theological by popular sovereignty, which leads Maududi to overstate the nature of divine sovereignty and leave little room for actual politics. On Devji’s account, Maududi’s theopolitics comes close to political theology, but falls short due to its “anti-political” anxieties.

Campanini and Donato, and Devji approach the question of Muslim politics from the perspective of the “Western imaginary”¹⁵ that takes the differentiation between the private religion and secular politics for granted. They thus see the two as having different purposes. It is for this reason that Mecca and Medina are seen as discontinuous, one being the realm of the ideal and the other of the real, and the Chart of Medina as concerned with “secular” matters. Dismissing the Meccan period as the realm of the political ignores the problem of translation and the political implications in the call to

¹³ Campanini and Donato, 9.

¹⁴ Faisal Devji, “Islamism as Anti-Politics,” Political Theology Network, accessed October 1, 2021. Also see Devji’s *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 231-240.

¹⁵ Markus Dressler and Arvind Mandair, *Secularism and Religion-Making* (Cary, USA: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4. On a similar note, Charles Taylor coined the terms “the Enlightenment package” and the Western “social imaginary” to underscore the Western-Christian ethnocentrism that wrongfully imagines only a single, universal model of modernity. Charles Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 153-174.

monotheism raised by the Prophet from day one. In a pagan society of Mecca in which the religious and the political were undifferentiated, raising the call of monotheism was a political act as it dethroned all the pagan deities. This was nothing short of a challenge to everything that the Meccan paganism stood for as the ascension of the one God meant the ascension of the Prophet's authority. In view of Scott's identification of salvation as the primary focus of political theology, Mecca too ought to be seen as a realm of political theology. It is where the translation from the theological to the political begins with the political always serving the cause of the theological, that is, salvation. It is also where the task of *ummah*-building initiates. It was the *ummah* gathered at Mecca that embarked on the migration (*hijrah*) as a theopolitical act—*theo* because it was ordered by God, and *political* because the Prophet's intention was to secure a context of political sovereignty to carry on his mission. The migration was, therefore, the political side of salvation, that is, Muslims' collective emancipation from persecution in Mecca. As for the Chart of Medina, we will discover in Chapter 4 that its language was religious through and through. That someone claiming to be God's Prophet contracted a treaty with his allies for the defense of his city, a treaty replete with the language of "the Prophet of God" could hardly be called secular.

The Western imaginary is also at work in Devji's critique of contemporary Muslim religiopolitics as failing to deal with mundane antagonisms, and the illegitimate use of religion as an instrument. This is because the Western imaginary considers religion as properly belonging to transcendence and politics to the realm of immanence. What needs to be emphasized, again, is the absence of any explicit differentiation between the

religious and the political in the seventh-century Arabian society, and that the primacy of politics as means of salvation confers upon it interests that render the problem of antagonisms secondary. My exposition of political theology will show that it rejects the Western, secular imaginary, and instead, seeks to institute a Muslim society that does away with the religious/political differentiation so that same ultimate purposes apply in all dimensions of life. Nonetheless, political theology will be found to address challenges of different kinds: one, that of colonial occupation and Muslim emancipation; and, two, that of a Hindu majority and Muslim minority in the context of the post-colonial Indian state. Yet, these more mundane concerns of modern politics will be shown to serve religious purposes. In the end, we will discover that while religion is susceptible to be utilized as a political tool, not all theopolitics is instrumental in that sense. I will return to these points below.

While a more detailed and technical definition of Muslim theology will follow in the next chapter, I will here offer a general definition for the purposes of the discussion in this chapter: *Islamic political theology is the political interpretation of sacred symbols and a religious critique of politics. Muslim nationalism is defined as any claim to Muslim nationhood, which could take two forms: ethnosymbolic nationalism and Islamic nationalism. Ethnosymbolic nationalism is a form of secular nationalism based on shared history and culture in which Islam constitutes an important marker of identity, but in which Islamic theology does not dictate political ideology or organization. Islamic nationalism, on the other hand, is strictly grounded in political theology, reasons with sacred symbols, and rejects secularity in principle, though it might reconcile with it for*

expediency. In this scheme, political theology and nationalism remain separate approaches to politics whose historical convergence, while not inevitable, was made possible in the context of colonial India.

Responding to the specific Muslim situation in colonial India, different visions of Muslim nationhood emerged (see Table 1). The Islamic nationalism articulated by Abul Kalam Azad and the *Jam 'iyyatul 'Ulamā-i Hind* (Chapter 4) supported the idea of One-Nation Theory, which projected post-colonial India as a secular nation of multiple religious communities, and in which Muslims were to enjoy religiocultural autonomy. Though rejecting secularism in principle, composite nationalism tolerated secularism as a temporary measure. The Two-Nation Theory claimed Hindus and Muslims to be distinct nations deserving of their own states. This vision was articulated from different quarters, one of which, the Muslim League (hereafter ML), transformed into an ethnosymbolic separatism demanding Pakistan; while the other, the *Jam 'iyyatul 'Ulamā-i Islām*, supported Pakistan on theological grounds. In contrast, Sayyid Maududi rejected both Pakistan and secular India (Chapter 5).

Before going further, it is necessary to clarify my use of the terms *modern*, *modernization*, and *modernity*. *Modernity* intends a period, a culture, and a project of Christian and post-Christian European origins. Culturally, modernity is first of all grounded in a secular imagination—which denies transcendence, and claims the material world to be all there is and meaningful in itself—that comes to be closely associated with a scientific and utilitarian rationality, and an anthropology of individualism.¹⁶ Modernity

¹⁶ Charles Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 153–74; *A Secular*

	ONE-NATION THEORY (<i>Muttahidah Qaumiyyat</i>)		TWO-NATION THEORY (<i>Do Qaumī Nazariyyah</i>)	
ETHNOSYMBOLIC			Muslim League	DEMANDED PAKISTAN
POLITICAL THEOLOGICAL	Abul Kalam Azad	REJECTED PAKISTAN	Muhammad Iqbal	
	Jam'iyyat 'Ulamā-i Hind (JUH)	REJECTED PAKISTAN	Sayyid A. A. Maududi and Jamā't-i Islāmī	REJECTED PAKISTAN
			<i>Jam'iyyatul 'Ulamā-i Islām (JUI)</i>	DEMANDED PAKISTAN

Table 1. Varieties of Muslim Nationalism.

habituates imagination to view the world in the dualisms of private and public, religious and secular, fact and value, belief and knowledge, reason and revelation, a backward past and a progressive future, etcetera. The modern consciousness is thus a way of 'partitioning' the symbolic contents of imagination in terms of the mentioned binaries. As a structural project, modernity involves a rationalization of economic activity, industrialization, an ever-growing use of technology, and the politics of nationalism, democracy, and the expansive bureaucratic state. *Modernization* refers to all those processes, whether intellectual or practical, cultural or structural, conscious or unconscious, through which a society moves toward greater ways of being modern. In relation to the arrival of modernity in South Asia, what needs to be emphasized is the

Age (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). Also, see Liah Greenfeld's discussion in Chapter 2.

differences in the development and experiences of modernity between its mother cultures and the colonies.

In the colony, modernity appears in many forms. First of all, modernity in the South Asian colony is a foreign colonizer who comes to enforce, usurp, and often brutalize the colony's inhabitants and resources. In the second instance, modernity in the South Asian colony is also homegrown, promoted in different forms by the colonized subjects themselves, both during and after colonialism. In the latter case, modernity is willfully imported or imitated by the colonized, the process being piecemeal, selective, and uneven as different colonial subjects preferred different aspects of modernity.¹⁷ Stated differently, whereas in its parent cultures, modernization was an organic process, endemic to the experiences of European Christian cultures and their passage to post-Christian ways of being, modernity's foreignness in the colony makes it a matter of imposition and/or choice of foreign structures, culture, and even religion.¹⁸ The tensions and struggles that modernity thus produces in the colony are waged on three levels: against the colonizer as a foreign presence, between the different proponents and

¹⁷ In relation to India, Francis Robinson describes the modernity embodied by the colonizer: "There is the growing influence of Western civilization with its ideas of individualism, personal fulfilment, and the rights of man—with its endorsement of earthly existence and earthly pleasures, and its celebration of individual lives, great and small. Such ideas and values were instinct in much Western literature and in many institutions; they were, of course, embodied by man of the colonial British." He further adds the decisive role of capitalist modes of production, and modern technologies of communication (e.g., the printing press, telegram, etc.)—and, let us add, modern transportation (railway, automobile, etc.). Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 107.

¹⁸ Masud astutely observes that Muslim thinkers found it very difficult to understand new ideas like secularism in isolation from Christian) supremacy. Secularism came to the Muslim world along with modernization, the latter usually perceived as Westernization. It was also an encounter with the West as a colonial power, which was regarded in the Muslim world as a continuation of Christian crusades against Islam. Muhammad Khalid Masud, "The Construction and Deconstruction of Secularism as an Ideology in Contemporary Muslim Thought," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 33, no. 3 (2005): 364.

opponents of modernity among the colonized, and subjectively within each colonized person with respect to identity. The overall experience of the modern struggle in the colony is that of an identity crisis, both individual and collective (addressed in Chapters 2 and 3). Given the modern origins of nationalism, this exploration of Islamic nationalism can be approached in the larger lens of Indian Muslim responses to modern politics.

THEORIES OF NATIONALISM

Different theories have been advanced about the origins, structure, and dynamics of nationalism. Primordialist perspectives on nationalism deem it an early, natural, and given human phenomenon.¹⁹ On the other hand, perennialist theories agree with nationalism's antiquity, but deny its naturalness.²⁰ In contrast, the modernist perspectives rooted in structuralist analysis hold that the real, causal forces driving nationalism are either the underlying structures of politico-economic modernization and/or state ideology.²¹ On this account, the anthropological elements of agency, meaning, values, symbols, morality, culture, religion, and nationalism as an ideology represent secondary effects of the more real, structural forces. The modernist theories tend to align with the instrumentalist accounts of nationalism that claim it an instrument of ideological manipulation by structures of power such as the state and/or elite interests. Ernest Gellner

¹⁹ Umut Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 49 and 55.

²⁰ Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 58-60.

²¹ Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Michael Hechter, John Breuilly, Paul Brass, Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, and Tom Nairn are some of the more prominent names among the modernists. See Anthony D. Smith, "The 'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism," *Millennium* 93 (2000): 791-814. A summary view of the various modernist positions can be found in Özkirimli, "Discourses and Debates on Nationalism," chap. 2; Anthony D. Smith, "Introduction" in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1988), and "Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism," *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 445-58.

and Benedict Anderson exemplify the modernist perspectives on nationalism.

Gellner's basic insights come from a Marxist reading of history, which asserts economic concerns as real and primary forces in history, decriing as "false consciousness," or epiphenomenal the concerns of nationalism, religion, and other matters of anthropology. Gellner thus views nationalism as a necessary outcome of the need of the modern nation-state to organize and manage an industrial society. The state accomplishes this through the production and management of a homogeneous national organization and culture, which include an official language, modes of communication, work ethic, lifestyle; and national values of loyalty, service, and solidarity with the nation-state. This brings into being a "high culture" developed and sustained by the state, and to which all other sub-cultures are expected to conform.²² In short, in Gellner's account, the state births nationalism and the nation.

Like Gellner, the modernist Benedict Anderson too places emphasis on education and literacy toward the formation of a literate intelligentsia overseeing the transition to a national order.²³ In this connection, "print capitalism" (exemplars being newspapers and novels) serve as the great instruments molding national imagination. Anderson saw the emergence of nationalism as the "dusk of religious modes of thought."²⁴ One of Anderson's most cited insights is one that declares nations "imagined communities"

²² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008). In *Muslim Society*, Gellner breaks down nationalism to three characteristics: (a) promise of upward mobility, (b) conditioned upon literacy and specialized educational know-how, (c) resulting in meritocracy and relative equality among all members of the nation. *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 93.

²³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 116.

²⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 11.

because the idea of the nation comprising millions of people, enclosed within geographical borders, identified with a certain history that continues to inform its members, all require a feat of imagination to sustain it.²⁵ Renan’s idea of nation as a “daily plebiscite” is an apt description of the role of imagination in nationalism.

As noted above, structuralist approaches closely align with the theory of instrumentalism that view nationalism as a tool for public manipulation. Scott Hibbard’s analysis of religious nationalism finds alignment with the instrumentalist reading. However, Hibbard goes a step further in adverting to the unintended consequences upon religion of the Western ideological impositions in the form of secular structures. Hibbard points to secular state actors as the unwitting instigators of religious nationalism. For the very attempt by the state to keep religion out of the political sphere, elicits religion’s pushback against the state’s encroachment. The consequence is often the opposite of what the secular actors intend: politicization of religion and its forceful emergence in the political sphere.²⁶

Van der Veer criticizes Gellner and Anderson for their teleological and universalist readings of history as determined to give rise to nationalism everywhere, and their essentialist readings of culture as either traditional or modern. This cultural essentialism views nationalism as a sign of transition from traditional society to

²⁵ See Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism*, especially chapters 3-5.

²⁶ Scott W Hibbard, *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). In reference to India, Madan agrees with the unintended consequences in the form of fundamentalist reactions of the secular state’s attempt to manage the equality of all religions, protect the minority religions, and maintain an equidistance from all of them without favoring any one of them. T. N. Madan, “Secularism in Its Place,” in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 4 (1987): 747–60.

modernity. In reality, however, “nationalism creates other nationalisms—religious, ethnic, linguistic, secular” as “counterforces” that might resist and challenge the nationalism of European pedigree.²⁷ In other words, according to the modernist view, Islamic nationalism can only be dismissed as regressive and reactionary, whereas a better alternative is to approach it as a “counterforce” to and a counter-critique of nationalism.

In stark contrast to the modernist view is the view of ethnosymbolism, which more closely aligns with a semiotic reading of nationalism. A prominent figure in this camp is Anthony D. Smith, who holds that while nationalism is a modern phenomenon, its basic foundations can be traced to longstanding ethnic myths, memories, religions, symbols, and values.²⁸ In constructing a new form of organization, nationalism did not (and, perhaps could not) make a clean break from the past, but kept a continuity with the enduring collective residue of ethnic organization.²⁹ Symbols are crucial in this view as the ethnic elements (like blood and ancestry) are imagined in symbolic forms. In his later work, Smith attributed the persistent appeal of nations and nationalism to their religious character and its sacred foundations. Smith thus explained nationalism as “a sacred communion of the people; the elevation of the voice of the people; the return to nature

²⁷ Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 12-18.

²⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1985; repr., Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

²⁹ Another way of explaining the reasons why past experiences, especially religion, retain their influence in nationalism is the cultural factor. Brubaker points to the link between religious confession and culture as an important factor in discerning the relationship between religion and nationalism. “Confessionalization,” he notes, “substantially tightened the relationship between political organization and religious belief and practice. In so doing, it provided a model for and matrix of the congruence between culture and polity that is at the core of nationalism.” Rogers Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches,” *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (2012): 7.

and to roots; the cult of authenticity; and the sacrificial virtue of heroes and prophets.”³⁰

The ethnosymbolist John Armstrong emphasizes (*à la* Fredrik Barth), *inter alia*, the significance of “boundaries” in ethnic identities. The obvious import of ethnic boundaries is to advert to the dynamic of group identification through inclusion and exclusion, an undeniable fact of nationalism.³¹ Both Armstrong and Smith also advert to the myth-symbol complex, the point of which is to recognize that ethnic boundaries exist in the imagination of a group’s members, and that this mythic character involves a narration of national stories, replete with metaphors and symbols. Ethnosymbolism aligns with Anderson in his emphasis on geographical boundaries limiting the extent of nations. This is one factor in common between nationalism and religion as religion too often serves to demarcate boundaries that include believers and exclude non-believers; and within the same religion, between the authentic and inauthentic practitioners. Interestingly, a central problem of contention among Islamic nationalisms is the demarcation of geographical and cultural boundaries. It is this imperative of demarcating Islam’s national boundary that turns to theology as a primary marker of difference. For not surprisingly, in a political conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in a shared space or over the same space, religious difference is an obvious marker of national boundary which is liable to be emphasized.

³⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 32.

³¹ John R. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel-Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). Similarly, Brubaker speaks of both religion and nationalism’s production of “cultural homogeneity” within the in-group and “cultural heterogeneity” across groups.

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM

The academic analysis of Islamic nationalism presents a challenge because the very study of religion in Western academia is fraught with the lack of consensus on the nature and scope of religion. A common strand running through most of the various academic approaches is religion as a private affair of the individual. This consensus, however, has been questioned in recent times. The difficulty lies in the presumption of the universal validity of the definition of religion, and the conflicting nature of different definitions taken together, without acknowledging the historicity of the terms ‘religion’ and ‘secular.’ Talal Asad’s work has sought to disabuse the study of religion from pretensions to the universality of religious/secular divide in non-Western cultures.³² In relation to Islam, the difficulty is compounded by the dual European Christian and post-Christian readings of Islam as either anti-Christian and/or anti-modern. Addressing the dual Western genealogy, Masud, Salvatore, and van Bruinessen identify three assumptions, traceable to the early days of social sciences, that inform the modern imagination on Islam’s relation to modernity: “deficiencies (measured by Islam’s alleged insufficient capacity to supersede traditions), dependencies (on Western modernity) and idiosyncrasies (in terms of distorted outcomes of a dependent modernisation).”³³ In general, the trouble with Muslim cultures toward modernization is traced to the heart of Islam itself, to “an all-encompassing doctrine of divine authority.”³⁴ Such a criticism

³² See, for example, Asad’s *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (1993).

³³ Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armondo Salvatore, and Martin van Bruinessen, eds, *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bu/detail.action?docID=536977>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

implies, again, that modernization—as it developed and achieved status in the Christian/post-Christian world—is universal and normative, hence, the standard of judgment by which other cultures are judged. It also implies that the essence of Islamic monotheism, the idea of an all-powerful monotheistic God, is inherently anti-modern. The signal sent to Muslims is, therefore, that modernization requires them to reconsider their basic theology.

Within the reigning Western paradigm, Islamic nationalism constitutes a subset of religious nationalism, and tends to be associated with the pejorative labels of fundamentalism,³⁵ religious resurgence,³⁶ Islamism, jihadism, Islamic extremism, Islamic activism,³⁷ and political Islam. Over time, ‘Islamism’ seems to have taken preference over other labels.³⁸ In one definition, Islamism is defined as the commitment to political action to implement an Islamic agenda.³⁹ The intent to suffix ‘ism’ and the qualification of ‘political’ signals the attempt to separate a purportedly normative Islam from the “resurgent” variety.⁴⁰ This is a modern reading that frames religion as modernity’s Other.

³⁵ The Fundamentalism Project (1987-1995) of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, directed by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, was a most notable effort in the analysis of religious fundamentalism due to its vast scope.

³⁶ For examples, Richard T. Antoun, Mary C. Hegland, and Mary Elaine Hegland, *Religious Resurgence: Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism* (1987); and Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity, Judaism in the Modern World* (1994).

³⁷ Some of the terms are discussed in Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, “Introduction: Islamic Reformism in South Asia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 42, no. 2/3 (2008): 247–57; and Richard C. Martin and Abbas Barzegar, eds., *Islamism: Contested Perspectives on Political Islam* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

³⁸ Daniel M. Varisco, “Inventing Islamism: The Violence of Rhetoric,” in *Islamism*, 37. Varisco criticizes the abuses to which terms like ‘Islamism’ are subject: “Islam...is being *ismed* to death;” and appeals for a critical examination of such terms. *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁹ Donald K. Emmerson, “Inclusive Islamism: The Utility of Diversity,” in *Islamism*, eds. Martin and Barzegar, 27. The definition is originally James Piscatori’s, and approved by Emmerson.

⁴⁰ These labels in part serve the same strategic function depicted in the identification of “good Muslim,” one approved by the West, from “bad Muslim,” disapproved by the West. Mahmood

The failures of the modern imagination in making sense of religious nationalism points to the Western imaginary's insistence on the universality of secular ways of engaging in politics. These failures have given rise to the critique of secularism in non-Western contexts. Waged from different quarters, this critique makes a forceful plea to reconsider the role of religion in politics.

In his study of Hindu and Muslim nationalisms, Peter van der Veer laments a secular bias in the study of nationalism, and the lack of scrutiny over the role of colonialism and orientalism in spreading nationalism to the non-Western world. The secular bias divides societies into modern and traditional, for which reason it views religious nationalism as "somehow flawed or hybrid" for what is seen as a conflation of traditional religiosity and modernity. Accordingly, van der Veer recommends due attention to the relationship between nationalism and tradition.⁴¹ Tradition serves as a basis upon which religious nationalism is constructed.⁴² Van der Veer's cautions about the Western bias were echoed earlier by T. N. Madan's critique of Indian secularism. Madan sees secularism as a product of the Protestant ideal of salvation as an individual concern, which in time engendered the tradition/modern binary in which the modern became synonymous with universal progress. In post-colonial India, Madan acknowledges the failure of secularism in the peaceful management of religions. Criticizing secular biases against Indian religions, Madan recommends that religion and

Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2005).

⁴¹ Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*.

⁴² *Ibid.*, ix-x.

secularism both be permitted to play a constructive role in nation-building.⁴³

The upshot of the preceding discussion is that the biases of the Western imaginary in the study of religion have obstructed a greater appreciation of the role of religion in politics. The challenge for the student of religion is to approach their subject matter in a fresh light without the modern biases. My pursuit of Islamic nationalism as political theology is an attempt to look past the normative assumptions of religious and secular, and to explore the positive role Islam might have played in Muslim politics in leading up to the Partition.

Reimagining the Role of Muslim Politics

According to Muhammad Khalid Masud, for South Asian Muslims, modernity entailed three manifestations: political and economic decline as a result of colonial expansion; Western criticism of Muslim religious elements such as the Qur'an, laws, and culture as backward and unreasonable; and the equation of modernization with Westernization by Muslims educated in the Western systems, whether abroad or at home. In this background, according to Masud, one set of Muslim responses to modernity took the form of Islamic modernism, which, in its second phase, turned to the discourses on nationalism, the universal caliphate, identity, and autonomy of the self.⁴⁴ Masud's exposition thus points to Muslims' religious politics in colonial India a step toward modernization. More specific studies on Muslim religiopolitics convey the nuances and the future possibilities that modernist readings remain oblivious to. Iqtidar, Hashemi, and

⁴³ Madan, "Secularism in Its Place."

⁴⁴ Muhammad Khalid Masud, "Islamic Modernism," in *Islam and Modernity*, 237-260, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bu/reader.action?docID=536977&ppg=10>.

Ahmad have offered analyses pointing to the possibilities of secularizing trends in contemporary Islam mediated by religious politics. In his comparative study of the development of democracy in the Western and the Muslim world, Hashemi has argued that if liberal democracy is to take root in the Muslim world, it can only do so by following a path through religious politics, much as it did in the West.⁴⁵ Irfan Ahmad's ethnographic study of the Indian movement the *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*, founded by Sayyid Maududi (see Chapter 5), shows its transition from an uncompromising anti-secularist commitment in colonial India to a pro-secularist stance in the post-colonial period.⁴⁶ Similarly, Iqtidar's ethnographic study of two urban Muslim movements in Lahore, Pakistan (one being the Pakistani *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*), gives credence to Hashemi's argument. Differentiating between secularism (the separation of church and state) and secularization (as rational engagement with religion and politics), she argues that by politicizing Islam, as opposed to Islamizing politics, and placing the emphasis on rationality, engagement with labor unions, communist parties, and student groups, the two movements are in fact unwittingly contributing to the secularization of Islam even as they work to oppose secularism.⁴⁷

A similar argument is advanced by Shadi Hamid who also maintains that if there is a path in the Muslim world to a more democratic future, it is likely to materialize by

⁴⁵ Nader Hashemi, *Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴⁶ Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁴⁷ Humeira Iqtidar, *Secularizing Islamists? Jama'at-e-Islami and Jama'at-ud-Da'wa in Urban Pakistan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

traversing a path that passes through religious politics.⁴⁸ A major reason for this is “Islamic exceptionalism, the idea that “there are more resources for Muslims making ‘Islamic’ arguments [for political engagement] than for those making arguments for European-style secularism.”⁴⁹ Similarly, in his comparative study on Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, Michael Cook wonders at the reason for Islam’s “higher political profile than any of its competitors,”⁵⁰ a question he observes had not been adequately addressed. Cook’s overall argument stems from the observation that ancient religions in modernity present their adherents a certain range of options that serve to *limit* their choices, and the choices made need to be *legitimized*.⁵¹ Cook concludes that Islam presents “a large and conspicuous exception to the normal pattern”⁵² because “in the context of modern politics there is more to be recovered from the foundations of Islam than from those of Hinduism or Christianity—and this in terms of both identity and values.”⁵³ One reason for this dynamic is due to “a clear conception of a canon—Koran

⁴⁸ Shadi Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle over Islam is Reshaping the World* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016).

⁴⁹ Hamid, 53.

⁵⁰ Michael Cook, *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics: The Islamic Case in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), xi.

⁵¹ Cook, xv.

⁵² Cook, 441.

⁵³ Cook, 441. The idea of Islam presenting an exception to the norm has also been echoed by Shadi Hamid’s *Islamic Exceptionalism*, and in the previous century by Ernest Gellner for whom while most other pre-modern religious traditions have paid a heavy price for persisting in modernity by abandoning their religious doctrines in favor of modern industrialized cultures, Islam has proven to be an outlier in that Muslim scripturalism has been able to incorporate political modernity in the form of nationalism without surrendering its ultimate doctrines. See, Gellner’s *Muslim Society*, 4-5; and *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4, and for the fuller argument, 1-22. Such observations have undoubtedly been challenged, for instance by Tristan James Mabry, “Modernization, Nationalism and Islam: An Examination of Ernest Gellner’s Writings on Muslim Society with Reference to Indonesia and Malaysia,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 1 (1998): 64–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198798330106>.

and Ḥadīth—that stands apart from the rest of the tradition: it is divine revelation, it is temporally anterior, and it is tied to the compelling figure of the prophet Muḥammad.”⁵⁴

To state Cook’s assertion in semiotic terms: for the political theologians under review, the sacred symbols of the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad continue to weigh heavily on Muslim imagination as they face up to the challenges of modernization.

In view of the preceding reflections, let me underscore a common strand running through these analyses. The critics of the Western imaginary, such as Hamid, Iqtidar, and Hashemi, themselves remain situated within the Western imaginary as they continue to dream of or suggest a more democratic future in the Muslim world as normative. Eschewing the question whether this is possible or even desirable in the Muslim context, the idea that Muslim theopolitics might have completely different goals than liberal politics, having to do with salvation and the saving of soul instead of salvaging economic growth, remains unthought in the Western imaginary. The analysis of political theology will help clarify the very different kinds of objectives political theology tries to achieve which run counter to liberal democratic ideals.

Decolonization and Political Theology

The critique of nationalism’s relationship with colonialism was taken up by postcolonial studies that scrutinize the colonial functioning of knowledge/power relationship and its manifestations in the colony. Gyanendra Pandey, for example, points to communalism in India as a product of “colonialist knowledge” of classification and identification of the colonized, which “constructed” communalism as rooted in supposed

⁵⁴ Cook, *Ancient Religions*, 101.

permanent local identities “produced” by the event of the “communal riot” in which same identities are seen to clash throughout Indian history.⁵⁵

The postcolonial critique has been joined by the more recent turn to decolonial theory that seeks to venture deeper in excavating the underlying assumptions and workings of the colonial enterprise. The basic insight of decolonial critique is the equation of two related modes of thinking and acting conveyed by the complementary pair modernity/coloniality. In this connection, Mahmood Mamdani has explored the origins of political modernity in relation to the rise of the nation-state, whose origins he traces to the 1492 Spanish Inquisition that sought to create a “homogenous national homeland for Christian Spaniards by ejecting and converting those among them who were strangers to the nation—[Muslim] Moors and Jews.”⁵⁶ Mamdani thus concludes that modern “colonialism and the modern state were born together with the creation of the nation-state.”⁵⁷ Mamdani further explains that colonialism was imposed in two distinct but related modes: direct rule and indirect rule. Direct colonial rule espoused the project of “nation-building” by remaking the native in the image of the colonizer—quite different than the nation-building in a post-colonial context. Native education was thus replaced with European education; local customs, laws, languages, religion were placed in an asymmetrical relationship with European counterparts; and local forms of land use were replaced with European practices. Indirect colonial rule describes the post-colonial

⁵⁵ Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, ed. 2nd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁵⁶ Mahmood Mamdani, "Introduction," in *Neither Settler nor Native* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020), <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/10.4159/9780674249998-001>.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

situation in which the colonial project is taken over by local elites in the governance of the nation-state order by reproducing, *inter alia*, the colonial dichotomy of majority versus minority identities, and by creating local, sub-national rivalries and constructing respective histories by conflating various markers of difference (language, ethnicity, etc.) with territorial control and identities. “Decolonization,” Mamdani explains, “the counterpoint, is the unmaking of the permanence of these identities,” by “reimagining the order of the nation-state.”⁵⁸ The problem of Hindu majoritarianism thus weighs heavily on the Muslim imagination in the anticipation of the post-colonial Indian state. Islamic nationalism’s theopolitical task is to construct a “counterpoint” toward ending direct colonialism, and preempt Muslims’ minority status by creating a majority-Muslim state, or to manage and minimize its possible encroachments upon Muslims’ religiocultural autonomy.

Decolonial theory also addresses the conception of secular/religion binary and the role of academic study of religion in the colonial enterprise. Whereas Talal Asad has duly argued for the historical nature and the mutuality of the categories of secular and religion, decolonial theory emphasizes the deployment of ‘religion’ and the universality of secular/religion binary as serving to distort the religious understanding and experiences of the colonized, and confine the positive role of religion to the private sphere. Needless to say, the nation-state order rests on that very dichotomy and so perpetuates it.⁵⁹ An

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Garret Fitzgerald, “Introduction to Decoloniality and the Study of Religion,” *Contending Modernities*, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/decoloniality/introdecolonial/>.

important recommendation in this connection as regards Islamic studies, for example, has been made by Abdulkader Tayob in his recommendation to decolonize Islamic studies by entirely turning away from non-Muslim discourses to Muslim discourses themselves.⁶⁰ Tayob's plea draws attention to the importance of emic methods for the study of religion.⁶¹ My focus on Islamic nationalism and primary Urdu sources conforms to Tayob's recommendation.

The extent and globalization of modernity, however, does not make it possible nor desirable to erase all elements of modernity from the previously colonized cultures. The Muslim cultures for the most part recognize the necessity to modernize, but they also insist on sustaining religious authenticity. This emic quests to both decolonize (or de-Westernize) and modernize the previously colonized cultures has led to the emergence of different kinds of modernity in the non-Western world. This dynamic has led Shmuel Eisenstadt to formulate the concept of multiple modernities. What connects all the various modernities together is that they all represent responses to the features of the "original Western project" without questioning the original "existential problematic."⁶² That problematic is defined by the reflexivity upon the traditional assumptions about anthropology ("conception of human agency"), society, economics, and political order.⁶³ Western modernity articulated the cultural side of the problematic as the problem of the

⁶⁰ Abdulkader Tayob, "The Promise of Decolonization for the Study of Religions," *Contending Modernities*, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/decoloniality/promise-of-decolonization/>.

⁶¹ See Tayob's comparison of two divergent Muslim readings of the modern category of religion "Divergent Approaches to Religion in Modern Islamic Discourses," *Religion Compass* 3, no. 2 (2009): 155–67.

⁶² Shmuel. N. Eisenstadt "Multiple Modernities." *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 2.

⁶³ Eisenstadt, 3.

“emancipation of man,” expressed through the salient symbols of equality, freedom, justice, autonomy, solidarity, and identity.⁶⁴ The political side of the problematic manifested, among other things, social movements rooted in national identities. Non-Western modernities have responded to the problematic on their own terms by selectively adopting certain aspects of modernity all the while rejecting other aspects. Given modernity’s dynamic nature, the process has entailed “the continuous selection, reinterpretation, and reformulation of these imported ideas.”⁶⁵ In the multiple modernities framework, Muslim nationalism represents the earliest Muslim contributions toward the formation of South Asian Muslim modernities. This study will in turn contribute to understanding of the process of “selection, reinterpretation, and reformulation” of modern political theory in colonial India, and the ways in which political theology challenged and constructed an alternative to the Western “existential problematic.”

Masud, Salvatore, and Bruinessen have offered a wider framework for scrutinizing the relationship between Islam and modernity by recommending a comparative civilizational analysis as articulated by Johann P. Arnason, in tandem with Eisenstadt’s theory of “multiple modernities.”⁶⁶ Masud *et al*’s first step is to problematize the classical social scientific perspective on tradition as a holdover from pre-modern cultures, and as rooted in rigid customs and ritualization, and inhibiting innovation and social differentiation, thus, the opposite of modernity. The editors view civilization as “constellations of culture and power, in which a tradition is the dynamic

⁶⁴ Eisenstadt, 6.

⁶⁵ Eisenstadt, 15.

⁶⁶ Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

cultural dimension of a civilization.”⁶⁷ Salvatore defines tradition as “the ensemble of practices and arguments that secure the social bond and provide cohesiveness to human communities of varying scale.”⁶⁸ On tradition’s relation to power, Salvatore explains that the “way power is exercised and legitimized is therefore dependent on cultural traditions: on the codes of legitimacy elaborated by cultural elites, but also on the concrete, everyday practice and judgement of the commoners.”⁶⁹ In this sense, “[t]radition thus conceived is essential to social action, communication and even cultural and institutional innovation.”⁷⁰ Salvatore thus overcomes the modern dichotomy of tradition and modernity, and rehabilitates the necessary role of tradition in a modern society, and the mutuality of intellectuals and the public. In the Indian context, the larger Muslim tradition consists of multiple smaller traditions, and the tradition mostly responsible for the development of political theology is that of religious scholars who exercise authority over religious interpretations and serve as guides for the masses (see Robinson’s discussion below). This tradition, as Cook duly noted, serves to both limit and legitimize Muslim political engagements.

Situating Political Theology as a Form of Nationalism in Colonial India

The Partition historiography does not acknowledge any positive role of political theology in the political developments that led to the 1947 moment. Multiple reasons account for this failure. The South Asian historian Francis Robinson has criticized the

⁶⁷ Masud *et al*, 7.

⁶⁸ Masud *et al*, 5.

⁶⁹ Masud *et al*, 8.

⁷⁰ Masud *et al*, 7.

structuralist and instrumentalist analyses in South Asian historiography in ignoring the role of religion. He notes that the historiographical methods in the 1970s were tilted toward the study of the material world and material forces. This framework of research saw little importance in the study of ideas and the role of religion in history.⁷¹ Targeting the Indian sociologist Imtiaz Ahmad as an exemplar of the trend, Robinson points to Ahmad's attempts to highlight the gulf between the grand religious ideal of living Islam according to religious law and the real practices of ordinary Muslims saturated with syncretism. Ahmad dismisses the readings of Aziz Ahmad and Clifford Geertz which saw the tendency of orthodox, "great traditions" to gradually overcome "little traditions." Rather, Imtiaz Ahmad maintained that the two traditions have co-existed in Muslim Indian history. Robinson locates Ahmad's reading as part of a constellation of Indian Muslim historiography hailing from the Jamia Millia Islamia that includes prominent scholars such as Muhammad Mujeeb, Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, and Mushirul Hasan. Among the drawbacks of Ahmad's analysis, Robinson underlines, *inter alia*, undue emphasis on religious practice and "synchronic" comparison at the expense of historical evolution of authoritative traditions.⁷² Robinson's alternative reading, aligned with Aziz Ahmad and Geertz, is to elevate, without discarding the fact of syncretism, the influence of two kinds of "high Islamic cultures:" the religious scholars and the Sufi holy men, "both are concerned to guard and to broadcast Islamic knowledge in their time, and to

⁷¹ Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History*, 1.

⁷² Robinson, 44-48.

raise fresh guardians and transmitters of the central messages of Islamic culture.”⁷³

One instrumentalist view of Muslim separatism in colonial India was advanced by Paul Brass in adverting to the role of the political elites, associated with the old Mughal nobility (the *ahsrāf*) spearheading the Pakistan demand, in manipulating religious symbols and creating a national myth to serve its secular purposes.⁷⁴ Arguing against Brass, Robinson held that a sense of separate religious consciousness was part and parcel of the Muslim presence in India, and began to be heightened in the post-1857 period. In this process, religious scholars played an important role.⁷⁵ In exploring the organic processes and experiences that unintentionally pushed Muslims toward separatism, Robinson detects a growing sense of “this-worldly” consciousness among South Asian Muslims in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The growing thisworldliness translated into a more modern view of the Muslim self, discernible in four registers: self-instrumentality, self-affirmation, affirmation of ordinary life, and an emphasis on self-consciousness—all of which together heightened the sense of individual autonomy and responsibility in world transformation. Robinson calls this dynamic “subjective secularization” (*a la* Peter Berger). In this process too the religious scholars unwittingly lent a hand by disseminating religious knowledge to a new reading public, made possible

⁷³ Francis Robinson, “Islam and Muslim Society,” in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 17, no. 2 (1983), 191.

⁷⁴ More recently, Farzana Shaikh has echoed similar ideas that the upperclass Muslims (the *ashrāf*) were imbued with a sense of Muslim brotherhood, superiority of their culture, and the wish to live under Muslim rule transferred these convictions to the general public in the form of a separatist discourse. Farzana Shaikh, “Muslims and Political Representation in Colonial India: The Making of Pakistan,” *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986): 539–57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/312536>.

⁷⁵ Francis Robinson, “Nation Formation: The Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism”, in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 15, no. 3 (1977): 215–30. Paul R. Brass, “A Reply to Francis Robinson,” in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 15, no.3 (1977): 231-34.

by print media.⁷⁶ The scholars, therefore, “helped to destroy their own monopoly over religious knowledge.”⁷⁷ Joined in by the reformists, modernists, and religious scholars, the growing thisworldliness resulted in a more rational Islam that, while still resting on sacred texts and Islamic law, made Islam “self-conscious, systematic and based on abstract principles.”⁷⁸ In my reading, Islamic political theology was one manifestation of Muslims’ heightened collective self-awareness in modern terms that resulted in its theopolitical systematization.

In late twentieth century, David Gilmartin had noted (*a la* Gyanendra Pandey), that “neither scholars of British India nor scholars of Indian nationalism have been able to find a compelling place for partition [of India] within their larger historical narratives.”⁷⁹ Gilmartin points out that the historiography on the Partition has either considered Pakistan a miscarriage of modernity, or a result of narrow-minded sectarian and communal interests. The root of the problem is traced to the gap that historians find between “the marked disjunction in the historical literature between the story of the ‘high politics’ of partition, the negotiations between the British, the [Indian National] Congress, and the Muslim League that led to the creation of Pakistan, and the narrative of popular history, of ‘history from below.’”⁸⁰ The perspective of “high politics” lays blame or praise for the Partition upon a minority of elite players deciding the fate of the many. In contrast, the perspectives from below lament the madness of the bloodletting,

⁷⁶ Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, 111-118.

⁷⁷ Robinson, 111.

⁷⁸ I Robinson, 127.

⁷⁹ David Gilmartin, “Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative,” in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 4 (1998): 1068.

⁸⁰ Gilmartin, “Partition, Pakistan,” 1069.

displacements, the pillage and plunder of the Partition. Gilmartin's alternative approach suggests that instead of searching for a single grand narrative that might transcend individual narratives, "we need to understand the ways that the tension between multiple constructions of identity and the search for moral community *itself* defined the partition event."⁸¹ Gilmartin's suggestion speaks to my thesis that religion was not a secondary addendum to Muslim imagination that fed into separatism, but that it was in part one of the primary motivations that strengthened the separatist cause.

Ayesha Jalal's *Sole Spokesman* exemplifies the "high politics" historiography that presents Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the chief Muslim negotiator with the British, as never really intending to create Pakistan, but only driven by the intense desire to be recognized as the Muslims' "sole spokesman." Jalal concluded that Jinnah only sought to use the Pakistan demand as a "bargaining counter" to secure a more just and the advantageous settlement of Muslims' minority predicament within the Indian federation. Who then was to be blamed for the Partition? Jalal points to the leaders of the Congress party. It has been noted that Jalal's thesis has come to define a "new orthodoxy" in the field.⁸² Jalal's highly provocative and counterintuitive interpretation turns the whole Partition into a farce and an accident. It empties the Pakistan demand from all positive and deliberate content. If even Jinnah never really intended Pakistan, the Partition turns out to be a pure accident, even a miracle. Yet, without contending with Jalal's thesis, I intend to show that

⁸¹ Gilmartin, 1070.

⁸² Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* (Daryaganj, Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 14.

there were many others who did in fact intend Pakistan and their understanding of it was saturated with positive, theological content.

Turning to the nature of Muslim nationalism both in colonial India and in post-colonial Pakistan, Devji contrasts old European nationalism rooted in blood, history, and territory with the new Zionist form adopted by Israel and Pakistan founded upon “psychic projection.” Searching for parallels beyond European nationalisms, Devji’s finds that the “Muslim League’s ideology...was of a piece with Enlightenment thought, especially in its revolutionary aspect, whose politics of the pure idea was fanatical because its abstract logic was capable of sweeping away all that was given to a people by nature and history.”⁸³ In Devji’s final analysis, “Faith, in other words, is the belief in and remaking of oneself almost out of nothing, so that Indian politics ceases to be about majorities and minorities to become a politics of the pure will.”⁸⁴ Devji therefore opposes nature and history to faith, and like Jalal, empties the separatist demand of all. However, we saw with Anderson (and will see again in the next chapter), that the kind of national rootedness in history and nature whose loss is decried by Devji too depends on imagination, hence, on a secular faith or myth. The fault with Devji’s argument is placing the emphasis on the secular ML, which did instrumentalize religion for its purposes, while ignoring the whole mass of political theology that, instead of becoming a tool of politics or leaving politics to politicians, sought to instrumentalize politics for the purposes of thisworldly and otherworldly salvation.

⁸³ Devji, *Muslim Zion*, 133-134.

⁸⁴ Devji, 138.

In contrast to the structuralist, instrumentalist, and “high politics” explanations of Islamic nationalism, a minority of voices, in addition to Robinson, in the Partition historiography do give greater credence to the role of Islam in Muslim politics. When it comes to the question of why did so many Muslims in the end run to the side of the elitist ML in supporting the demand for Pakistan, Farzana Shaikh offers an argument that tries to dive deeper into the religious imagination that led to separatism. She contrasts the major differences between liberal political theory and what she considers to be Islamic principles of representation and organization.⁸⁵ Her point is that Muslims place a higher value on communal identity and representation than the liberal ideals of individualism and meritocratic representation. Hence, even the supposedly secular ML’s politics and framework of representation cannot be understood without grasping “its relation to the vision of societal organization propounded by Islam and espoused by Muslims.”⁸⁶ The semiotic insight hidden in Shaikh’s reading is that the secular ML, primarily unconcerned with religion, could hardly be fully conscious of Islam’s axiological preferences. Rather, the traditional imagination worked unconsciously in the imagination of the League’s leadership. This is one way in which Muslim attempts at being modern come up against traditional limitations. We will see in Chapter 3 that the first deliberate attempt at Muslim modernization valued community over individuality, or evaluated the role of the individual through a communal frame. The force of traditional ways of imagining social life is one reason why Muslims could not adopt a secular and individualistic framework

⁸⁵ Shaikh, “Muslims and Political Representation.”

⁸⁶ Shaikh, 545.

of politics in its entirety, root and branch. The reasons lie deeper than the surface-level structural concerns of economic prosperity, realpolitik, and instrumentalism.

More recently, a most important attempt at facing up to the nuanced contribution of religious intervention in the Partition story has been made by Venkat Dhulipala. Dhulipala laments that the scholarship on Partition has assumed for the most part that until its very conception Pakistan remained a vague idea, “insufficiently imagined” as quipped by Salman Rushdie—that is, devoid of meaningful content.⁸⁷ He remarks that “[h]istorians riveted by the political performance of the elegantly suited Mohammad Ali Jinnah and consequently prone to seeing Pakistani nationalism as a species of secular nationalism have not paid adequate attention to the religious impulse animating the struggle for its creation.”⁸⁸ Against the grain of established scholarship, Dhulipala argues that Pakistan was “popularly imagined,” “envisaged not just as a refuge for the Indian Muslims, but as an Islamic utopia that would be the harbinger for renewal and rise of Islam in the modern world, act as the powerful new leader and protector of the entire Islamic world and, thus, emerge as a worthy successor to the defunct Turkish Caliphate as the foremost Islamic power in the twentieth century.”⁸⁹ In particular, Dhulipala accentuates the role played by a group of religious scholars (the JUI, the focus of Chapter 6) “in articulating this imagined national community.”⁹⁰ Dhulipala concludes that

⁸⁷ Dhulipala, Venkat. “A Nation State Insufficiently Imagined?: Debating Pakistan in Late Colonial North India.” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 48, no. 3 (2011): 377–405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001946461104800303>.

⁸⁸ Dhulipala, 496-497.

⁸⁹ Dhulipala, 4.

⁹⁰ Dhulipala, 4.

“Pakistan was a symbol with substance.”⁹¹ On the one hand, the “Muslim League propaganda valorized Pakistan’s ‘geo-body’ waxing eloquent on its natural resources, infrastructural assets, strategic location and a human population with unbounded potential;” on the other hand, “Islam demonstrably constituted its soul and spirit.”⁹² While Dhulipala goes a long way in habilitating the important and positive role of religion in separatism, he limits his analysis mostly to the seven-year period leading up to the Partition, and does not address political theology as such.

On the flip side of the successful role of religion expounded by Dhulipala lies the failure of Pakistan’s opponents to make a compelling case against it. Ali Qasmi and Megan Robb’s *Muslims Against the Muslim League* serves as a complement to Dhulipala’s thesis. The editors argue that despite the initially large numbers and formidable forces on the side of Pakistan’s opponents, which included major Muslim organizations coalescing under the umbrella organization the Azad Muslim Conference, they gradually lost support and failed to convince the masses of their viewpoint.⁹³ The reason being “the intellectual poverty of its [Pakistan’s] critics” and their failure to offer a viable alternative to Pakistan.⁹⁴ One weakness of the arguments advanced by Pakistan’s opponents was that while they vehemently rejected the League’s particular definition of Muslim nationhood (*qaum*), they did not deny Muslim nationhood altogether, yet failed to convince the masses of their position. After the 1940 declaration for the demand of

⁹¹ Dhulipala, 496.

⁹² Dhulipala, 496-497.

⁹³ Ali Usman Qasmi and Megan Eaton Robb, eds., *Muslims Against the Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁹⁴ Qasmi and Robb, 6.

Pakistan, what united all the different opinions for or against Pakistan was the shared sense of Muslims as a “religiously defined, historically constituted and culturally distinct” nation (*qaum*).⁹⁵

In light of Dhulipala, and Qasmi and Robb’s conclusions, I will argue that it was not only that separatism was sufficiently imagined and debated by myriad thinkers for and against Pakistan from 1940 to 1947, but that this imagination was long prepared by political theology since the early twentieth century and copiously disseminated in the public sphere. Moreover, not only did the anti-separatist camp suffer from incoherence, but that the separatist camp wielded greater coherence and cogency due to the whole mass of political theology developed over four decades. This means that it was the anti-separatist theologians themselves who were responsible for initially systemizing and popularizing the motifs and themes that were eventually tied together by the separatist theologians. In other words, the Muslim separatist theology was the logical and more coherent conclusion of the basic premises of the anti-separatist camp, which is why it won over the Muslim public. In the process, a new kind of “high politics” was developed, that of political theology.

PEIRCEAN SEMIOTICS AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The choice of my theoretical framework rests on the fact that both nationalism and religion are forms of imagination that closely resemble each other in certain respects which explain the nature of their mutual resemblance, operations, and conflicts. As we will see in the next chapter, the structures and dynamics of human imagination are

⁹⁵ Qasmi and Robb, 8.

symbolic, and mediate all human experience. As a study of theopolitical imagination, my theoretical framework brings together two semiotic theories. I turn to Liah Greenfeld's theory of nationalism toward ascertaining the symbolic structures and dynamics of nationalist imagination. Toward scrutinizing the structure and dynamics of religious imagination and the role of sacred symbol in it, I draw on Robert Neville's theory of religion.

I share with Neville the espousal of the semiotic of Charles Peirce, which has recently begun to receive attention in religious studies. Toward a fuller appreciation of Peircean semiotics, the following review situates the Peircean approach in relation to the study of religious semiotics. To clarify some basic terminology, I will use *semiotics* to mean the general study of signs, symbols, and signification; *semiotic* as its adjective, and to denote a particular view of semiotics (e.g., Neville's semiotic). I will employ *semiosis* to mean the dynamic processes of signs and symbols, and the human processes of signification; and *semiosic* as its adjective. In referring to Charles Peirce's semiotic based on his philosophy of pragmatism or pragmaticism, I will use *pragmatist* as its adjective to avoid conflating it with the more conventional, pejorative meanings of 'pragmatic' as 'expedient' or 'utilitarian.'

The difficulties of the modern imagination in facing up to the complexity of religion are duly reflected in the study of religion. One reason has to do with the lack of endemic methodologies in the study of religion. Theories primarily designed to investigate non-religious phenomena attempt to reduce religion's complexity to their respective disciplinary subject matter, and this is liable to paint a partial picture of

religion.⁹⁶ Note that Stausberg and Engler's *Handbook* on methods in religious studies published in 2011 was the first of its kind. The editors state that the "method use in the study of religion\ continues to be relatively unsophisticated and surprisingly uniform;"⁹⁷ and that "there also seems to be only a limited interest in actively exploring new methodological options"⁹⁸—semiotics being one of them. On the mutual promise of semiotics and the study of religion, Yelle noted in 2012,

[a]t this time when reconstruction is badly needed in the study of religion, I aim to show that semiotics has much to offer to our understanding of both the structural and historical dimensions of religion, beyond and, in some cases, in opposition to the lessons learned from [Saussurean] structuralism and [Saussurean inspired] poststructuralism a generation or two ago. Equally important is the contribution that a focus on religious phenomena can bring to reinvigorating the field of semiotics.⁹⁹

This study is one attempt to address the said lacunae by turning to Neville's more complex semiotic framework for the study of theopolitics.

As mentioned, the Saussurean-inspired structuralist and post-structuralist "semiology" (Saussure's coinage) continues to influence the reception of semiotics in the study of religion.¹⁰⁰ In his *Course on General Linguistics*, Ferdinand de Saussure (d. 1913) advanced the basic framework of structuralism through an analysis of language. Saussure based his linguistic theory on the distinction between the underlying *system*

⁹⁶ Examples include, religion as animism (Müller), myth (Tylor), rooted in an uniquely religious faculty (Rudolph Otto), neurosis born of repressed forces in the unconscious (Freud), social experience construed as sacred (Durkheim), and an epiphenomenon masking economic suffering (Marxism).

⁹⁷ Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 4.

⁹⁸ Stausberg and Engler, 12.

⁹⁹ Robert Yelle, *Semiotics of Religion: Signs of the Sacred in History* (Huntingdon, GBR: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 11.

¹⁰⁰ Webb Keane, "Semiotics and the Social Analysis of Material Things," *Language & Communication* 23, no. 3/4 (2003): 410.

(*langue*) structured upon sign-relations, and the spontaneous instantiation of the system in speech (*parole*). Saussure privileged the *system* in the event of signification, and described the system as constituted by *arbitrary differences* among linguistic signs, which makes signification relative, fluid, and autonomous. Arbitrariness further implies that symbolic processes are internally closed systems unburdened with the need to reference what might persist and affect signification beyond the system of signs.¹⁰¹

The revolutionary implications of Saussurean semiology include the emphasis on signs as situated in relation to other signs so that the signification of each element is adjusted by its relation to others. The system/speech distinction identifies the complexity of signification. The system undoubtedly lends a degree of autonomy to signification as the *a priori* sign relations determine the possibilities of signification in speech. Saussure certainly accounted for agency in signification as an infinite number of significations are possible and cannot be predicated prior to their instantiation in a speech-act. Nonetheless, arbitrariness and structured relations serve to greatly undermine the agency of the speaker. Furthermore, the closed nature of the Saussurean system and modeling it after linguistics excludes the role of non-semiotic causal relations, or non-linguistic signs, affecting the system from outside. Saussurean semiology also ignores the practical effects

¹⁰¹ After Saussure, perhaps none has undermined the cause of semiotic reference than the poststructuralist Jacques Derrida. Derrida asserts the arbitrariness sign relations and the autonomy of sign processes as determined by *différance*, that is, the infinite *difference* and *deferment* of meanings such that signs can claim no “essence,” “presence,” “being,” or “identity,” and so make no allowance for definitive, absolute, or stable meanings. The dynamic of *différance* is such that the sign-to-sign deferment persists infinitely, without ever escaping the process to signify what might lie outside it. Jacques Derrida, “*Différance*,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1-28.

of signification on the speaker, and of practice on signification.¹⁰² Some of the demerits of the Saussurean semiology find correction in Peirce's semiotic.

Charles S. Peirce (d. 1914) is the founder of the American philosophical school of pragmatism.¹⁰³ The pragmatist semiotic asserts the determined or projected practical effects of a sign essential to its meaning. The meaning of a sign is therefore not limited to its intellectual conception, but also includes actions the conceptions project. In contrast to Saussure's binary or dyadic structure of the sign as constituted by the signifier-signified pair, Peirce's basic semiotic scheme is structured upon the triadic complex of *referent*, *sign*, and *interpretant*.¹⁰⁴ In an anthropological context, the *referent* is any entity that causes its *representation* to appear in human experience in some form, or the object

¹⁰² Keane relates Judith Irvine's observation that "'one of [Saussure's] most durable legacies' was the radical separation of the sign from the material world. Moreover, she added, this separation was consonant with the long separation of mind from body in Western thought." Keane, "Semiotics and the Social Analysis." For an appraisal and critique of Saussurean approaches in religious studies, see Robert Yelle, "Semiotics Beyond Structuralism," chap. 1 in *Semiotics of Religion*.

¹⁰³ An explanation of pragmatism, or pragmaticism, that explicitly attends to my concerns here holds that "Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition that—very broadly—understands knowing the world as inseparable from agency within it. This general idea has attracted a remarkably rich and at times contrary range of interpretations, including: that all philosophical concepts should be tested via scientific experimentation, that a claim is true if and only if it is useful (relatedly: if a philosophical theory does not contribute directly to social progress then it is not worth much), that experience consists in transacting with rather than representing nature, that articulate language rests on a deep bed of shared human practices that can never be fully 'made explicit.'" Catherine Legg and Christopher Hookway, "Pragmatism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/pragmatism>." Peirce himself defines the "pragmatic maxim" thus: "[c]onsider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." "Maxim of Pragmatism," *Digital Companion to C. S. Peirce*, <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/maxim-of-pragmatism>.

¹⁰⁴ The power of Peirce's semiotic is its breadth, which reflects on semiosis beyond the human context. However, for my present purposes I will limit myself to the human side of semiosis (anthroposemiosis). Peirce's basic semiotic ideas are found in Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings (1867-1893)*, eds. Nathan Houser and Christian J. W. Kloesel, vol. 1 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992); and *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings (1893-1913)*, ed. Peirce Edition Project, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

intended by the interpreter. The *representation* is the *sign* that further invokes an *interpretant*, another sign that comes to interpret the *sign* in an act of interpretation. The interpretant interprets the *referent* through the mediation of the *sign*, and does so in *some respect* (e.g., in respect of thirst it suffices to call the quencher of my thirst ‘water,’ but in respect of its chemical makeup it is better labeled ‘H₂O’). The triadic structure of the Peircean signification conveys its relational nature. Signification occurs when an act of interpretation relates together its three constituent components. Signification relates something new in experience (*sign*) to something already present in experience (*interpretant*) to something that lies outside and transcends the act of signification (*referent*). The transcendent or independent reality of the referent is illustrated in that, for example, a cat (*referent*) persists as it is in itself whether I signify it or not, and whether I do so correctly or incorrectly. Once the cat appears in my field of vision, its representation or image (*sign*) in my experience will lead me to identify it as a ‘cat’ (*interpretant*) based on prior knowledge or experience. The interpretant introduces the role of the interpreting agent and her intention in semiosis as it involves evaluation and selection, and raises the possibilities of ambivalence, uncertainty, ambiguity, and error in interpretation. Moreover, the interpretant need not be semantic, but can also be pragmatist and lead to action (e.g., flight or fight in face of danger). In Peircean semiosis, a sign births other signs (interpretants), which themselves become signs for further interpretation, thereby, linking signs in a system of complex relations. Signification is therefore an ongoing process of signs interpreting other signs and what lies beyond human semiosis, that is, the world, the context of referents and the pragmatist operation

of signs.

The only other Peircean distinction that we need to outline here is the nature of the relationship between a sign and its object. A sign can reference its object in three ways. As an *icon*, a sign resembles or mimics its object (e.g., a photograph). As an *index* a sign can either *contiguously* direct attention to its object (e.g., road signs), or be causally related to its referent (e.g., smoke indicating fire). As a *symbol* a sign imposes sociocultural or conventional meanings on its object (e.g., the sound ‘dog’ symbolizing a certain animal, the color red symbolizing danger, flag representing a nation). Icons and indexes challenge semiotic arbitrariness as resemblance, causality, and contiguity cannot be arbitrary. Moreover, while most symbols are arbitrary, not all symbolic signification is. Once a certain interpretant-sign-referent relationship is well established, it cannot be put to arbitrary use nor arbitrarily undone (e.g., the Taj Mahal does not arbitrarily symbolize Mughal power and imperial affection). In fact, the very idea of signification controlled by an underlying *system* militates against arbitrary deployment of signification. Put differently, *system* opposes *arbitrariness*. Islamic nationalism is an outcome of the systemic logic of Islamic symbols asserting themselves upon encountering secular symbols, and protesting arbitrary importations of non-Islamic symbols into the Muslim tradition.

According to Charles Morris, Peirce’s semiotic can be investigated in three perspectives, namely, *syntactics*, *semantics*, and *pragmatics*.¹⁰⁵ *Syntactics* treats the relationships in which signs are structured such that they become interpretable. As

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Sullivan, “Pragmatics and Pragmatism,” *Philosophy Today* 35, no. 2 (1991): 175–184.

interpretation is always situated in a context, I include contextual consideration as a necessary element in syntactics. *Semantics* concerns the intellectual meanings or conceptions of signs. The crucial pragmatist insight holds that semantics includes the practical consequences *predicted* by a sign (e.g., the meaning of fire includes the harmful consequences it predicts). Finally, *pragmatics* addresses the material, causal, or embodied effects of signs upon the human agent, and through her, upon the world. The overall semiosis proceeds upon a continuous dialectic of syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics. While my primary focus is on semantics, I give due consideration to pragmatics and syntactics when necessary to better convey the semiosis of Islamic nationalism. As regards my subject matter, syntactics attends to the context of colonial India that forms the backdrop in which Islamic nationalism was formed. Semantics addresses the meanings, values, and intentions or motivations invoked by Islamic theopolitical symbols. Pragmatics looks to the actions, movements, and political programs inspired by Islamic nationalism.

Prior to Peirce's reception in religious studies, linguistic models reigned in semiotic studies on religion. Peircean semiotic opened up new possibilities of scrutinizing religious phenomena, and thus far seems to have made the most impact on anthropological studies on ritual.¹⁰⁶ As Kreinath remarks, "pragmatics of sign processes made it possible to open up a new framework for the theorization of ritual

¹⁰⁶ For an overview of Peirce's reception in anthropology, see Richard J. Parmentier, "Semiotic Anthropology," chap. 1 in *Signs and Society: Further Studies in Semiotic Anthropology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016). Underscoring recent attention to Peirce in linguistics, Parmentier speaks of a "pragmatic" turn in contemporary linguistics. *Ibid.*, 24.

performances.”¹⁰⁷ While Peircean semiotics has not made a comparable impact on the study of religion and politics, this study hopes to make an important contribution in that regard.

Extending Michael Silverstein’s theory of language ideology¹⁰⁸ and the basic insights of Peirce’s semiotic, Webb Keane has developed the theory of “semiotic ideology” that frames both religion and modernity in semiotic terms.¹⁰⁹ Silverstein describes language ideology as a community’s “self-reflexivity” about the ontology, interpretation, the practical use of signs, and how to encode and decode information. Keane extends Silverstein’s reflections on language to his theory of “semiotic ideology” to account for the total scope of semiosis. Semiotic ideology is a community’s self-reflexivity and deliberate management of its semiosis.

¹⁰⁷ Jens Kreinath, “Semiotics,” in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, eds., J. Kreinath, J. Snoek, and M. Stausberg (Leiden: Brill 2006), 456-470.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Silverstein advanced the understanding of language by incorporating the implications of Peirce’s iconic and indexical signs in discourse by elevating the role of pragmatics. Owing to its physical, causal nature, an indexical reference can only occur in a present, contingent, spatiotemporal context. Given that social life or lived experience involves language and interaction, Silverstein bifurcates two dialectical meaning-events in discourse, “denotational text” and “interactional text.” The “interactional text” of a given semiotic event underscores the role of agency, for as the interactional cannot be prefigured before its occurrence, it occasions novelty, chance, or spontaneity of agency in semiosis. Michael Silverstein, “Texts, Entextualized and Artifactualized: The Shapes of Discourse,” *College English* 82, no. 1 (2019): 55–76. For Silverstein’s contribution to semiotic anthropology, see Richard J. Parmentier, “Semiotic Anthropology, chap. 1 in *Signs and Society*. Silverstein has also introduced a very important concept of “language ideology,” which, he explains, “is defined only within a discourse of interpretation or construal of inherently dialectic indexical processes, as for example the processes of making or achieving text (*entextualization*) by using language and other sign modalities, whether at the *denotational* plane or the more encompassing plane of *interactional textuality* (though of course, for language in particular, both planes of textuality are always in play). When put to use in discourse, ideology serves to ‘naturalize’ or ‘rationalize’ certain indexical signs beyond their immediate indexical relations possibly “grounded in a cosmologically or cosmogonically totalizing vision.” Michael Silverstein, “The Uses and Utility of Ideology: A Commentary,” in *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, eds. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn Ann Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 128-129.

¹⁰⁹ Webb Keane, “On Semiotic Ideology,” *Signs and Society* 6, no. 1 (2018): 64–87.

The concept of semiotic ideology draws our attention to the many ways (ranging from tacit to fully explicit) in which assumptions about what signs contribute to the ways people use and interpret them, and on that basis, form judgments of ethical and political value. Semiotic ideology can play a crucial role in religious or political clashes, in which the very existence of the object of signification is itself in question.¹¹⁰

In particular, Keane draws attention to modernity in general as a semiotic ideology.

Modern semiotic ideology involves the semiotically-mediated semantics and pragmatics of anthropology (self, agency) and politics (power-relations). An important characteristic of the modern semiotic ideology is defined by Keane as differences between things and humans, nature and culture, subject and object¹¹¹—and, let us add, private-religion and secular-politics.¹¹²

Extending Keane's argument toward criticizing the shortfalls in both the Saussurean and Peircean semiotics, Yelle remarks that their root problem is the failure to historicize the prejudices of modern, secular semiotic ideology in adjudicating other semiotic ideologies. The failure to historicize has resulted in the modern-secular ideology's privileging of arbitrariness, realism, literalism, and positivist, scientific, and written signification over non-arbitrary, mythic, ritualistic, magical, symbolic, allegorical, and oral signification. To correct this bias, Yelle recommends the imperative of "semiotic recognition", an awareness of semiotic differences across semiotic ideologies.¹¹³ It

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 67.

¹¹¹ Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 7.

¹¹² Given that Keane associates modernity with the modern-Protestant anxiety toward ensuring the transcendence or autonomy of the modern subject over material signification, he proposes "to open up social analysis to the historicity and social power of material things. Webb Keane, "Sincerity, 'Modernity,' and the Protestants," *Cultural Anthropology* 17, no. 1 (2002): 84–85; and "Semiotics and Social Analysis," 411.

¹¹³ Yelle, *Semiotics of Religion*, 14.

follows from Keane's formulation that if semiosis involves anthropological and political conceptions and transformations, it should come as no surprise that modernization in non-Western contexts often unleashes a widespread, multidimensional crisis of identity and politics. Keane thus places us in a better position to appreciate Islamic nationalism as a context of intra-Muslim debates between the two semiotic ideologies of Islam and modernity. Perhaps the most significant and far-reaching contribution of political theology as regards its Muslim audiences was the heightening of *semiotic recognition* and sensitizing them to Islam's *semiotic ideology viz a viz* secular nationalism.

While the relation between signs and agency is only implied in previous analyses in relation to anthropology, it is explicitly taken up by Steven Engler, who incorporates Peircean indexical signs in ritual theory. Against the erstwhile understanding of ritual as modeled upon linguistic communication, Engler points to the role of indexical signs in ritual. Engler notes that indexes can be taken as both discursive and non-discursive, and both as causal (e.g., fire causing smoke) and contiguous (e.g., attention to spatial relations among objects involved in signification). The index is linked to the agency of the personal and, more importantly, to non-personal objects. Engler defines an agent as *anything that occasions causal events*, "what *acts like* an agent rather than what *thinks like* an agent."¹¹⁴ In the religious contexts, spirits, demons, deities, gods, and other such

¹¹⁴ Steven Engler, "Ritual Theory and Attitudes to Agency in Brazilian Spirit Possession," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 21, no. 4 (2009): 480. Along similar lines, Stanely Tambiah presents ritual performance as a complex of words and actions, performed through different media, in which language plays an important role. Among other things, the indexical power of linguistic symbols is evinced in that speaking, chanting, singing, and writing themselves performative acts, induce intense experiences in participants when enacted and embodied, and reflect back on the participant indexically (causally). See for example, Stanley Tambiah, "A Performative Approach to Ritual," *Proceedings of*

supranatural entities are perceived as acting like agents, and as a result, induce action in humans as if commanded by another agent. It is in this general sense of *acting like an agent* that I extend agency to religious symbols. We may call this kind of agency secondary. To the extent that religious interpreters relate to religious symbols as produced by divine or sacred agents (God, spirits, bygone ancestors, prophets, shamans, priests, sages, etc.) such symbols can themselves *act like agents in the absence of agents themselves*. In fact, the sense of a symbol imbued with divine command or authority is one reason for its sacred status. In this sense, religious symbols carry utmost authority and a sense of imperative to comply with their ‘demands’ or to mold one’s being in accord with them. Divine agency embodied in Islam’s sacred symbols is essential to understanding why Islamic nationalists insist on implementing a religious agenda in politics.

A daunting problem before religious actors is the pragmatist interpretation of religious symbols in practical life. Performance of religious symbols or living a religious life are pragmatist engagements, which, given its social reality, is mediated through a given religious tradition. Extending Roman Jakobson’s appropriation of Peircean semiosis as a process of *translation*, Talal Asad relates *translation to tradition*. Asad’s concern is to inflect the Peircean idea of signification as a mediated through other signs. In the case of religious communities, the mediation takes form of *translation through tradition*. In view of Peirce’s pragmatist theory, Asad wishes to further stress non-

the British Academy 65 (1979): 113–69; and "The Magical Power of Words." *Man* 3, no. 2 (1968): 175–208.

semantic translations. He thus describes a discursive tradition as “not merely a verbal process; [but] it is also and primarily an implicit continuity embodied in habit, feeling, and behavior that one acquires as a member of a shared way of life that is translated from one time to another.”¹¹⁵ “That chain [of traditional mediation] I see as the core of tradition, the move from one generation to another through translation, and through disputes over what is essential to the tradition, differences that must therefore be reflected in the translation.”¹¹⁶

Asad’s reflections serve to highlight an essential element in explaining the peculiarities of Islamic political theology. If semiosis is possible only when one symbol is interpreted through another, then a whole mass of signification accumulated in a tradition holds power over and exerts itself in interpreting new symbols. In this sense, Engler and Asad can be read together to extend agency to tradition itself as a whole. For, on the one hand, having been fully embodied by its community, tradition ‘acts’ through them. On the other hand, tradition imposes a directive, a kind of collective ‘will,’ over its members to conform their semiosis to its internal logic. This means both enabling the interpreters to understand the world in certain ways, but also limiting the scope of interpretation according to the dictates of the tradition. The exploration into Islamic nationalism will exposit the limits imposed by the Muslim tradition on Muslim engagement with nationalism.

¹¹⁵ Asad, 5.

¹¹⁶ Asad, 4-5.

SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

The preceding review allows me to now tie together and restate in succinct form my main argument. To restate the objective of this study, it explores the development of Islamic nationalism as a form of political theology during its formative period of 1857-1947 in north colonial India as articulated in the writings of Urdu-speaking intellectuals. The theopolitical dynamics during the formative period are related to and influenced by two other periods. The formative period itself is situated in the context of British colonialism in which Muslims find themselves in a state of disempowerment and humiliation. In these circumstances, they looked back to the long centuries of Muslims' political sovereignty and religiocultural autonomy, all the while anticipating the onset of a post-colonial India situated in a global nation-state order. In this background, the ideal situation for the Muslims was to recover their pre-colonial dominance in a post-colonial context. For this reason, I propose that while keeping within the general purview of political theology defined above, the fortunes of political theology in its formative period should be contextualized according to its immediate objectives. I thus differentiate between the task of political theology during the colonial and the post-colonial contexts. The task of political theology in the post-colonial period is one of nation-building and critique of the existing nation-state order in a given moment. However, I identify the task of political theology during colonialism is Muslims' *collective emancipation*, or we may say, *thisworldly* salvation. The nature of such an emancipation is twofold: intellectual and political.

Political theology's intellectual objective appears in two modes, constructive and critical. On its constructive side, political theology interprets Islamic ultimacy in political terms applicable to colonial India. On its critical side, political theology takes the form of critique of secularism, nationalism, and colonialism, on the one hand; and the critique of Muslim history in the form of a new, revivalist historiography, on the other hand.

Political theology's second objective is political and restorative: that is, the recovery of the conditions of Muslims' political sovereignty and religiocultural autonomy in the anticipation of the Hindu-majority post-colonial Indian state. Both the intellectual and the political tasks entail the nationalization of Islam and the desecularization/decolonization of politics. In this endeavor, political theology appropriates nationalism as an instrument of emancipation.

CHAPTER PLAN

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework for a joint semiotic study of religion and politics. Toward delineating semiotics of religion, I draw on Robert Neville's theory of religion. Neville theorizes religion as centered on ultimate realities that can only be expressed through sacred symbols. Sacred symbols, on the one hand, make it possible to engage with ultimate realities; and on the other hand, cast their shadows upon all aspects of life, religious and secular. In a religious imagination, the centrality of sacred symbols makes their meanings the standards through which to evaluate the relative significance of secular symbols. Neville's theory will help me redefine Islamic political theology in semiotic terms, and explain the nuances of the relationship Islam's sacred symbols bear with symbols of modern politics.

As Neville does not address politics per se, I draw on Liah Greenfeld's theory of nationalism. Greenfeld presents nationalism as the secular framework of modernity centered upon the symbols of *nation*, *individual freedom*, *popular sovereignty*, *egalitarianism*, and *dignity*. These symbols impart a kind of secular ultimacy to nationalism as they define the overall trajectory of modern life. The reason why I classify certain Indian Muslim discourses as forms of nationalism is due to their attempt to formulate political theology partly in terms of these symbols, religiously interpreted. I will show that the logic of Islamic semiotic system imposes limitations upon political theology that keeps it from accepting nationalism without first Islamizing it.

Chapter 3 outlines the post-1857 context that made Muslim nationalism possible and partly determined the course it followed. It then outlines the proto-nationalism of Sayyid Ahmad Khan as the most influential spokesman for the Muslim community in the post-1857 period until his death in 1898. While Khan was not a political theologian, Khan inaugurated a new era of Muslim self-awareness as a nation. Despite his non-theological outlook on politics, Khan's discourse on Muslim nationhood serves to show the 'partitioning' of Muslim imagination that he shared with the later political theologians.

Chapter 4 turns to the semantics and pragmatics of *composite nationalism* (*muttaḥidah qaumiyyat*) as developed by Abul Kalam Azad and the *Jam'iyyatul 'Ulama Hind* (Association of Indian Scholars), especially Ḥusain Aḥmad Madani. Azad—along with Muhammad Iqbal—inaugurates modern Islamic political theology within whose purview he articulates his national vision. The salient symbols here are caliphate

(*khilāfat*), the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad, sacred law (*sharī'at*), Muslim cultural autonomy, freedom from colonialism, and a forceful advocacy of pan-Islamism favoring the Ottoman Caliphate. A new, public, journalistic form of Qur'anic exegesis emerges as the salient instrument of political theology. The chapter underscores the most significant aspect of composite nationalism, namely, the theological attempt of accommodating Islam to secular nationalism all the while insisting on Muslims' cultural autonomy in majority-Muslim provinces. Much of this discourse revolves around the traditional meanings and modern interpretation of the central symbols of Islamic nationalism, namely, *qaum* (nation), *millat* (religious community), and *ummat* (global Muslim community).

Chapter 5 expounds the political theologies of Muhammad Iqbal and Sayyid Maududi. These figures criticized composite nationalism and the condition of secularity, and each offered his own alternative theory of Islamic nationalism. For Iqbal and Maududi, Islamic nationalism meant freedom of Muslims from political colonialism, Hindu majoritarianism, and from all possible forms of post-colonial subjugation of Islam by non-Islam. What they desired was not only the emancipation of Muslim bodies and culture, but the sovereignty of Islam itself. In this chapter, we encounter additional symbols of *khūdī* (individuality), *bekhūdī* (selfless service to the community), *jamā'at* (organization) and *hizb* (party). Despite the general agreement between Iqbal and Maududi, they approach the problem of Muslim nationhood from entirely different angles. Iqbal's political theology centers on his philosophy of individuality, while Maududi equates religion (*dīn*) with state, which remains subservient to divine

sovereignty (*hakimiyyat*). Finally, both agreed in rejecting secular nationalism as neo-idolatry.

Chapter 6 turns to Muslim separatism and the religious nationalism of the *Jam 'iyyat 'Ulamā 'i Islām* (JUI), which rejected composite nationalism in favor of Muslim separatism spearheaded by the mostly secular Muslim League. The JUI thus represents the convergence of political theology and Muslim nationalism. Remaining at a non-threatening distance from the leadership of the League, the JUI's theology played a decisive role in popularizing, legitimizing, and lending authority to separatism. The JUI's theology thus Islamized the Pakistan idea, equating it not only with the future of Muslims in the region, but with the cause of Islam itself. I argue that without the JUI's direct challenge to the theology of composite nationalism, Pakistan would not have become appealing to the masses, who for the longest time looked to the JUH and its scholars for guidance on political matters. The JUI's attacks on composite nationalism and the inability of the JUH to mount a veritable challenge weaned the masses away from the JUH and delivered them to the separatist camp.

CHAPTER 2: SEMIOTICS OF RELIGION AND NATIONALISM

Islamic nationalism appears a misnomer in a sense that it brings together two disparate imaginations, namely, Islam and secular nationalism that, according to the Western imaginary, are better confined to their respective spheres. To gain fruitful insights into the inner workings of Islamic nationalism, I consider it prudent to inquire into the two imaginations separately, and then reflect on the nature and dynamics of their convergence. For that task, this chapter draws on Robert Neville's theory of religion and Liah Greenfeld's theory of nationalism. The merits of the two theories lie in the semiotic analysis of their respective subject matter which places greater emphasis on the role of symbols, agency, and values. The two theories complement each other as Neville's lack of focus on politics is complemented by Greenfeld's reflections on nationalism, while the lack of detailed attention to religion in Greenfeld is complemented by Neville.

ROBERT NEVILLE'S SEMIOTIC OF RELIGION

Robert Neville's intellectual career is witness to multiple constructive ventures in philosophy (especially philosophy of religion, and Anglo-American philosophy), theology, semiotics, and comparative religion. Neville's general approach to semiotics hails from the American pragmatist tradition founded by Charles Sanders Peirce.¹¹⁷ As Peirce had little to say on religion, the early pragmatist tradition did not extend Peirce's semiotic to the study of religion. It is one of Neville's unique contributions that he not only extended pragmatist semiotics to the study of religion, but furthered its scope and

¹¹⁷ Neville notes a later influence of Confucianism apart from pragmatism on his semiotic theory. Robert C. Neville, *Philosophical Theology*, vol. 3, *Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015), 63.

depth by developing a comprehensive semiotic theory of religion.

In moving to the discussion on religious symbols, the first point of order is to address the birth and function of symbols in the human condition. For Neville, the central human faculty responsible for semiotic structuring and processing is imagination.¹¹⁸ The content of imagination are ‘images’ produced due to the various biological activities of the body, especially the senses, as a result of environmental stimuli. It is through the mediation of these images that we *experience* and *engage* with the world. Without the mediation of imagination, human interaction with one’s environment is reduced to the level of animal interaction mostly determined by stimulus-response reaction. As Neville puts it, “[i]magination is what makes the difference between experiencing something and merely responding as a reaction in vectors of forces.”¹¹⁹ Of these images, the most basic are those that enable us to experience and engage with the world as spatial, temporal, and as structured in relation to things possessing values relative to other things.¹²⁰

Imagination becomes the basis for interpretation, which is a triadic process in which images are taken as representations of the world and interpreted or given meanings

¹¹⁸ Neville situates imagination as a faculty of thinking, and it plays the central role in his grand project of constructing *axiology of thinking* aimed at reconstructing the structures and processes of thinking on the basis of axiology (theory of values), as opposed to the classical Western construction of thinking upon a knowing subject’s identification with the form of the object of knowledge. Neville identifies the basic structures of thinking as “imagination” (receiving worldly objects in imagination based on their values), “interpretation” (evaluating the meanings of things as mediated through signs), “theorizing” (grasping the unity of the subject and world through abstract conceptualizations), and “responsibility” (responding to the world according to values embodied in the norms of thinking: beauty in imagination, truth in interpretation, and a unified vision in theory). The first volume in the tripartite series, *Reconstruction*, expounds the theory of imagination. *Axiology of Thinking*, vol. 1, *Reconstruction of Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981).

¹¹⁹ Robert C. Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 48.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

according to meanings accumulated through prior experiences. Neville stresses that interpretation is an intentional act, an intentional engagement with images, one that transforms an image into a symbol.¹²¹

As regards the processing of imagination's contents, Neville classifies all operations of imagination into two general categories: *autonomous* (pre-critical) and *inventive* (creative and deliberate). The autonomous functions of imagination are highly important in that they operate on auto-mode, prior to deliberation and intention. The function of the autonomous side of imagination is to "to make the world appear" before us in 'images,' thereby, rendering internal and subjective what is external and objective.¹²² The *inventive* side of imagination lies in its creating, imagining differently, or re-interpreting symbols, and thru symbols changing the world, for which reason Neville also calls imagination's inventive operation the "world-constructing" power of imagination. For Neville, imagination is inventive in a twofold sense. One, it invents internally the forms in which we experience the world and its objects—without which our images would remain a formless, chaotic jumble. Two, it produces externally all the

¹²¹ We should keep in mind that Peircean semiotic locates semiosis in nature within whose general context human semiosis transpires. In the Peircean tradition, nature's evolutionary dynamics are explained in terms of triadic 'interpretation.' For example, environmental pressures (one element) upon organisms (second element) lead them to adapt or change their behavior or physiology with cumulative effects (third element). In this background, Peircean semiotic uses 'sign' for anything that connects two other things in ongoing natural dynamics. In human semiosis, "[s]ome signs are involved only in experience and are distinguished from the other signs by virtue of their connection with intentionality. The subclass of signs involved with human intentionality will be called 'representations'....Representations are not only verbal, but include any kind of gesture, perceptive structure, artifact, natural object, or instrumentally organized action that signified in an intentional way. Neville, *Recovery of the Measure*, 55. In the context of religion, Neville employs the 'symbol' as a general term for anything that signifies a religious object.

¹²² Robert C. Neville, *Broken Symbols*, 51.

various forms of culture (language, arts, architecture, literature, and so on).¹²³ The cultural production of imagination points to the necessary social quality of human semiosis. While imagination in the first instance is subjective to each individual, Neville notes that “even the most idiosyncratic subjective world is the image of a public world. One imagines objects as being in a common space-time with oneself,”¹²⁴ and let us add, among other selves. Moreover, “the image of common worlds held separately by all participants is a necessary condition for the social interaction whereby the idiosyncratic subjective worlds can be corrected and transformed into a common public arena.”¹²⁵ While Neville does not put it in these words, but anticipating Greenfeld’s reflections on imagination and culture, culture can be understood as collective or social imagination, and the contents of individual imagination in part culturally produced, and their interpretations culturally learned.

The upshot of Neville's discussion on imagination is to stress the point that imagination grounds human engagement with the world, and that engagement is mediated through symbols (that is, interpreted images), and that imaginative interpretation holds out the possibility of changing the world, which in part requires reinterpretation of existing symbols, or invention of new ones.

Religion as Ultimacy

Neville notes that the sum total of a culture’s guidance about the macro questions of life, about the nature of the world, and how to comport oneself in it comprise its

¹²³ Neville, *Recovery*, 18.

¹²⁴ Neville, *Reconstruction of Thinking*, 167.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

worldview. Semiotically defined, a worldview is a “set of signs, more or less coherent, by which individuals who hold the worldview are oriented to the things in the various domains with which they directly and indirectly interact.”¹²⁶ With Neville, religion is an aspect of one’s worldview.¹²⁷

Neville explicates his theory of religion through Peter Berger’s idea of “sacred canopy.”¹²⁸ A sacred canopy is the interpretation of those marginal situations of existence that tend to threaten the stability of life’s experiences such as death, war, disease, the problem of evil, and the whence and whither of the universe. These are, in short, the profound perennial problems of meaning. A sacred canopy addresses these problems in terms of sacredness, realities of the highest significance that render all things meaningful or meaningless relative to them. Hence, extending Berger’s insights, Neville asserts any imaginative scheme dealing with the ultimate nature of the world—be it science, philosophy, poetry, or religion—religious in this sense. As Neville has it, “imagination in this basic function of worldmaking, including the place of the human, is always religious, because it is world constructing.”¹²⁹ Reason being that the oldest religious myths treat the creation of the world, and try do so through images and symbols that convey aspects of world’s coming to be or its given reality. In the general context of religion, world-

¹²⁶ Robert C. Neville, *Philosophical Theology*, vol. 1, *Ultimates* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013), 81. For Neville’s earlier reflections on religion and worldview, see “Worldviews,” *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (2009): 233-243.

¹²⁷ Contrast Neville’s confining of religion *within* a worldview to Ninian Smart’s defining it *as* a worldview. Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1983).

¹²⁸ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, repr. ed. (New York: Anchor, 1990). For Neville’s discussion of Berger, see *Ultimates*, 29-33.

¹²⁹ Neville, *Broken Symbols*, 55.

constructing activity proceeds under the inspiration of *ultimacy*.

In Neville's definition, "*Religion is human engagement of ultimacy expressed in cognitive articulations, existential responses to ultimacy that give ultimate definition to the individual and community, and patterns of life and ritual in the face of ultimacy.*"¹³⁰

Given its succinct articulation, the definition requires unpacking. The most important concept in this definition is that of *ultimacy*.¹³¹ Ultimacy is a technical term in Neville's comparative philosophy of religion that he divides into two subcategories of ontological ultimacy and anthropological ultimacy. Ontological ultimacy addresses ultimates as ontological, transcendent realities (e.g., God, Brahmin, or the Neoplatonic One, etc). Anthropological ultimacy deals with the ultimate human, immanent concerns as may be defined by a given religion (e.g., suffering in Buddhism, or salvation in Christianity and Islam, etc.).¹³² After asserting its respective version of ultimacy, a religion's next challenge is to imagine ways to engage with ultimacy in intelligible terms. For Neville, religion's way of managing engagement with ultimacy is through symbols conveying "finite/infinite contrast" as "boundary conditions."

¹³⁰ Neville, *Ultimates*, 4. Emphasis original. Also see, *Defining Religion: Essays in Philosophy of Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018), 9. Neville notes that one trait of his later philosophical theology is that it moves from a discourse on *religions* to the universal category of *religion* based on his understanding that all (genuine) religions are centered upon ultimacy. Neville's magnum opus, *Philosophical Theology*, details his comprehensive theory of religion spread over three volumes.

¹³¹ Neville's preference for the term "ultimacy" grew out of the challenge of comparative study of religion. Whereas the Western Judeo, Christian, Muslim traditions have historically referenced a personal God as the ultimate reality, not all religions subscribe to personified description of ultimate realities, or even to ontological realities as such. The Buddhist concern with suffering holds ultimacy, however, suffering in not an ontological reality, but an anthropological concern. Hence, ultimacy is preferred as the most accommodating term for purposes of studies in comparative religion. My task is made easier here as I only need to deal with Islamic ultimacy, for which purpose my definition suffices. For Neville's enlightening elaboration, see chaps. 1-5 in *Ultimates*.

¹³² *Ultimates*, 25-28.

To begin with, "the finite/infinite contrasts in a sacred canopy are signs [or, symbols] that can stand for ultimate realities in certain respects."¹³³ The signs of ultimate reality explain "what basic dimension of the world stands or falls with the finite/infinite contrast."¹³⁴ As such, they are the "outermost elements of the symbolized world."¹³⁵ The contrast defines something finite as a "boundary condition," a condition of the world without which a basic, definite, and necessary characteristic of the world ceases to be, and without which the world would either not function at all, or function differently or imperfectly.¹³⁶ The *finite* side of the contrast is "whatever finite or determinate thing is taken to be ultimate in a sacred canopy."¹³⁷ The *infinite* side of the contrast "is the recognition that without the finite side, some basic world-defining trait would be missing, or would be indeterminate, infinite. The infinite side defines the finite side, as being a boundary condition, a world-making condition."¹³⁸ The infinite side has been variously described as absolute nothingness, chaos, God, and the other explanations offered by religious traditions. It is what is *directly* or *immediately* inaccessible, inexperienceable, impenetrable, and unknowable.¹³⁹ Accordingly, the finite side is conveyed through

¹³³ Neville, 73.

¹³⁴ Neville, 74.

¹³⁵ Neville, 83.

¹³⁶ Another explanation by Neville reads: "A finite/infinite contrast is some finite thing to which reference can be made that is taken to be a boundary line or world-founding element in the culture, community, or person bearing the referring symbol....A finite/infinite contrast is infinite in the sense that without the finite thing in its world-founding role, the world would be indeterminate or infinite in that respect." Robert C. Neville, *Religion in Late Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 46-47.

¹³⁷ Neville, *Ultimates*, 33.

¹³⁸ Neville, 33.

¹³⁹ For instance, one absolute boundary condition of the world is its contingency. The world is contingent, and the *idea of contingency* is something determinate that symbolizes the finite/infinite contrast in that if contingency be removed as a condition of the world, the world's finitude, dependence, and transience collapse, for on the other side of contingency persists indeterminacy of the

symbol(s) that help engage with the infinite side. The finite/infinite contrast need not be something metaphysical or transcendent, but can also be something wholly worldly. “The Exodus from Egypt is world founding for the Israelites’ religious status as a people in special relation to God.”¹⁴⁰ For Muslims, the early Muslim community’s migration from Mecca to Medina functions as a finite/infinite contrast as a defining moment of Muslim history that discloses God’s will, wisdom, and protection extended to Prophet Muhammad and his followers. The overall effect of finite/infinite contrasts is that they “shape culture’s apprehension of (1) the physical world (2) the place of people within that (3) the grounds for value and meaning, and for world-significant identity, and (4) the elements of religious purpose such as salvation.”¹⁴¹ Moreover, as regards the finite/infinite contrasts, “if their interpretations are true, they are realities, or structures of reality” and “have the form of being disclosures of reality, not of being mere images themselves”¹⁴² (e.g., Prophet Muhammad’s migration from Mecca discloses for Muslims God as liberator and “the best of the planners” as expressed in the Qur’an). Chapters 4 and 5 will demonstrate how the Caliphate functions as a boundary condition, and how it serves to disclose God’s power.

infinite. It is highly unlikely for religions to speak of contingency as such, as a concept; rather, they attend either to one of its existential manifestations (e.g., death), or symbolize it in some way (e.g., as in the Angel of Death).

¹⁴⁰ Neville, *Religion in Late Modernity*, 47.

¹⁴¹ Neville, 47.

¹⁴² Neville, *Broken Symbols*, 58. In view of ultimacy’s relation to boundary conditions, Neville’s later definition of religion presents it as a harmony of at least five components responding to the five ultimate boundary conditions: “worship” (engagement with the ultimate ontological creative act, or God), “aesthetic-grasp” (concerned with beauty of form in religious matters), “psychology” (aimed at achieving “wholeness” in religious matters), “social or environmental” context (healthy relations with all creatures and surroundings), and semiotics (developing symbolic systems to properly engage ultimacy). See *Defining Religion*, 10-11.

Returning to Neville's definition of religion, the engagement with ultimacy is expressed in “cognitive articulations” manifesting in various symbolic elaborations of ultimacy pertaining to religious and non-religious life. Neville notes that these cognitive representations fall on a spectrum of complexity such as liturgy, allegory, poetry, doctrine, and theology. As opposed to the understanding of religion as private, a sacred canopy can manifest in “existential responses” to all aspects of life.¹⁴³ “Existential responses” in the definition point to the ways in which one’s engagement with ultimacy bears on various experiences of human existence, especially those concerned with ultimate meanings: suffering, death, loss, failure, whence and whither of the universe, and the like.

While Neville does not say so, the incorporation of “individual and community” in his definition of religion adverts to the role of human agency in religion and indirectly implicates Islamic nationalism. As Neville has it, “existential responses to ultimacy...give ultimate definition to the individual and community, and patterns of life and ritual.” The complexity of religious ultimacy is such that it casts its shadow upon the community, thereby, enabling them to imagine *themselves* in ultimate terms. The community’s faith in ultimacy has the effect of transforming the community itself as a boundary condition, something finite representing something infinite. So imagined, the community is also liable to draw a symbolic boundary around itself, excluding non-members as Others. It is little wonder, then, why religious communities are so keen on

¹⁴³ For Neville's explication of the existential dimension of experience, see *Philosophical Theology*, vol. 2, *Existence*.

maintaining orthodoxy and orthopraxy, of patrolling the boundaries of membership. A threat to these boundaries is one reason why the erstwhile privatized religious communities become politicized, at times formulating political theologies as a defensive mechanism.

A final note on ultimacy requires a clarification that is not offered by Neville. Religious ultimacy's relation to religious symbols imparts ultimacy on the symbols themselves, that is, makes them ultimate, or sacred. This is necessary in religion as the ultimate reality cannot be experienced except symbolically. The loss of religious symbols spells the loss of access to ultimacy. It is only natural, then, that religious symbols themselves take on a sacred character. For Muslims, for example, the true meanings of the Qur'anic text can only be accessed through the original Arabic reading. The literal text cannot be replaced by different, synonymous words. For this reason, a translation of the Qur'an is not given an equal status with the Arabic. In a similar vein, the ritual prayer in Islam is valid only if it follows the prescribed times, postures, recitations, and sequence. A single misstep or omission can invalidate a prayer. It is for this reason that we will witness Islamic nationalists fight over not only the meanings of religious symbols, but also over the choice of symbols to convey given meanings. They all agreed that Muslims were a nation, but what was the proper symbol to invoke that meaning: *qaum*, *ummat*, *hizb*, or *millat*? and whether these could be equated with the English 'nation?'

The upshot of the preceding exposition serves to underline two main points. One, religion is defined by ultimacy expressed in symbols conveying the boundary conditions

upon which the world operates. Two, religious ultimacy casts its shadow on all aspects of life, including a community's self-definition, the scope of its membership, and the extent of its religious engagements, which can include politics. Having outlined the function and scope of religion, and the general nature and origins of religious symbols, I now turn to the structure and dynamics of religion as operated through religious symbols.

The Structure and Dynamics of Religious Symbols

While Neville's discourse on religious semiotics appears throughout his impressive oeuvre, my exposition pays particular attention to his monograph dedicated to the study of religious symbols, *The Truth of Broken Symbols*.¹⁴⁴ Neville defines a religious symbol as a "generic word for all kinds of religious signs of the divine (or however we might define what religious signs signify)."¹⁴⁵ Alternatively, symbols can be "anything that can be referred to a religious object and can bear a religious meaning,"¹⁴⁶ be it a statue, an allegory, a metaphor, liturgy, an idea, theology, a person, or what have you. He analyzes a sixfold complexity of semiosis involving *meaning, referent, interpretation, engagement, truth, and consequences*.

Reference

As discussed in the previous chapter, a defining distinction of pragmatist semiotics is its affirmation of reference—in contrast with Saussurean semiology that evades reference to what lies outside sign-relations. In the case of religious symbols, the

¹⁴⁴ For other references to Neville's semiotics, see Part II in *Ultimates; and Defining Religion*. For Neville's general discourse on semiotics, consult *Reconstruction of Thinking, and Recovery of the Measure*. A succinct summary appears in chap. 3 in *Religion in Late Modernity* (2002).

¹⁴⁵ Neville, *Broken Symbols*, xxii.

¹⁴⁶ Neville, xxii.

question of transcendent reference constitutes the point of primary critique of religion by modern semiotic ideology. Whereas for Neville, the *raison d'être* of religious symbols is to symbolize their ultimate referents, which must accommodate transcendent references as well: “Religious symbols are those whose primary reference, direct or indirect, is to a finite/infinite contrast, that is, at least partly to the divine or the infinite.”¹⁴⁷ In keeping with Peirce’s triadic scheme, a religious symbol can reference ultimacy, or ultimate objects, iconically, indexically, or conventionally. How to refer symbols to their objects and what meanings to confer on them is in great part influenced by the social side of semiosis.

Meaning and Extensionality

Much human semiosis is governed by semiotic *codes*: that is, the rules, regulations, and conventions of symbolic use built into and transmitted by culture over time. A language, for instance, must obey rules of grammar and diction to be intelligible. Socially, one must observe proprieties of a given occasion for acceptable participation. In terms of religious practice, worship demands adherence to proper form and content. A community encodes symbols with a whole spectrum of possible *meanings* and *referents* that a symbol might legitimately invoke (dictionaries and encyclopedias are good examples). Neville terms the meanings so encoded the “extensional interpretants”, and all the possible objects that extensional interpretants might reference, “extensional referents.”¹⁴⁸ Neville’s term for the total combined dynamics of extensional meanings and

¹⁴⁷ Neville, 65.

¹⁴⁸ Neville, 65-68, and 97.

referents is “extensionality.”¹⁴⁹

Interpretation and Intentionality

Peirce did not emphasize the role of context or agency in semiosis. Neville fills those lacunae by noting that what really counts in interpretation is the *intention* of the interpreter. Neville states that the real interpretant in any interpretation is the “intentional interpretant,” that is, the respect in which an interpreter intends to reference an object in the background of a particular context, which Neville labels the “intentional context.”¹⁵⁰ Intention elevates the role of agency in semiosis without which extensionality would claim absolute autonomy. However, intention holds out the possibility of interrupting extensionality, that is, of interpreting symbols otherwise, or inventing new symbols altogether, thereby, opening up the possibility of change in the semiotic system. The need for such an interruption has in part something to do with experiencing symbols in unexpected ways.

As the Saussurean-inspired semiology’s privileging of linguistic signs places undue emphasis on semantics, it misses out on the crucial experiential engagement with symbols (e.g., reading about blood is different than seeing blood), which can in fact change their semantic meaning. Neville calls the experiential aspect of a symbol “content meaning:” “what is involved in *experiencing with a symbol*.”¹⁵¹ Just as (extensional) meaning of a symbol relates to its extensional interpretant and referent, so the content

¹⁴⁹ Neville, 37.

¹⁵⁰ Neville, 115-116. What Neville calls “intentional context” is the whole focus of Michael Silverstein’s “language ideology” and the related context of “interactional text,” as outlined in the previous chapter.

¹⁵¹ Neville, 100. Emphasis original.

meaning is the same as the “intentional meaning” and relates to intentional referent and interpretant. Content meaning is not the coded meaning built into a symbol’s network, but the actual experience of a symbol disclosed or intended in a given encounter with a symbol that might not harmonize with the extensional meanings.¹⁵² The expected effect of content meaning is that interpretations “that involve content meaning make the souls and practical lives of the interpreters bear the objects symbolized in the respects interpreted.”¹⁵³ The failure of the content meaning to conform to the extensional meanings raises the question of adequacy of extensionality. The conformity between the extensional and the content meaning is, therefore, decisive for many reasons. First, as Neville explains, “[m]uch religious growth and development consists in turning the network meanings of important symbols into content meanings.”¹⁵⁴ The reason being that without content meaning the opportunity for personal, social, factual, empirical, historical experience of symbols is lost, keeping the symbol’s reference from becoming an experienceable reality. Moreover, content meanings must also conform to extensional meanings in order to sustain historical and cultural continuity, the only way a tradition can come to exist and endure. Conformity of the extensional and the content meanings reinforces faith, whereas the loss of said conformity results in cognitive dissonance, and if widespread, can lead to a community-wide crisis (or, anticipate Greenfeld, anomie), which in the case of religion can lead to a crisis of faith. Muslim political theologies that I survey here are in part a response to a real and perceived crisis of Muslim faith effected

¹⁵² Neville, 101.

¹⁵³ Neville, 103.

¹⁵⁴ Neville, 103.

by modernity.

Truth, Extensional and Intentional

The question of content meaning and its consistency or inconsistency with extensional meanings raises the question of *semiotic truth*. It was mentioned above that all of imagination's processes fall under two general categories: autonomous and inventive. The pre-reflective, autonomous process are subsequently given over to critical judgment, which enables the interpreter to distinguish between symbols, and to judge the extent to which symbols proximate or validate the objects they symbolize. Neville's term of preference for such a critical judgment is *truth*, or *authenticity*.¹⁵⁵ Against the modern semiotic ideology's privileging of truth as conceptual (expressed in the fact/value distinction), Neville defines *truth* axiologically as "the accurate carryover of the nature of the religious object, in the respect interpreted, into the interpreters by the vehicle of the meanings in the interpreters' symbols."¹⁵⁶ When symbolic experiences meet expectations, their truth-value is authenticated, otherwise it opens the room for doubt and critical reevaluation. For example, if the repetition of a certain symbolic formula promises tranquility, the fulfillment of such a promise carries over tranquility into the interpreter objectively. The central problematic between religion and modernity is the question of the ontological and epistemological truth of religious symbols versus modern symbols. In Muslim theopolitics, the matter is debated as the problem of discerning 'true' or 'real'

¹⁵⁵ In Neville's words, "worldviews are learned in addition through intellectual means, in which adults take responsibility for the truth or authenticity of their worldview in part or whole." "Worldviews," 242.

¹⁵⁶ Neville, *Broken Symbols*, 20.

Islam. To advert focus to axiology of truth transforms the question of truth from that of factual truth to spiritual, emotional, practical efficacy, without denying the importance of conceptual truth. The problem is no longer merely whether a religious symbol is factual, but whether it is effective.

Pragmatics in Public Life

Whereas the exposition of Neville's semiotics thus far has mostly focused on semantics, no level of complexity in a semiotic system can endure if symbolic engagement remains confined to semantics. Religiously, the ultimate task of religious symbols is to cultivate a spiritual connection with ultimacy, and while intellectual or spiritual contemplation can certainly attain that goal, such engagements remain the prerogative of the dedicated few. The masses for the most part require practical experience, and, according to Neville, the most effective practice transpires in the pragmatics of "cultic life," or performance.

Neville defines 'cult' as religious activities developed through tradition to effect a transformation of particular character and identity in the participants.¹⁵⁷ Cultic performance adds content meaning to sacred symbols through actual experience (often through rituals). Without this dynamic, many members of the community are likely to remain disconnected from experiencing ultimacy. The intense experiences in cultic performance can convince many of the truth-value of what might be otherwise abstract and transcendent symbols. The practical integrity thus obtained serves a crucial purpose

¹⁵⁷ Neville, 245. The dialectical significance of cultic and emotional experience was highlighted by Durkheim in his conception of "collective effervescence," experience that give birth to the social bond, and his equation of divinity with society.

of acculturating the individual into the religious life of the community. In Neville's explanation, the

practice of a religion has a deep need to imprint the symbols in the habits and imaginations of people, and to make their practical implications baseline traditions and politics for religious institution. All this is done through rehearsing the symbols in imagination-forming behavior, the primary example of which is ritual....¹⁵⁸

The dynamic of cultural semiosis is to reproduce itself by imprinting in individual imaginations extensional associations. While some extensional associations are imprinted through semantic education, others require pragmatics.

Engagement and Consequences

The remaining elements in Neville's sixfold semiotic complexity are *engagement* and *consequences*. The basic idea of semiotic engagement has already been discussed in relation to imagination in that it is the source and foundation of human engagement with reality. In the quest to engage ultimacy through sacred symbols, Neville speaks of "dead" and "live" symbols. To the extent that religious symbols succeed in engaging their object, they are "live" for their interpreters. Live symbols can lead to real positive, salutary consequence for their interpreters and the community. However, to the extent that religious symbols fail to engage their ultimate objects at all, they are "dead."¹⁵⁹ Howsoever religious symbols engage will have *consequences* in the lives of the interpreters.

As mentioned in relation to imagination's social situation, pragmatic semiotics understands semiosis to be a collective process. In a religious context, semiosis transpires

¹⁵⁸ Neville, 140.

¹⁵⁹ Neville, 62.

among a community of believers who agree on some minimal hermeneutic standards of engagement with sacred symbols. Such standards are refined over generations so that adherence to minimal standards ensures best outcomes in semiosis so that sacred symbols may be engaged truthfully and lead to desired consequences for the practitioners (e.g. issuance of *fatvá* requires a mastery of classical texts, exegesis, and hermeneutics of Islamic law). Engagement with sacred symbols and symbols of power in general can lead to immense consequences for oneself and others. Neville notes that symbols not only accrue interpretive consequences, but also incur “extra-interpretive” ones as well. In one scenario, when religious symbols fail to engage the infinite, and instead engage something finite mistaken as infinite, they become “idolatrous,” that is, mistakenly invest ultimacy in the non-infinite. Moreover, when religious symbols in fact succeed in engaging ultimacy, but misrepresent it, they become “demonic”¹⁶⁰ (e.g., the Muslim militancy’s failure to observe the Islamic law’s hermeneutic objective of preserving life conflates the murder of children with *jihād*). All in all, the purpose of religious symbols is to truthfully engage ultimacy (that is to draw out the proper value from the religious object), and as a result, bring its interpretive consequences to bear upon all aspects of life.

In Neville's words,

the purpose of religious living is to modify everything we do, in household life, providing for economic needs, organizing communal life, maturing through life’s stages, creating things of excellence—everything—so that those activities and their projects are rightly related to the sacred [i.e., the ultimate]. Religious effort struggles to conform the whole of a society and the whole of individuals’ lives to

¹⁶⁰ Neville, 237.

whatever would be an appropriate stance toward the sacred in that situation. In this way religion seeks to leaven all the other dimensions of life.¹⁶¹

This is a most succinct statement capturing the gist of the complexity of religious semiosis, and one that hints at the quintessential problem between Islam and modernity, namely, the scope of religious influence in the context of a secular nation-state. It was the attempt to address this problem that gave birth to Islamic political theology.

In sum, religion is concerned with ultimacy, engaged through religious symbols, which function as boundary conditions and mediate between practitioners and infinite realities. Religious symbols in turn cast their sacred shadow upon other, non-religious symbols, and through them upon all engagements of life, whose value is appraised relative to their relation to ultimacy. This is in part accomplished by the systemic nature of semiosis as symbols interrelate in systems of extensional meanings and referents that serve to instruct intentional experiences. The extent of the distance between extensional projections and content meaning raise of the question of truth of religious symbols. When ineffective, religious values fail to carry over into the interpreters and fall short of transforming the souls and lives of the interpreters.

Finally, extending Neville's definition of religion, I can now offer a more technical definition of Muslim political theology as might cover both contexts of Muslim power and disempowerment: *political theology is the interpretation of Islamic ultimacy so that all relations of power in the public arena (societal, economic, political) symbolize 'Islam' ('submission to God') in order to realize Muslims' worldly emancipation and*

¹⁶¹ Neville, 217.

Islam's ultimate objective of otherworldly salvation. Muslim community itself is one of the boundary conditions of Islam, for without Muslims Islam too disappears from the human world. However, the mere presence of (inauthentic) Muslims is not sufficient to fulfill the criteria of the theologians, for they demand that each Muslim individually and the community collectively feel, think, behave, and organize life in a way so that the whole and its parts together symbolize (bears witness to) God's presence in the world. Personal relation to God is what ensures the individual's salvation. However, collective emancipation and an Islamic polity are necessary as the optimum path to facilitate the ultimacy of salvation. The form of polity and the specific meaning of emancipation will vary from context to context, and will be assessed with respect to the criterion of otherworldly salvation.

LIAH GREENFELD AND SEMIOTICS OF NATIONALISM

Liah Greenfeld was trained as an anthropologist and a sociologist. At the time when she published her major monograph, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1992), Greenfeld announced her project as standing within the early discipline of sociology and its attempt to understand the nature of modern society. Among the fathers of sociology, she declared her alignment with Weber's methodological individualism in privileging "social reality as essentially symbolic, of social action as *meaningfully* oriented action, in other words action oriented by or grounded in symbolic systems."¹⁶² In later years, however, while still upholding Weber, Greenfeld no longer considered herself a

¹⁶² Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 18.

sociologist as that discipline came to be defined in its methodological commitments to structural analysis dominated by Marxist historical materialism.¹⁶³ The structuralist account holds that “nationalism is a product or reflection of major components of modernization,” with the result that neither “‘structuralism’ nor idealism recognizes the significance of the human agency, in which culture and structure are brought together.”¹⁶⁴ Two points are to be noted here. One, Greenfeld’s methodological individualism rehabilitates the role of human agency in nationalism, which makes her analysis a theoretical anthropology of nationalism. Two, as against the mistaken view that might consider human agency separate and opposed to structural influences, Greenfeld presents it as the confluence of structural and cultural forces. The semiotic implication of this approach is that analysis of imagination or symbols offers clues to the workings of both structures and culture.

The Semiosis of Anthropology

Just as semiotics is central to Neville's theory of religion, so it is to Greenfeld’s theory of nationalism.¹⁶⁵ A major difference in their respective semiotics is their respective point of departure. Whereas Neville's semiotic is indebted to the Anglo-

¹⁶³ Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays on Modern Culture* (London: Oneworld, 2006), viii. For her elaborate critique of structuralism, see *ibid.*, 176-180. For a similar critique, which particularly targets Gellner and Anderson, see “Session VII. A New Paradigm for the Social Sciences?” *Critical Review* 16 (2004): 288-322; “The Trouble with Social Science,” *Critical Review* 17, no. 1-2 (2005): 101–116.

¹⁶⁴ Greenfeld, *Five Roads*, 19.

¹⁶⁵ Greenfeld, “Nationalism and Modernity,” in *Nationalism and the Mind*, 67. For Greenfeld’s semiotic reflections, see *Nationalism and the Mind*, 135-144, and 203-244; *Mind, Modernity, Madness: The Impact of Culture on Human Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 59-112; *Five Roads*, 14-26; and *Advanced Introduction to Nationalism* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2016), 15-25.

American philosophical tradition and the field of comparative religion, Greenfeld's semiotic grows out of her studies on nationalism and its relation to anthropology, culture, and the mind. This is evident in the title of the third monograph in her trilogy on nationalism, *Mind, Modernity, and Madness: The Impact of Culture on Human Experience*. Greenfeld's reflection in this work's first part, entitled "Philosophical," begins with the examination of empirical experience, a phenomenological thought experiment of imagining the activities in one's daily routine and examining the role and content of mind in it.

In *Madness*, Greenfeld's semiotic reflections begin with acknowledging the unique relationship between mind and signification. The first context of signification arises with the emergence of consciousness, or life, in which responses to stimuli are genetically encoded. In this context, specific stimuli function as *signs* signifying another thing. "Life, in distinction, is full of significance. Everything in it is a sign."¹⁶⁶ Greenfeld notes that signs constitute the phenomenal experience of the immediate present, which, in the animal world, operates on instincts. Greenfeld's sign thus encompasses the Peircean iconic and indexical signs. Symbols, on the other hand, are distinctly human as they are "intentionally articulated signs." For Greenfeld, intentionality points to the operation of choice, agency, and semiotic arbitrariness.

Unlike signs, symbols represented phenomena of which they were not a part—in this sense they were arbitrary, dependent on choice. The meaning (the significance) of a symbol was not given in the phenomenon it was signifying—its referent, or genetically; it was given to it by the context in which it was used, and increasingly

¹⁶⁶ Liah Greenfeld, *Mind, Modernity, Madness: The Impact of Culture on Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bu/detail.action?docID=3301256>.

this context became mostly the context of other symbols. Thus, the significance of symbols constantly changed.¹⁶⁷

Whereas Greenfeld speaks of symbolic meaning in general, Neville differentiates between extensional and intentional meanings (interpretants), where intentional meaning is what is intended in an actual act of interpretation in the background of a particular context. The nuance is nonetheless alluded in Greenfeld's description of symbols as "intentionally articulated signs" and that the individual receives her symbolic inventory from her culture, the macro repository of symbols. On the whole, both Greenfeld and Neville agree on the basic fact of the cultural origins of symbols, and their systemic order. For Greenfeld, symbols "from the first formed systems, ever changing and becoming more complex and connected by constantly transforming ties of interdependence. Symbols, in other words, constituted a world of their own; an autonomous, self-creative world in which things were happening according to laws of causation that did not apply anywhere else."¹⁶⁸

Like Neville, Greenfeld too adverts to imagination as the central faculty and the foundation for experience and the processing of symbols. It is the basic faculty of human experience "on which every one of the mind's functions and its very formation (and thus the cultural process in general) depend. Symbolic imagination is an ability to create new information within the brain and, therefore, the creative mental ability *par excellence*."¹⁶⁹ On the one hand, imagination is given to cognitive reasoning, but, on the other hand, in it

¹⁶⁷ Greenfeld, 63.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Greenfeld, "Nationalism and the Mind," in *Nationalism and the Mind*, 216.

thought also mingles with emotions. In Greenfeld's words, "perceptions, in addition to information about the outside world...have an emotional content."¹⁷⁰ Whereas rationalist and structuralist approaches are wont to dismiss emotions as epiphenomenal or idiosyncratic, contrasted with facts and objectivity, Greenfeld sees them as constituting basic human experience. Just like values, emotions facilitate preferences and choices as some symbols hold greater emotional appeal than others. In contrast to the modern semiotic ideology, Greenfeld asserts that "emotions play a much greater role in it [human consciousness] than thought."¹⁷¹ A most important point about emotions is that the distinctly human emotions (e.g., pride, guilt, shame, etc.) are for Greenfeld "products of culture,"¹⁷² which makes them collective, or public. In imagination's symbolic content, therefore, thoughts and emotions intermingle.¹⁷³ In Neville's case, instead of emotions, he places greater emphasis on value as more basic than cognition in imagination. However, emotions and values are intimately connected, for values incite emotions, and emotions influence value-creation. It can be said that values are the cognitive expression of emotions, while emotions are the experience evoked by values.

Semiotic complexity, Greenfeld holds, is augmented further still due to the historical nature of symbols. Symbols accumulate information and meanings over time, transmitted from generation to generation, thus becoming part of a culture's bequest, the

¹⁷⁰ Greenfeld, *Mind, Modernity, Madness*, 96.

¹⁷¹ Greenfeld, 92.

¹⁷² Greenfeld, 81.

¹⁷³ In Greenfeld's words, "This suggests that human cognitive process, especially when un(self)conscious, also has an important emotional component, that our symbolic imagination and even explicit thought are emotionally colored, as it were, and it is impossible in fact and unwise in theory to separate sharply between cognitive and emotional functioning." Greenfeld, 82.

sum total of which is aptly labeled by Greenfeld “collective mind.”¹⁷⁴ The overall human experience for Greenfeld unfolds in the mutual interaction of individual mind and culture.

She defines culture as

the singular nature of the organization of human life and the singular manner in which this organization is constructed and transmitted across generations, namely, to its *symbolic* nature and its transmission through *symbolic*, rather than genetic, i.e. physicochemical, blueprints.¹⁷⁵

The symbolic nature of both mind and culture point to their mutual relationship.

Individual imaginations create culture, which transmits a community’s symbolic bequest to individual minds. Hence, mind and culture create each other—in Neville’s language, in interpretation, extensionality and intentionality mutually influence each other.¹⁷⁶

Moving from culture to politics, Greenfeld notes (*à la* Geertz) that cultures function as *models for* social reality, and as such cultures tend to be “incompatible” with one another, which can translate into political conflicts so that “all politics are politics of culture; that the significance of culture in politics is a permanent feature of political reality.”¹⁷⁷ If politics is determined by culture, then culture gets to determine the

¹⁷⁴ Greenfeld, 64.

¹⁷⁵ Greenfeld, “An Invitation to a Dialogue,” in *Nationalism and the Mind*, 167. For a very interesting exchange between Greenfeld and some interlocutors on the nature of culture, semiotics, and neuroscience, see Liah Greenfeld, “A New Paradigm for the Social Sciences?” Greenfeld’s reading of culture is reminiscent of Karl Deutsch’s explanation of culture from the perspective of social communications, which presents culture as those aspects of society through which humans and other social agents (like institutions, corporations, states) produce and exchange information. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*, 90-92.

¹⁷⁶ “The mind—the emergent process that happens in the boundary conditions of our organic being and, specifically, by means of our brain—is a cultural process. Culture—the process of symbolic transmission of human ways of life that happens in the mind—is a mental process.” *Mind, Modernity, Madness*, 75. Also see, “An Invitation to a Dialogue,” 162-173. The dialectical reading of the social or collective with the individual mind is reminiscent of Ferdinand de Saussure’s distinction of language as a collective store in possession of the whole community which is only finitely and imperfectly possessed by any given individual.

¹⁷⁷ Greenfeld, “The Political Significance of Culture,” in *Nationalism and the Mind*, 136. In a religious

production and reception of political symbols and structures so that “[e]very political order thus represents a reflection and realization of a culture’s central, legitimating beliefs,”¹⁷⁸ which implies that political conflict can, at least in part, revolve around culture’s central beliefs and symbols. In addition, some cultures are more conflict-prone than others, and what determines a culture’s inclination and the pace of transition to conflict is “the readiness with which it perceives the incompatibility between its fundamental presuppositions and those of other societies, and interprets this incompatibility as in some respect offensive or threatening to its existence.”¹⁷⁹ This is a key insight for our study of the points of conflicts in Muslim politics. For if culture by its nature determines politics, then the introduction of a secular, foreign cultural ideas or practices in a religious culture is likely to trigger conflicts of culture in the guise of politics. We will learn shortly that culture is a way of organizing and streamlining cognition, emotions, values, identity, social relations, and politics. In this view, religion and nationalism are two cultures founded upon conflicting bases, which is a major reason why Islamic political theology conflicts with secular nationalism.

Semiotics, Identity, and Agency

Turning from the cultural to the individual, the impact of culture on the individual is to mold identity and influence agency. Greenfeld defines identity as “symbolic self-definition,” “the image of one’s position in the sociocultural ‘space’ *within* the image of

sense, culture is also an attempt to model all reality in that it is not uncommon in religious cultures to mimic cosmic or sacred structures, beings, and ways of being in mundane life. The idea has been expressed in the adage, ‘as above so below’ such that worldly order is seen as a shadow of a heavenly order.

¹⁷⁸ Greenfeld, 137.

¹⁷⁹ Greenfeld, 137.

the relevant sociocultural terrain itself.”¹⁸⁰ Inflecting the role of emotions in identity formation and its effect on organization of experience, Greenfeld explains that “identity formation, like the process of symbolic imagination by means of which identity is formed, is a largely emotional process.”¹⁸¹ Identity’s function in relation to one’s experiences is to rank them relative to one another on the strength of their “emotional charge.” As so much of human wellbeing rests on emotional health, identity and emotions mutually affect each other. Hence, while changes in “certain peripheral aspects of identity are possible, but any change in its core (i.e., crises of identity, doubts about one’s identity, multiple identities) translate into mental problems.”¹⁸² Identity’s emotional ranking of experience directs agency in making choices. Will too is a function of mind’s symbolic processes because “we internalize the principle of their [symbols’] intentionality.”¹⁸³ In view of this mutuality of culture and the individual mind, Greenfeld calls identity “the agent of a particular culture.”¹⁸⁴ Stated differently, culture feels, thinks, acts, and transmits itself through individuals.

In sum, despite their different points of departure and terminology, both Neville and Greenfeld agree that (a) human experience is mediated by symbols operating in individual imagination and shared by the collective; (b) individual emotions, values, ideas, identity, and actions are greatly, though never absolutely, influenced by collective semiosis; and (c) changes in the collective semiosis are reflected in individual, and vice

¹⁸⁰ Greenfeld, *Madness*, 93.

¹⁸¹ Greenfeld, *Madness*, 96.

¹⁸² Greenfeld, *Madness*, 98.

¹⁸³ Greenfeld, *Madness*, 100.

¹⁸⁴ Greenfeld, *Madness*, 99.

versa.

Having explicated Greenfeld's semiotic framework, I will now elaborate her theory of nationalism with a view to understand its nature, its central symbols, and their effect on individual imagination. This exposition will help clarify the dynamics of Islamic nationalism in all its forms.

Theory of Nationalism

The first point of order in broaching Greenfeld's theory nationalism is to fathom nationalism's significance for the modern world. Witness Greenfeld's various descriptions of nationalism:

Nationalism is the most important social and political phenomenon of our time. It is the cultural framework of modernity and, as such, it defines all of the specifically modern experience, be it social, political, economic, personal, that is, it defines the ways we, modern men and women, live our lives.¹⁸⁵

Nationalism is a form of social consciousness, a way of cognitive and moral organization of reality. As such it represents the foundation of the moral order of modern society, the source of its values, the framework of its characteristic-national-identity, and the basis of social integration in it.¹⁸⁶

Nationalism, in short, is the modern culture. It is the symbolic blueprint of modern reality, the way we see, and thereby construct, the world around us, the specifically modern consciousness.¹⁸⁷

Nationalism as a system of beliefs, or this, national, modern form of consciousness, which...always contains these three: (1) the belief in the fundamental equality of those considered members of the nation; (2) the belief that the national community is self-governing, the source of authority and law; and (3) the belief that this empirical world, the objective world accessible to our experience is inherently meaningful and autonomous, that, whether or not transcendental forces had

¹⁸⁵ Greenfeld, *Advanced Introduction*, 1. Emphasis original.

¹⁸⁶ Greenfeld, "Nationalism and Modern Economy," 199.

¹⁸⁷ Greenfeld, 204.

anything to do with it at the time of creation, they have nothing to do with it at present.¹⁸⁸

The array of characteristics in these descriptions convey nationalism's scope of operation, and the depth and extent of its influence. Greenfeld's descriptions are amenable to extending these very terms to nationalism's scope and power beyond the state to the whole of modern culture and imagination. As the modern "social consciousness," "cognitive and moral organization of reality, framework of modern values, national identity, and framework of modern culture, nationalism is, in a manner of speaking, omnipresent, omnipotent, and tends to omniscience in the modern world.¹⁸⁹ One reason for such a vast scope and power of nationalism lies in Greenfeld's distinct thesis that modernity itself took birth in nationalism, and all the other modern developments in science, economics, and culture are nurtured in its cradle, hence, it is only natural that the ideas and values of nationalism serve as modernity's roots, and its influence pervades all aspects of the modern world.¹⁹⁰ The important point for my present purposes is that the omnipresent scope of nationalism leads it to encroach upon private territory of religion in

¹⁸⁸ *Mind, Modernity, Madness*, 50.

¹⁸⁹ Such terms have in fact been used by Nandy to describe the growing scope of the post-colonial Indian state: "the Secular State has begun to claim—along with its new priestly classes like the scientists, the bureaucrats and the development experts—exactly the same blind faith from its followers as the Church once did. It has begun to equip itself with the technological means to be omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. God itself." Ashis Nandy, "An Anti-Secularist Manifesto," *India International Centre Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1995): 35-64.

¹⁹⁰ Greenfeld points to sixteenth-century England under the second Tudor monarch, Henry VIII, as the birthplace of nationalism. She pursues this thesis in her early major study, *Five Roads to Modernity* (1992), applied to five case studies of modern nationalism: England, France, Russia, Germany, and the United States. Most theorists point to modern France as the birth of nationalism. While Anthony Smith too points to France, he also considers England as one of the possible birthplaces of the first modern nations in the early Middle Ages. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 130. While Greenfeld's thesis is a controversial one, that debate is irrelevant to my present concerns. I am here concerned not with how nationalism took birth, but how it functions semiotically once established, and what implications this holds for Muslim nationalism.

different ways, thereby, often forcing religion to respond in protest and become politicized.

Turning to the semiotic matrix of nationalism, Greenfeld observes that the “only foundation of nationalism as such, the only condition, that is, without which no nationalism is possible, is an idea;...the idea of the ‘nation.’”¹⁹¹ Etymologically, the original meaning of the Latin *natio* as ‘litter’ carried derogatory connotations. In its genealogy, the meaning of ‘nation’ underwent various transformations ranging from “a group of foreigners united by place of origin,” to “communities of opinion and purpose,” to “a political, cultural, and then social *elite*” (in late thirteenth century). In this journey, ‘nation’ later became synonymous with ‘people,’ which was once associated with ‘rabble’ and ‘plebs.’ The equation between people and nation as an elite indicated the elevation of the commoners to an elite status. Finally, somewhere in late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century England, ‘nation’ took on the meaning of “a *unique* sovereign people,” and thus became the basis for claiming congruity of the national with the political principle.¹⁹² In the semantic evolution of the word ‘nation,’ Greenfeld discerns the dialectical relation between structure and culture: “The process of semantic transformation was constantly redirected by structural constraints which formed new concepts. At the same time, the structural constraints were conceptualized, interpreted, or defined, in terms of the inherited concepts, which oriented social action.”¹⁹³ I consider

¹⁹¹ Greenfeld, *Five Roads*, 5.

¹⁹² Greenfeld, 8. For Greenfeld’s semantic analysis of ‘nation,’ see *Advanced Introduction*, 11-12; and *Five Roads*, 4-8.

¹⁹³ Greenfeld, “Nationalism and Modernity,” 71.

this a statement on methodological inquiry, a method that I adopt as in tracing the semantics of Islamic nationalism.

Nationalism and Identity

Once a group of people begin to identify as a nation in its sixteenth-century English connotation, a distinct national culture develops with which a particular nationalism becomes identified. A national culture determines the lineaments of a people's collective and individual identities. "Identity" is "perception." For if "a particular identity does not mean anything to the population in question, this population does not have this particular identity."¹⁹⁴ Greenfeld describes national identity as a "fundamental identity" because it defines the very "essence" of an individual, and one to which all other identities remain secondary.¹⁹⁵ Greenfeld, however, cautions against conflating national identity with other kinds of identities. National identity is not to be confused with regional or linguistic identities. These identities can in fact predate the emergence of national identity in a people. "National identity is not a generic identity, it is always specific."¹⁹⁶ The specificity of national identity rests on the idea of a "people" "seen as the bearer of sovereignty, the central object of loyalty, and the basis of collective solidarity." In addition, the people "is usually perceived as larger than any concrete community and always as fundamentally homogeneous and only superficially divided by the lines of status, class, locality, or (in rare cases) even ethnicity." National identity is

¹⁹⁴ Greenfeld, 13.

¹⁹⁵ Liah Greenfeld and Daniel Chirot, "Nationalism and Aggression," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (1994): 79.

¹⁹⁶ Greenfeld, *Five Roads*, 12.

the “most powerful,” which is to say that it is the most assertive and the least negotiable identity one subscribes to.¹⁹⁷

Given the scope of nationalism, its determination of modern identity, and the fact of its recent origins raise the obvious question of the reason for its appeal. Greenfeld’s answer points to the role of individual motivation and mass appeal in nationalism. Specifically, she points to a certain kind of social pathology as instigating the transition from pre-national society to nationalism. This analysis is key to making sense of South Asian Muslims’ transition to Islamic nationalism.

Pathology and Agency in the Birth of Nationalism

Conveying the dialectic between anthropology and structure, Greenfeld states that

[s]ocial action is determined chiefly by the motivations of the relevant actors. Motivations are formed by their beliefs and values, and at the same time are shaped by the structural constraints of the actors, which also affect the beliefs and values. Social action, determined by motivations, creates structures.¹⁹⁸

The cyclical dynamic of semiosis thus moves from individual beliefs, values, and motivations governing individual imagination to structural constraints that shape and define the larger cultural imagination. While this process is faithfully Weberian, in adverting to the general axiological context in which the said dialectic is likely to birth nationalism, Greenfeld looks to Durkheimian *anomie* as the answer.¹⁹⁹

Modernization entails far-reaching consequences in the transition from a pre-

¹⁹⁷ Greenfeld, 20.

¹⁹⁸ Greenfeld, 20.

¹⁹⁹ On anomie, see, for instance, *Five Roads*, 14-17; *Nationalism and the Mind*, 9, 69-72, 212-213; “The Formation of the Russian National Identity: The Role of Status Insecurity and Ressentiment,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32 (1990): 549–552; and “When the Sky Is the Limit: Busyness in Contemporary American Society,” *Social Research* 72, no. 2 (2005): 315–338.

national order to a national one, in which nearly all aspects of life are impacted in some way. While the impact might be negligible in some aspects, tolerable in others, it is bound to be unbearable in other ways still. All in all, transition to nationalism disrupts, unsettles, and destabilizes pre-national social and political structures, often resulting in the loss of bearings for many. In this new situation, the pre-national traditional cultures offer little or no guidance in successfully reorienting one's life in a new society. The sectors that stand to lose the most as a result are the elites.²⁰⁰ Their predicament is characterized by Greenfeld as "status-inconsistency, which, depending on its nature, could be accompanied by a profound sense of insecurity and anxiety."²⁰¹ As the elite's prior experiences of prestige, authority, and stability dissipate due to the loss of power, or emergence of rivals, they begin to suffer the social pathology of *anomie*: widespread feelings of confusion, precariousness, uncertainty, anxiety, and distress.²⁰² For the elite, anomic conditions effect a "crisis of identity"²⁰³ in which the old image of society no longer corresponds to the newly emerging conditions.²⁰⁴ Greenfeld thus notes that a "change of the generalized identity (e.g., from religious or estate to national) presupposes a transformation of the image of the social order" motivated either by "independent structural changes," or "a desire to change an order resistant to change."²⁰⁵ Agency and

²⁰⁰ Greenfeld, *Five Roads*, 15. Motivation is just the sort of potent social force that is likely to be dismissed or undermined by sociology. Michael Mann, for instance, rejects the role of desires, drives, or motivations in determining society and social history. Instead, he favors networks of social power, namely, ideology, economy, military, and politics. Michael Mann, chap. 1 in *The Source of Social Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²⁰¹ Greenfeld, *Five Roads*, 15.

²⁰² Greenfeld, *Advanced Introduction*, 112-113.

²⁰³ Greenfeld, 14.

²⁰⁴ Greenfeld, "Nationalism and Modernity," 72.

²⁰⁵ Greenfeld, *Five Roads*, 20-21.

structure are both implicated in semiosis.

Transition to nationalism is that dramatic change of one's inherited map that first frustrates and then compels whole populations to transition to a new, national identity. Anomic elites serve to facilitate the transition for all as they are naturally given to searching for a resolution to the crisis: "*national* identity is adopted because of its ability to solve the crisis."²⁰⁶ In this circumstance, should a national model happen to come along, the anomic elite readily adopt it toward a resolution of their crisis. A national vision offers the elite a conceptual scheme through which to assert or reclaim their authority over the rest, and in the process, incorporate the masses into their vision. The transition to nationalism involves two types of elite: the power elite (the decision makers, the affluent) and the intellectual elite (theologians, philosophers, journalists)—the two sectors at times converge toward mutual support in a national struggle, and at other times conflict as opposing forces.

As we will see later, the role of the intelligentsia is all the more important in the case of Islamic nationalism as the religious imagination of South Asian Muslims gives tremendous weight to religious authority, and that journalists played a key role in disseminating nationalist ideas among the Muslim masses. It was a new class of intellectuals who imagined all Indian Muslims as a single nation, formulated new political theologies, criticized secular nationalism, and invented the idea of 'Pakistan.'

²⁰⁶ Greenfeld, 17.

Axiology of Nationalism: Dignity and Réssentiment

Apart from taking on a national identity toward claiming or reclaiming their political authority, there is another axiological and emotional reason why the intelligentsia finds nationalism appealing. Greenfeld observes that nationalism offers egalitarianism to all citizens so that the rich and the poor, the leaders and the citizens, the powerful and the common folk in a nation are all declared equal, at least in theory.²⁰⁷ For this reason, nationalism is likely to “replace other forms of consciousness precisely in the periods of humiliation and loss of dignity and to appeal in the first place to groups that experience such humiliation and loss and that, therefore, were in possession of dignity earlier.”²⁰⁸ This explains why nationalism readily appeals to declining or deposed elites. They stand to lose the most under anomic conditions, and gain the most from nationalization. The same value of dignity, however, also explains its mass appeal because national dignity is distributed to all the citizens who participate in it vicariously (e.g., an Olympic medal won by an individual becomes the source of national pride). The widespread offering of national dignity is, therefore, unlikely to be transcended unless a greater offering is made.

Whereas I will explicate the Islamic nationalist discourse on dignity and egalitarianism, the two values appear as a point of contention for the Muslim critics of

²⁰⁷ Liah Greenfeld, “Transcending the Nation’s Worth,” *Daedalus* 122, no. 3 (1993): 49. On this point, Greenfeld finds alignment with Gellner: “Industrialization engenders a mobile and culturally homogeneous society, which consequently has egalitarian expectations and aspirations, such as had been generally lacking in the previous stable, stratified, dogmatic and absolutist agrarian societies.” Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 72.

²⁰⁸ Liah Greenfeld, *Globalisation of Nationalism: The Motive-Force Behind Twenty-First Century Politics*, ECPR Press Essays (Colchester, United Kingdom: ECPR Press, 2016), xviii.

secular nationalism as they privilege the dignity and equality offered by Islam over its secular rival.

Réssentiment: The Pathology of Foreign Imitation and Transvaluation of Values

If anomie is one pathology accompanying nationalism, the other notable pathology is that of *réssentiment*, which Greenfeld describes as “a psychological state resulting from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred (existential envy) and the impossibility of satisfying these feelings.”²⁰⁹ Beyond its birthplace of sixteenth-century England, nationalism elsewhere remains an imitation. The fact of imitation undeniably not only signals the imitator’s attraction to the object of imitation, but also its superiority. The awareness of the model’s superiority leads the imitators to discern the actual impossibility of matching the model’s standards and achievements, thereby inducing in them *réssentiment*. While *réssentiment* in the first instance is a negative quality, a pathology, it nonetheless harbors a creative power that results in “transvaluation of values.” For *réssentiment* induces the imitators to evaluate the values of the model in a negative estimation so that the very things the model values highly become points of rejection, ridicule, and disgust for the imitators. *Réssentiment*’s creative dimension lies in that it “leads to the emphasis on the elements of indigenous traditions—or the construction of a new system of values—hostile to the principles of the original nationalism.”²¹⁰ The return to indigenous elements or the creation of new values form a

²⁰⁹ Greenfeld, *Five Roads*, 15. Greenfeld traces the coinage of *réssentiment* to Nietzsche, and its further refinement to Max Scheler. See, for instance, *Five Roads*, 15-16; “The Formation of the Russian National Identity,” 549–52. For Greenfeld’s application of *réssentiment* in relation to specific case studies, see “Nationalism and Aggression.”

²¹⁰ Greenfeld, *Five Roads*, 16.

new gravitational center around which imitation nationalism rallies.

While Greenfeld does not state it explicitly, *r essentiment* points to the negative emotions and values of nationalism that serve to create the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Its function is to identify who is the Other against whom ‘our’ nationality is to be defined, and who is to be excluded in the nation. I will explicate two kinds of *r essentiment* at work in Islamic nationalism, one anti-British, the other anti-Hindu. This analysis will show that the creative element of *r essentiment* develops in opposition to the British, not the Hindus. For Islamic nationalists rework and incorporate modern symbols of nationalism into their political theology, and do not concern themselves with Hindu ideas whatsoever. Thus far, we have not addressed the question of nationalism and religion in Greenfeld’s exposition. Whereas she does not devote much attention to the subject, her remarks on nationalism and religion offer highly valuable insights.

Modern Spirituality: Sacralization of the Secular

Greenfeld’s recounting of the semantic development of the idea of ‘nation’ above already alluded to a most decisive shift of emphasis in values, ideas, and ideology. Born in and having traversed through different religious milieus, nationalism finally arrived at a secular conception.

Nationalism is secular in the sense that it is focused on this world of our experience, endowing it with meaning in its own right, completely independent from any transcendental force, whether or not such forces are believed to exist. This necessarily demotes such forces (in monotheistic societies, God) from the dominant position they held within societies for which religion provided the cultural framework...and makes them largely irrelevant.²¹¹

²¹¹ Greenfeld, *Advanced Introduction*, 6. Similar articulation can be found in *Nationalism and the Mind*, 94, and 205. This particular description of secularization closely tracks Max Weber’s

Recall Greenfeld's earlier assertion of nationalism as the basic framework determining modern consciousness, identity, and cognitive and moral organization of reality. The quintessential nature of modern national consciousness is now declared secular, secularity being one of the most basic and foundational values espoused by the modern semiotic ideology. The effect of secularization in experience is the filtering of all experiences in imagination through the sieve of secular valuation, that is, the abstraction (or emptying) of all symbols of their sacred, enchanted, or transcendent interpretations. Greenfeld's analysis of secularity, however, strikes a more radical chord *viz a viz* the equation of secularization with Weberian disenchantment of the world:

Secularization in this sense, however, does not at all mean desacralization (or disenchantment, as the phenomenon is commonly called) of social and political world; on the contrary, it implies this world's sacralization. With nationalism, in other words, the secular itself, and politics in particular, becomes the sphere of the sacred.²¹²

In this assessment, Greenfeld goes farther than the criticisms of the "Western imaginary" and the modern "semiotic ideology" we encountered in the previous chapter. For the secular did not only displace religion from its erstwhile position of privilege and power,

"disenchantment," or Charles Taylor's "immanent frame."

²¹² Greenfeld, *Advanced Introduction*, 6. In addition to the scholars of nationalism mentioned in the previous chapter, sacralization of the political center has been pronounced "essential" and "crucial" by Tainter in identifying the emergence of a "center" for the rise and functioning of states. "Complex societies are focused on a center...which is the symbolic source of the framework of society. It is not only the location of legal and governmental institutions, but is the source of order, and the symbol of moral authority and social continuity. The center partakes of the nature of the sacred. In this sense, every complex society has an official religion." He goes on to stress that "An early complex society is likely to have an avowedly sacred basis of legitimacy, in which disparate, formerly independent groups are united by an overarching level of shared ideology, symbols, and cosmology." Joseph A. Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 27-28. Jose Casanova offers a similar analysis as that of Greenfeld on secularization: "The secular is by no means profane in our secular age. One only needs to think of such sacralized secular phenomena as nation, citizenship, and human rights." Jose Casanova, "The Secular and Secularisms," *Social Research* 76, no. 4 (2009): 1064.

but replaced religion in its emotional and spiritual dynamics as well. In other words, the moderns relate to the secular religiously. In Greenfeld's reading, the sacralization of the secular has the effect of orienting modern spirituality around nationalism. In her explanation,

[t]he perception of this world as ultimately meaningful [the essence of secular consciousness]...makes our everyday existence...far more spiritual than that of any of the prenational social formations....If religion were identical with spirituality, then nationalism would truly be the modern religion and more of a religion, at that, than any we have known before.²¹³

Spirituality addresses the individual's sense of self, and what confers on it meaning and emotional wellbeing. According to Greenfeld, modern society did away with all the prenational social loci of meaning and value, and replaced them with two entities: the individual and the nation.²¹⁴ With nationalism's power to define fundamental identity, and its transvaluation of values (sacralization of the secular), modernity redefined the concept of the self and spirituality.²¹⁵ Accordingly, nationalism projects interrelated anthropology and sociology: "In distinction to a closed system of social stratification, the bearer of status in the modern system of stratification—called *class system*—is the individual."²¹⁶ The new vision of spirituality is indicated by the modern "emotional repertoire" of self-love, self-realization, personal ambition, and attainment of personal happiness (or authenticity) as the ultimate goals of life.²¹⁷ Yet, once again, the public is implicated in individuality as modern individuality can only attain its goals if

²¹³ Greenfeld, "The Modern Religion?," in *Nationalism and the Mind*. 97.

²¹⁴ Greenfeld, "Nationalism and Modernity," 76.

²¹⁵ Greenfeld, *Advanced Introduction*, 7.

²¹⁶ Greenfeld, 1.

²¹⁷ Greenfeld, 112-118.

underwritten by nationalism. As Greenfeld remarks, “[o]ur emotional repertoire...determines our existential experience. Modern existential experience is defined by nationalism.”²¹⁸ National imagination links up with individuality in its salient values of *equality, liberty, and popular sovereignty*—the “most salient” characteristics of modernity with Greenfeld.²¹⁹ All three of these values concern the individual *in the context of national belonging*.

The three values of equality, liberty, and sovereignty are together reflected in the modern principle of democracy. While Greenfeld distinguishes between liberal polity and totalitarian polity, she insists that both can be classified as democracies as the power to select leaders through elections exists in both polities, which signifies at least a tacit acceptance of public consent as a source of political legitimacy.²²⁰ Moreover, the imperative of popular sovereignty places the responsibility of human destiny in the hands of the people as a collective. Meanwhile, the ideal of individual liberty places the responsibility of one’s salvation in one’s own hands. Taken together, the three values present a challenge to the role of and need for religion in the context of nationalism.

Greenfeld draws out the implications:

²¹⁸ Greenfeld, 112.

²¹⁹ Greenfeld, 1. Greenfeld is partly echoed by Webb Keane’s description of modernity as involving “individual’s agency, inwardness, and freedom,” “individual self-creation” “a historical self-consciousness that places a high value on social as well as individual change, in contrast to a relatively devalued “tradition.” Webb Keane, “Sincerity, ‘Modernity,’ and the Protestants,” *Cultural Anthropology* 17, no. 1 (2002): 68. In Asad’s description of the modern liberal secular theory, the salient features are claimed to be freedom, equality, and neutrality in the context of the liberal state ideology. Talal Asad, *Secular Translations: Nation-State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2019), 13-14.

²²⁰ There is a reason why authoritarian leaders like Saddam Hussein and Hosni Mubarak held elections in their times.

One is no longer expected to submit to suffering or deprivation, unless one has special reason to do so, for the general reasons for such submission—the expectation of rewards in the beyond, transmutation and migration of the souls, the duty to serve witness to the glory of God wherever one is called, or the sheer impossibility to change one’s condition—no longer apply.²²¹

It becomes evident then that nationalism in effect replaces the role of religion and its concern with personal wellbeing. The threat that nationalism poses to religion should now become manifest. Earnest adoption of nationalism implies a drastic change in values that affect not only the public sphere, but private experience as well.

In sum, nationalism is rooted in a secular imagination, and defines the cultural context (the semiotic framework) of the modern world. The modern culture is centered on the salient symbols of *nation*, *freedom*, *equality*, and *popular sovereignty*. These symbols in turn influence identity, emotional repertoire, ideas, and will. The transition to nationalism for a pre-national people is spurred on by anomic conditions in which elite sectors suffer from a loss of status and a crisis of identity, the resolution to which is sought by taking on a national identity.

SEMIOTIC COMPLEXITY, CONSISTENCY, INTEGRITY, AND AGENCY

Having outlined the theories of Neville and Greenfeld, I now wish to draw out some of their implications. To begin with, a symbol is a *complex* of triadic relations of sign, referent, and meaning. This complexity is further augmented by the location of symbols in culture/extensional systems, encoded with their respective referents and meanings. Given the systemic nature of semiosis, symbols form complexes with other symbols that are related together in some respect. Symbolic complexes also persist in a

²²¹ Greenfeld, “Nationalism and the Mind,” 207.

hierarchy so that in a given context certain complexes hold primacy over and govern the meanings of other symbols. In the context of religion, sacred symbols hold the highest authority and power over others. The depth or the extent of extensional semiosis determines the extent of a culture's complexity. The semiotic system of a tribal culture dwelling in remote places untouched by modern living, for example, will lack the symbolic complexity to intellectual resist and make sense of modern cultures. Whereas a more complex semiosis, as those of axial age religions for example, is more likely to furnish their modern adherents with semiotic complexes sophisticated enough to withstand the powerful challenge posed by modern semiotic ideology.

Extensional complexity imposes a kind of internal *consistency* to a given semiotic system in the context of a particular culture. I thus define *semiotic consistency* as the cultural/extensional logic of a given semiotic system that imposes conformity upon its users, lends some level of stability or inertia to semiosis, and lays down some stated or unstated rules for managing change in the system. Grammar, dictionaries, exegetical commentaries, hermeneutics, norms, proprieties, laws, ethics, legislatures, and monetary policy are some examples of means by which semiosis is stabilized and managed. Inconsistency in semiotic use can carry dire consequences like failing an English exam, misunderstanding in communication, or in the case of religion, excommunication. The social outcomes of semiotic consistency is cultural or traditional continuity. Semiotic continuity is in part a manifestation of the historical nature of semiosis. Symbols accrue meanings and undergo change over time; however, such change is slow and often imperceptible. Religious semiosis has the unique power to endure over longer periods,

partly because of the dynamics of sacredness and sentiments attached to sacred symbols. Religious symbols (texts, poetry, art, architecture, etc.) are diligently preserved and their meanings jealously guarded. However, as Greenfeld emphasizes, culture and its symbols are in a constant flux. Hence, a religious community must also contend with historical change, spontaneity inherent in intentionality, and the inventive side of imagination. Religion might be more resistant to change than modern semiotic ideology, but never immune from it.

Semiotic change too must remain consistent with extensionality to some extent. It is impossible for a whole community to change over to a new language overnight. Likewise, no large religious community can be forced to earnestly convert, in heart, mind, and deed, to another religion suddenly. For this reason, when inventing new symbols or borrowing foreign ones, their *integration* in the existing culture must achieve some level of consistency with its extensionality. Hence, semiotic *integration* is the process of successful accommodation of new or foreign symbols, or reinterpretation of old symbols, more or less consistent with existing extensionality.

The triad of complexity, consistency, and integration explains the rise of political theology and its particular form of Islamic nationalism. Rephrasing Cook and Hamid's conclusion (Chapter 2) in semiotic terms, the Muslim tradition has greater semiotic complexity to offers than its competitors to mount both a defense against and a counteroffensive to modern semiosis, especially in view of political theology's objective of emancipation. The extent of the Muslim success is determined partly by its ability to construct an alternative semiosis and/or to integrate modern symbols within its own

system without threatening its overall consistency. The imperative of semiotic consistency gave rise to modern political theology and transformed the old religious intelligentsia into a new intellectual elite, while the necessity of semiotic integration took the form of Islamic nationalism.

In addition, Greenfeld's insightful explication of cultural semiosis, identity, and will; and Neville's interrelationship between extensionality and intentionality apply to religious identity as well. Both the national and religious identities rest on powerful emotions that make it difficult to effect drastic change in them. There is a drastic difference in the formation and persistence of national and religious identities. Given religion's direct and explicit concern with individual's spiritual, moral, and intellectual transformation, it plays a greater role in molding micro aspects of identity that nationalism can never do. A conscientious Muslim can conform every aspect of one's life to religious recommendation, which can include sleeping, waking up, eating, drinking, bathing, answering the call of nature, dressing, greeting, kind of company to keep, praying, walking, talking, thinking, finances, and politics. Consequently, while the religiously committed may also possess a national identity, religious identity is likely to be more deeply rooted than national identity, and the two may be in conflict, as is the case with some Islamic nationalists (Chapters 5 and 6). Religious people change their nationalities much easily than their religion. The most daunting challenge before political theology was to integrate nationalism without losing what they saw as essential Islamic identity.

Nationalism's Religionesque and Religion's Nationalesque Character

Juxtaposing nationalism and religion shows the difficulties Muslim political theology faces in its encounter with nationalism. On the one hand, religion is engagement with ultimacy, mediated by sacred symbols functioning as boundary conditions, that imparts ultimate meanings to individual and community, and shape values, ideas, and practice. On the other hand, nationalism too functions upon a kind of ultimacy defined by a secular consciousness and the central symbols of freedom, equality, and sovereignty, which serve as secular boundary conditions without which nationalism cannot exist. This implies a family resemblance between religion and nationalism. It is my observation that the scholars of nationalism from their end and the scholars of religious studies from their perspective at times meet halfway at the intersection where the religion and nationalism converge.

Among the earliest scholars to equate nation with divinity was Emile Durkheim, for whom the worship of a deity was in fact the worship of the collective symbolized in the form of a deity.²²² One of the earliest historians to advert to parallels between nationalism and religion was Carlton J. H. Hayes (d. 1964), who viewed nationalism as manifesting man's inherent "religious sense," which he describes as "a mysterious faith in some power outside of himself, a faith always accompanied by feelings of reverence and usually attended by external acts and ceremonial."²²³ Similar to Hayes, his

²²² M. Marion, "Emile Durkheim and the Philosophy of Nationalism," *Political Science Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (1931): 87–106, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2143110>.

²²³ Carlton J. H. Hayes, "Nationalism as Religion," in *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), accessed May 23, 2021, <https://www.panarchy.org/hayes/nationalism.html>.

contemporary Hans Kohn (d. 1971) saw nationalism and its vision of progress as a secularized version of the Biblical approach to history.²²⁴ Adrian Hastings also adverts to the Biblical lineage of modern nationalism. In the Old Testament, the consecration of a people associated with a land consecrates the land by association. “Locational holiness,” Hasting notes, “is seen as requiring its own political order, and possibly the total exclusion of non-believers. A claim to exclusive proprietorship over a given territory is the very essence of nationalism.”²²⁵ More recently, Scott Hibbard observes that

nationalism emerged from the cauldron of religious sentiment, and the latter continues to provide an emotive—and moral—foundation to modern political structures. This influence is evident in the religious symbols and narratives that inform modern nationalisms, including such recurring themes as ‘chosen peoples,’ divine favoritism, and providential mission....These features of modern nationalism derive in part from the covenant tradition of Biblical religion....”²²⁶

Above all, Anthony Smith has devoted much reflection to nationalism’s relation with religion. In one place, he defines nationalism as “secular, terrestrial, and anthropocentric,” in which “a worship of the secular nation replaces that of the deity, while the nationalist movement takes the place of the church, and posterity becomes the new version of immortality in place of the after-life.”²²⁷ Smith highlights four recurring objects of national communion and sanctity that contribute to nationalism’s ‘religious’

²²⁴ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1946).

²²⁵ Adrian Hastings, “Holy Lands and Their Political Consequences,” *Nations and Nationalism* 9, no. 1 (2003), 50.

²²⁶ Scott Hibbard, “Religion, Nationalism, and the Politics of Secularism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*, by Scott Hibbard, ed. Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 103.

²²⁷ Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25-26.

character: elect community, holy land, glorious past, and sacrifices of heroes.²²⁸ Nationalism thus constitutes “a powerful religion of the people, which parallels and competes with traditional religions.”²²⁹ Interestingly, even the modernist Benedict Anderson acknowledges the links between nationalism and religion. Anderson saw nationalism as imparting secular meanings to the perennial problems of contingencies of life, and a way to integrate fraternity, power, and time. He thus concludes, “[i]f the nationalist imagining is so concerned, this suggests a strong affinity with religious imaginings,”²³⁰ and that nationalism can only be understood if studied in comparison with “the large cultural systems that preceded it, *out of which—as well as against which—it came into being*,” namely, dynastic realm and religion.²³¹ If nationalism developed “out of” religion and defined itself “against” it, surely there must be more to explain about such connections of genealogy and opposition. However, with this declaration, Anderson moves on having presumed the replacement of religion by modern society.

Greenfeld too acknowledges more abstract parallels between religion and nationalism. To begin with, nationalism is certainly not a religion in the conventional sense owing to its secular commitments and lack of any relation to ontological transcendence. Rather, she recommends that “nationalism should be compared to a *type* of religion, such as monotheism, representing as it does a set of fundamental principles

²²⁸ Elsewhere, Smith enumerates community, territory, history, and destiny. Anthony D. Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism,” *Millennium* 93 (2000): 791–814.

²²⁹ Smith, *Chosen People*, 42.

²³⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 10.

²³¹ Anderson, 12. Emphasis added.

that can be realized in a variety of dissimilar and often incompatible doctrinal systems.”²³² Greenfeld’s rationale behind comparing nationalism to a religion-type lies in the qualities that make each of the two phenomena the “functional equivalent” of the other as both are “ways to interpret—that is invest with meaning—otherwise meaningless reality,” or as both constitute “order-creating cultural systems.”²³³ Accordingly, both religion and nationalism belong to “the same general category of sociological phenomena.”²³⁴ Whereas in the pre-modern world, religion defined the basis of identity and social cohesion; in the modern world, nationalism has “replaced religion as the basis of individual and collective identity,”²³⁵ and “as the main cultural mechanism of social integration.”²³⁶ Beyond this functional equivalence, nationalism and religion “differ in virtually all other important respects and inattention to these differences obscures the nature of nationalism.”²³⁷ This difference, however, is no small matter.

Two points become evident from the preceding discussion. Nationalism carries undeniable parallels with religion. Both are imagined in distinct ways, and expressed in and engaged symbolically. Both nationalism and religion *offer* people similar kinds of anthropological goods, make people *do* similar things, and tend to yield some similar social and political *results* (social cohesion, communal boundaries, etc.). Both offer identity, meaning, spirituality, values; and create order and culture. Both demand ultimate loyalty, devotion, and sacrifice. Both tend to be imbued with an exclusivist (‘us’ versus

²³² Greenfeld, “The Modern Religion?,” 94.

²³³ Greenfeld, 94.

²³⁴ Greenfeld, 94.

²³⁵ Greenfeld, 94.

²³⁶ Greenfeld, 95.

²³⁷ Greenfeld, 95.

‘them’) mentality. Both express their values in ritual. Yet, nationalism is not to be equated with religion. Accordingly, I coin the term *religionesque* for that what acts like religion but does not fully qualify. Without being a religion, nationalism carries a *religionesque* potential. I say ‘potential’ because the private values and experiences of dignity, equality, freedom, and empowerment it offers may be rejected by some or found in conflict with their religious values and experiences. However, once fully internalized, nationalism’s secular values and experiences can entirely replace religious ones. It is this religionesque character that in part leads to Muslim political theology’s opposition to secular nationalism. This is, however, only half the story. The other side of nationalism’s religionesque potential is religion’s *nationalesque* potential.

If the study of nationalism comes up against parallels with religion, the study of religion has too uncovered parallels with politics and nationalism. Ninian Smart represents a most instructive illustration of discerning religion’s *nationalesque* and modern ideologies’ religionesque potentials. Smart undertakes a comparative study of religion and modern ideologies as *worldviews*, where a worldview is understood as comprised of the following six dimensions: doctrinal, mythic, ethical, ritual, experiential, and social. Nationalism can be shown to carry all the six traits of religion, and thereby, seems to resemble the members of the religion family. But, by definition nationalism cannot belong to the religion family. Accordingly, Smart offers the following caveat: “Nationalism is not quite a religion, but it has some of the same characteristics;” and, what is more, the “ideology of the state is also clothed in religious garments.”²³⁸ The

²³⁸ Some of nationalism’s characteristics common with religion include: loyalty to the nation, welfare

commonalities thus discerned between religions and ideologies are ascribed to the fact that they all represent “systems of belief, which, through symbols and actions, mobilize the feelings and will of human beings.”²³⁹ Similar observations are made by David Chidester, but with reference to power.

Chidester explains that religion and politics are inherently mediated through relations of power. To begin with, he defines religion as “the way human beings orient themselves to the multitude of powers that impinge upon their lives.”²⁴⁰ Similarly, he defines politics as a “network of power relations in a society.”²⁴¹ Considered together,

[r]eligion and politics are dimensions of human experience engaged in the meaningful exercise of power. They are patterns of power, dynamic processes of action and interaction, and systems of power relations that reinforce the general distribution of power within any society.²⁴²

To be sure, upon Chidester’s reading (*à la* Durkheim), religion centers on “sacred” power, while politics treats “profane” power. Interestingly, traditional power tends to be an attribute of divinity, which implies that all power is in some sense deifying. Accordingly, Chidester arrives at a surprising conclusion: “there is a political dimension to religion, and a religious dimension to politics.”²⁴³ In this reading, it is neither possible nor prudent to separate religion and politics from associations with power. Accordingly,

of citizens, willingness to fight wars, punishment for traitors, anthems, flags, national ceremonies, and much more. Smart, *Worldviews*, 48-49. Smart returns to the comparative study of religion and politics in Peter H. Merkl and Ninian Smart, *Religion and Politics in the Modern World* (New York: University Press, 1983).

²³⁹ Smart, *Worldviews*, 1.

²⁴⁰ David Chidester, *Patterns of Power: Religion and Politics in American Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988), 1.

²⁴¹ Chidester, 1.

²⁴² Chidester, 1.

²⁴³ Chidester, 2.

Chidester suggests the term “*religiopolitical power*” to underscore the inseparability and mutuality of religion and politics.²⁴⁴ Chidester goes on to reveal the semiotic dynamics of power in that power “generates powerful symbols, myths, and ideologies through which contending individuals and social groups are defined and define themselves.”²⁴⁵ We may then conclude that religious and political symbols project religiopolitical power.²⁴⁶

The confrontation of Islam’s nationalesque and nationalism’s religionesque potentials is a primary reason why some religions find secularism so threatening. For each perceives the other as its Other that can supplant it in totality. We will see in Chapter 5 that some political theologians perceive that nationalism’s ‘omnipresence’ and ‘omnipotence’ within its domain along with its religionesque character carries the possibility of replacing Islam in both public and private spheres. Hence, when faced with the historical necessity of choosing to accommodate Islam to nationalism, or vice versa, political theology sought to instrumentalize nationalism to make it subservient to the cause of Islam. In other words, in terms of political theology, Islam and nationalism are competitors, and the two cannot co-exist as equals in the same space. The dominance of one spells the subservience of the other, with the difference that while nationalism is wholly an immanent framework of religiopolitical power because of its secular

²⁴⁴ Chidester, 2. Rejecting the Western, dualistic, separatist vision of religion and politics, Panikkar advocates for a non-dualist view of the two. “every political activity has its religious repercussions and vice versa. This is the case not only because the human being is a unity, but also because human destiny is unique.” Raimundo Panikkar, “Religion or Politics: The Western Dilemma,” in *Religion and Politics in the Modern World*, 56.

²⁴⁵ Chidester, *of Power*, 8.

²⁴⁶ The equation of power and divinity is reminiscent of Carl Schmitt’s thesis that all modern concepts of the state are secularized versions of theological concepts. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*.

commitments, religion is partly transcendent—partly because it does not completely dwell in transcendence, but engages with the material world albeit in religious ways.

Having brought together Neville and Greenfeld's theories toward a joint study of religion and politics, the next four chapters will trace the semiotic development of Islamic nationalism.

CHAPTER 3: THE PROTO-NATIONALISM OF SAYYID AHMAD KHAN

This chapter begins by outlining the colonial context and structural interventions (syntactics) that made the emergence of Islamic nationalism possible. I will briefly pinpoint factors that demonstrate both the interplay of knowledge/power and modernization/colonization equations. The bulk of the chapter expounds the proto-nationalism of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the most influential Muslim leader responding to the post-1857 situation. While Khan does not qualify either as a political theologian or a nationalist according to my criteria, precisely for that reason his discourse on Muslim nationhood demonstrates the collective Muslim imagination that harbored the impulses toward the partitioning of Muslim imagination, and which he shared with the political theologians coming after him. Khan's proto-nationalism, therefore, serves as an instructive contrast to the theopolitical imagination developed in later years.

COLONIAL KNOWLEDGE AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE

In 1526, the Central Asian Turk chieftain Babur—a descendent of Timur and Genghis Khan—defeated the Lodhi dynasty of the Muslim Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526), thereby, laying the foundations of the Mughal Empire that would last until 1858.²⁴⁷ At their height, at the time of Emperor Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Mughals ruled most of India, whose population at the time totaled 180 million, about twenty percent of the

²⁴⁷ Arab Muslims established their first military presence at the Makran coast of Baluchistan during the reign of the second Muslim Caliph, Umar bin al-Khattab, in late 630s. Muslims gained their first permanent foothold in the Sindh valley with Muhammad bin Qasim's invasion in 711. The Arab rule in Sindh lasted about 300 years. From the thirteenth to early sixteenth century, the dynastic rule of Muslims, the Delhi Sultanate, prevailed over much of South Asia. Burjor Avari, *Islamic Civilization in South Asia: A History of Muslim Power and Presence in the Indian Subcontinent* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

world population then.²⁴⁸ The expansion of the Mughal Empire unfolded in parallel with the development of the modern Western civilization, a most formidable manifestation of which took the form of the British Empire.

On December 3, 1600, Queen Elizabeth I granted a Royal Charter to the joint-stock East India Company (EIC) to trade with the Asian lands bordering the Indian Ocean. In 1617, the EIC established its first corporate post on the Indian east coast at Surat. Madras and Bengal posts were established in 1646, and the EIC acquired the island of Bombay in 1661. Madras, Bengal, and Bombay eventually transformed into the three governing presidencies of the British colonial state in India.²⁴⁹ With the dawn of the eighteenth century, “the Company *was*, in all but name, a sovereign state, negotiating with princes, administering its own laws, and employing men who intrigued not only against the Company’s European commercial rivals, but with Indian merchants and bankers.”²⁵⁰ The EIC’s direct governance of Indian territories began with the victory in Bengal after the battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764). Consequent to the latter victory, the EIC obtained the rights to collect state revenue (*dīvānī*) in the states of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, effectively controlling the region’s economic policy. Later, it also gained control of the region’s justice system (*nizāmat*). After defeating the last remaining power in the region, the Marathas, in a series of battles (1845-1846, and 1848-1849), the EIC went on to increase its direct and indirect control over the vast South

²⁴⁸ Andrea Hintze, *The Mughal Empire and Its Decline: An Interpretation of the Sources of Social Power* (Aldershot, Great Britain: Ashgate, 1997), 9.

²⁴⁹ Anthony Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company: The Evolution of Anglo-Asian Commerce and Politics, 1790–1860* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2009), 19.

²⁵⁰ Michael Edwardes, *Plassey: The Founding of an Empire* (London: Hamilton, 1969), 9.

Asian territory. At this stage, the Mughals retained their status and power only in name.

The true power wrested with the British.

As one of the first multinational capitalist corporations in history, the EIC represents one of the greatest products, engines, and symbols of modernization in general and of British nationalism in particular. EIC landed in South Asia to do business, but in turning India into a colony, committed itself to intellectual and structural modernization. Intellectually, the modern “ideas of the French Revolution and of Enlightenment had reached the shores of India with the help of Christian missionaries very early—at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.”²⁵¹ Under these inspirations, different Indian movements and intellectuals spread “the message of rationalism and religious reform.”²⁵² Politically, the EIC sought to manage the colony through a legal regime and bureaucratic governance, which entailed legislating, implementing, and enforcing laws that touched upon varied sectors of local life.²⁵³ In due course, the British legislative decrees countered, and often affronted, local laws, customs, and mores. Modernization of the economy adversely impacted native industries. Old livelihoods were disrupted, influential families bankrupted, a new class of bourgeois middlemen created, and longstanding means of earnings rendered defunct.²⁵⁴ Owing to

²⁵¹ Dietrich Reetz, “Enlightenment and Islam: Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s Plea to Indian Muslims for Reason,” *The Indian Historical Review* 14, no. 1/2 (1988): 207.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Lelyveld enumerates some aspects of colonial life that had to interface with the government: rent collection on land holdings, tenants needing assistance in resisting encroachments from landlords or money-lenders, commerce and manufacturing processes, inheritance transfers, maintaining charitable endowments, and establishing marriage contracts. David Lelyveld, *Aligarh’s First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 63–64.

²⁵⁴ Hunter, for example, recounts the miserable conditions of Muslims of Bengal. William Wilson Hunter, “The Wrongs of the Muhammadans Under British Rule,” chap. 4 in *The Indian Musalmans:*

these interventions, the colonial state extended itself far beyond the arena of secular politics and public policy, encroaching upon the private-religious sphere (see the discussion on Khan's *Causes* below). Given the vast scope of the colonial state's reach, power, and activity, I consider it apt, in juxtaposition to religious terminology, to describe it as approaching omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience.²⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, the Indians resented the encroachment, whose cumulative effects came to a head in the mass Uprising of 1857.

The Uprising first broke out as a mutiny in a cantonment in Meerut, a northwestern city in the United Provinces. The immediate controversy in the cantonment concerned the rumors that had been circulating about the cartridges of the new Enfield rifle having being greased with cow and pig fat.²⁵⁶ The cartridge's top had to be bitten off to release the powder inside. Hindus being forbidden beef and Muslims pork, the prospects of chewing off the grease was a religious affront to both communities. The sepoys mutinied in protest, soon joined by civilians in the streets, transmutating a spark

Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?

²⁵⁵ Explaining Raymond Aron's idea of "political religion" in relation to totalitarian states, Hans Maier notes that "[j]ust as religion was universal in early societies, so too are ideologies universally 'omnipresent' in modern 'totalitarian' societies. Even political action is now no longer determined by a state system based on the rule of law; it is justified through an appeal to 'absolute values'." Hans Maier, "Political Religion: a Concept and its Limitations," trans. Jodi Bruhn, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 1 (2007): 10. To be sure, the colonial state in India was not quite a totalitarian state, nonetheless, given its power and reach backed by police and military prowess, Raymond's comment applies to a lesser degree.

²⁵⁶ Other grievances of the native soldiers in the military included disrespectful demeanors of the British officers toward their native subordinates, violations of religious sensitivities of the natives by certain kinds of military engagements, shrinking opportunities of employment in the military, failure of proper compensations for the native soldiers, and the 'wrongful' annexations of local territories. For details, see for example, Julian Spilsbury, chap. 1 in *The Indian Mutiny* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), and Thomas Metcalf, chap. 2 in *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

into a mass explosion.²⁵⁷ For nearly two years, the hostilities continued until the British were able to finally rally their forces, quell the violence, and regain full control. The matter of the cartridges illustrates the distance between the colonial state's modern imagination and Indians' traditional imagination. What symbolized for the colonial state efficiency, justice, and modernization; symbolized religious affronts to its subjects.

Upon reestablishing their authority, the British set about ensuring the prevention of all future uprisings. Among other things, this entailed for them meting out exemplary punishment to the rebels. In this process, the government deemed Muslims particularly responsible for foaming hostilities. They reasoned that the Muslims were particularly resentful for having been deposed from power by the British. A terrible vengeance was thus exacted from the Muslims.²⁵⁸ Panīpatī paints a bleak picture of the post-Uprising

²⁵⁷ Debate persists on how to interpret the significance of these events: was it just a mutiny, a people's rebellion, a peasant revolt, or a war of independence. Farooqui prefers the Urdu term *ghadar* as it connotes the general meanings of outburst, mayhem, rebellion, riot, disturbance, helter-skelter, and turbulence. Mahmood Farooqui, *Besieged: Voices from Delhi 1857* (Gurgaon, India: Penguin Random House India, 2010), 394–395. William Dalrymple, on the other hand, holds that the outbreak was simultaneously a mutiny, war of independence, urban revolution, and a peasant revolt. Accordingly, Dalrymple's general term "uprising" aptly covers the range of function and purposes the outbreak served. William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty: Delhi, 1857* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 17. The official Indian position that it was a war of independence is articulated in Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (n.p.: Delhi Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1957). Debate also exists on the religious rationales behind the uprising. Farooqui is right to first point out the complexity of the situation, as certainly much more than religion was at stake, and for some religion played no part. Yet, at the same time, Farooqui finds "irrefutable evidence for the uprising being informed by religion. Being informed by religion does not equal a religious uprising, however." Farooqui, 5–7, 19–20, 343, and 404. Dalrymple more emphatically underscores the religious purposes behind the Uprising as the last Mughal, Bahadur Shah Zafar—around whom the Delhi rebels rallied—held for many both religious and political appeal. Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal*, 22–23.

²⁵⁸ As Lelyveld explains, "the historical assumption that 'the Muslims' were the former rulers of India inspired many with a distrust of their 'loyalty.' This view was particularly widespread after 1857; it was renewed by the 'Wahhabi' conspiracy trials in Patna during the following decade, and again by [William Wilson] Hunter's book in 1870." Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 99. Also see, Rafiq Zakaria, *Rise of Muslims in Indian Politics: An Analysis of Developments from 1885 to 1906*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1971), 3–4.

atmosphere: thousands of Muslims were executed, their families ruined, their lands confiscated, their properties destroyed, several historical and sacred Muslim sites desecrated, many innocent Muslims were punished based on false accusations, and any criticism of the British government often met with grave consequences.²⁵⁹ Finally, in 1858, the EIC was abolished, and the British Crown incorporated India into its Empire, with Queen Victoria assuming the mantle of the Empress of India.

While Indians of all stripes participated in the Uprising, the British were not entirely wrong in perceiving the Muslims' anti-British sentiments, as will become clear in the subsequent chapters. For those deposed from power are naturally bound to grow nostalgic, and naturally look to recover their losses. In essence, the British were acknowledging that the Muslim history in the region predisposed them to anti-colonial resistance. The nostalgia of power was rooted in Muslim historical experiences, and weighed heavily on the Muslim imagination. While this initially appears negative and reactionary, collective nostalgia harbors a creative impulse that manifests itself in two ways. One, the shared suffering of Muslims as a single community reinforced their self-image as a single community. Two, it compelled collective soul-searching and analyses that led to creative rethinking of the place and role of Muslims in the region. In this way, the post-1857 period marks the beginning of a rethinking of the meaning of Islam and the presence of Muslims in India, which in my analysis gradually develops into Islamic

²⁵⁹ See Panīpatī's introductory note in Sayyid Ahmad Khan, "Kiyā Sabab Huvā Hindustān kī Sarkashī kā?," in *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid*, ed. Muḥammad Ismā'īl Panīpatī (Lahore, Pakistan: Majlis Taraqqī-yi Adab, 1992), 9:47–48. Similar sentiments are expressed by Altāf Ḥusain Ḥālī, *Ḥayāt-i Jāved* (Mirpur, Azad Kashmir: Arsalan Books, 2000), 1:102–104.

nationalism. Masood Raja divides the post-1857 developments into two periods: “(i) The post-rebellion [of 1857] articulation of Muslim exceptionalism [Muslims’ particularity as different than Hindus]; and (ii) The rise of the Pakistani nationalist movement after 1940 [also called separatism].”²⁶⁰ Raja recommends reading Khan’s articulation of Muslim exceptionalism in political, and not cultural, terms, in which case it is presented as a discourse of resistance. However, in my view Khan’s articulation of *Muslim* exceptionalism is only part of the story, the other part was that of *Islamic* exceptionalism (the primacy of Islam as a superior religion) articulated by political theology.

A significant example of colonial knowledge/power most decisively affecting the political imaginations of Indians was the innovation of population enumeration. In 1872, the colonial state carried out the first census of the Indian population for which purpose the population was divided into different categories of caste and religion. This enumeration and its implications for resource distribution and political representation had an unintended consequence of politicizing the categories and those who belonged to them. The most transformative consequence was the new imagination of the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority, and this imagination in part fueled the rise of native varieties of nationalism, both secular and religious, Muslim and Hindu.²⁶¹ The Muslim

²⁶⁰ Masood Ashraf Raja, *Constructing Pakistan: Foundational Texts and the Rise of Muslim National Identity, 1857- 1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), xv.

²⁶¹ See for example, Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 18-20. In postcolonial discourse analyses, colonial technologies such as the census are seen as instruments of Western knowledge production that impose Western ways of socio-political management upon the colony under the presumption of preconceived outcomes. See, for example, Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, 3rd ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006). Pandey holds that colonialism was a result of specific, European conceptions of positivist rationality and the nation that engendered the techniques of, inter alia, enumeration and classification. Application of these

anxieties around their newly discovered minority status was a major factor in the formulation of Muslim exceptionalism—recall Mamdani’s identification of the majority/minority politics as a quintessential bequest of colonialism.

In the background of colonialism’s structural intervention, the consequent disempowerment of Muslims on the whole and more so of its elite classes birthed the era of new Muslim thinking whose most prominent spokesman was Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

KHAN’S BIOGRAPHICAL BRIEF

(Sir) Sayyid Ahmad (Khan Bahadur), popularly known as Sir Sayyid or Sayyid Ahmad Khan, was born in 1817 in Delhi, the seat of the Mughal Empire at the time.²⁶² His paternal family was closely associated with the royal court, and thus counted among the Mughal nobility.²⁶³ Such people were considered of high birth and belonged to the upper classes that came to be designated *sharīf* (‘respected,’ pl. *ashrāf* and *shurafā*) for the respect and influence they held across the social hierarchy.²⁶⁴ This sociocultural or

techniques in turn gave rise to yet another binary: nationalism/communalism. The antagonism inherent in this dichotomy was one reason why any other vision of the Indian nation other than one espoused by the nationalists was seen as a threat. Communalism(s), in its turn, could only counter nationalism by mimicking it.

²⁶² Originally named Sayyid Ahmad, the British Indian government gave him the honorific title “Khan Bahadur,” and knighted him in 1888 for his services and loyalty to them.

²⁶³ His maternal grandfather Khvājah Farīduddīn Aḥmad (d.1828) found important appointments both with the government of the East India Company, and the Mughal court. Robinson, introduction to *Causes*.

²⁶⁴ The Muslim Mughal society was structured along three strata: royalty, nobility (landlords, land grantees, traditional intellectual elites), and the rest comprising the working class (“*kārkhānadār*”: craftsmen, artisans, bricklayers, masons, etc.). The first two strata constituted the *sharīf* culture. An important factor in the *sharīf* identity was its foreign origins outside India, and in this sense a certain ethnosymbolism becomes a necessary element in the makeup of *sharīf* identity. Hafeez Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 26, and 60. It is to underscore the sense of lineage that Devji translates *sharīf* as “well-born,” “thus lending the *qawm* [‘nation’] some substance as an ethnic category.” Faisal Devji, “Qawm,” in *Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies*, ed. Gita Dharampal-Frick et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 217–219.

ethnosymbolic belonging plays an important role in Khan's proto-national imagination as the South Asian society was caste- and class-conscious.²⁶⁵ *Sharāfat* was not, however, limited to Muslims alone, but functioned more like a class or status for all Hindus and Muslims alike. In Lelyveld's explanation,

the dominant Mughal concept of society vested authority in a network of kin-like units bound in a system of asymmetrical exchanges that reflected their hierarchical relationships....Descent was an explanation for the possession of certain moral attributes that determined a group's position in the social order. The dichotomy of kinship and state was a piece of British culture that had no clear Indian translation.²⁶⁶

In addition, one

usually acquired *sharāfat* [respectability] by birth.... *Sharāfat* also defined character: a *sharīf* man was one of dignified temperament, self-confident but not overly aggressive, appreciative of good literature, music, and art, but not flamboyant, familiar with mystical experience, but hardly immersed in it. *Sharīf* social relations involved a pose of deference, but were above all a matter of virtuosity within the highly restricted bounds of etiquette.²⁶⁷

Sharāfat thus symbolized the status and position of a person in relation to other persons, and of one's community relative to other communities. Khan's association with the *sharīf* culture meant that he belonged to the elite circles of northern India, which primed him to be a member of the intelligentsia.²⁶⁸ *Sharāfat* was also a value that lent one dignity and worth by association with a certain class and culture. In view of Farzana Shaikh's evaluation of the importance of communal representation for Muslims (Chapter 1),

²⁶⁵ To get a glimpse of how caste and religion continue to be linked in the sociocultural imagination of South Asian Muslims, see Irfan Ahmad, "A Different Jihad: Dalit Muslims' Challenge to Ashraf Hegemony," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 46 (2003): 4886–91.

²⁶⁶ Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 21.

²⁶⁷ Lelyveld, 30.

²⁶⁸ It is because of his persistent associations with the *sharīf* culture, which he never disavowed, that Hafeez likens Khan's nationhood to "aristocratic nationalism." Hafeez Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 230.

sharāfat favored sociocultural association over individualism. *Sharāfat* as an identity marker was therefore at odds with modern identity shaped by individualism within the larger matrix of national identity. Khan's discourse on nationhood, however, recast the Muslims' collective identity and the status of *sharāfat* in it.

The forty years of Khan's engagement in the post-1857 period have been described as an effort at modernization.²⁶⁹ Muslim modernization is the quest for some level of acceptance and use of modern culture, which could involve an education in modern sciences, learning European manners, industrialization, use of modern technology, or nationalism. Malik identifies Khan's modernizing reforms in four registers: political, educational, religious, and social.²⁷⁰ I combine the education and religious reforms as two components of Khan's intellectual modernization. On the one hand, Khan sought to reinterpret Islamic theology in the light of modern sciences.²⁷¹ On the other hand, he promoted English-based education and modern sciences. It is a peculiar trait of the colony that the mere learning of the colonizer's language is considered a mark of modern distinction. For this reason, Muslims opposed to Khan's modernization deplored the learning of English and the adoption of English ways. Socially, Khan advocated for a modern work ethic, inculcating an entrepreneurial spirit, and certain ways of European culture that he found to have a civilizing effect, among them, selfless service to one's community. Politically, he sought British friendship and

²⁶⁹ Malik's *Khan and Modernization* is a case in point.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978).

protection by advising Muslims to stay out of the political arena. Toward achieving this reform effort, he adopted a dual strategy. First, he sought an intellectual engagement with the Muslim public through writings and speeches. For this purpose, he launched the journal *Tahzīb al Akhlāq* (literally, ‘cultivation of morals’) in 1870, with the English translation of title rendered “The Mohammedan Social Reformer.”²⁷² Second, he found the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875 in Aligarh (later to become the Aligarh Muslim University) for the training of a breed of modern Muslim leaders. Khan’s vision came to be labeled the Aligarh movement. Khan was therefore the first prominent local Muslim face of modernization. For his archrivals, he symbolized a continuation of the colonial project, hence, was subjected to severe critique, condemnation, and ridicule.

In expositing Khan’s discourse on nationhood, the collection of his speeches in *Khuṭbāt* (Speeches), and volumes five, eight, and twelve of *Maqālāt* (Speeches and writings) will serve as my main texts.²⁷³ Khan delivered most of his speeches before Muslim audiences, likely drawn from the upper classes. These speeches contributed to the construction of proto-national imagination of Khan’s audiences, who were spread across the Urdu-speaking population in north India.

²⁷² Typical entries covered in the journal included “Religion and Social Life,” “Dignity,” “Customs and Habits,” “The Harms of Slavishness to Customs and Mores,” “Patriotism,” “Sympathy,” “Selfishness and National Sympathy,” “Self-Reliance,” “National Unity,” “Freedom of Expression,” and “Morals.”

²⁷³ Khan’s various public addresses appear in *Khuṭbāt-i Sar Sayyid* [Speeches of Sir Sayyid], ed. Muḥammad Ismā‘īl Panīpatī (Lahore: Majlis Taraqqī-yi Adab, 2009). His collected works are published as *Maqālāt-i Sar Sayyid* [Writings of Sir Sayyid], ed. Muḥammad Ismā‘īl Panīpatī, 16 vols. (Lahore, Pakistan: Majlis Taraqqī-yi Adab, 1990-2007).

THE SEMANTICS OF QAUM

The Urdu word for ‘nation’ and ‘nationality’ in the current usage are *qaum* and *qaumiyyat*, respectively. The reference to all Indian Muslims as a *qaum* became a staple of Khan’s discourse. However, the semantics of *qaum*, however, did not carry modern connotations at this time. However, Khan played an important role in pushing the *qaum*’s meanings in the modern direction.

While Khan himself in certain places translates *qaum* as ‘nation,’ his usage was pre-modern. In scrutinizing the full signification of *qaum* in Khan’s imagination, we need to attend to how his particular usage of *qaum* contributed to the sense of Muslims as a single community. The Urdu word *qaum* is of classical Arabic origins, and is used in the Qur’an to refer to human collectives (discussed in the next chapter). Edward Lane’s nineteenth-century *Arabic-English Lexicon* consists of definitions found in classical Arabic dictionaries. Lane’s definitions of *qaum* include “[a] people, or body of persons composing a community.” The word retained its classical Arabic meanings in Urdu,²⁷⁴ but along the way accumulated meanings applicable to the particular social organization of the Indian society, divided along religious, racial, linguistic, class, professional, and caste divisions. In the sixteenth century, *qaum* carries the two meanings of “a collection of people; a group” (*ādmīyon kā groh; jamā ‘at*).²⁷⁵ However, already in the seventeenth century, *qaum* was being applied to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims, and this is

²⁷⁴ *Urdū Lughat*, s.v. ‘qaumī,’ <http://urdulughat.info/>.

²⁷⁵ *Urdū Lughat Tārīkhī Uṣūl Par*, s.v. “*qaum*,” <https://www.rekhta.org/ebooks/urdu-lughat-tareekhi-usool-par-volume-014-ebooks>.

the sense that first Khan and then political theology intensified.²⁷⁶ It is in the nineteenth century that ‘nation’ appears in *qaum*’s definition. In 1834, Shakespeare’s dictionary presents *qaum* as denoting ‘tribe,’ ‘sect,’ ‘caste,’ ‘a people,’ ‘nation,’ and ‘family;’ and *qaumiyyat* to mean an association with any of these. Farooqui’s scrutiny of the (1857) Mutiny Papers at the National Archives of Delhi shows that *qaum* either refers to “one’s caste, if upper class, or occupation-caste, if one is lower caste.”²⁷⁷ By 1879, Fallon’s dictionary begins to show a transition toward contemporary denotations in defining *qaum*’s primary denotation as ‘tribe’ and ‘race,’ and secondary denotation as ‘breed;’ and the adjective *qaumī* to mean ‘national,’ and used in the phrases such as ‘national interest,’ ‘parliamentary government,’ ‘national assembly,’ and ‘race oppression.’ Platt’s 1884 dictionary parallels Shakespeare’s definitions above with the addition of ‘clanship’ for *qaumiyyat*; while Sangaji’s 1899 dictionary based on Shakespeare’s lexicon, repeats his 1834 definitions with the addition of ‘breed’ for *qaum*, and ‘nationalness’ and ‘nationality’ for *qaumiyyat*.

In relation to the Muslim community, Reetz explains that “[b]y no means did Indian Muslims constitute a coherent social or ethnic community. Unlike in the Islamic heartland of Arabia, Indian Muslims lived more or less dispersed. Beside a few Muslims of foreign descent, who were employed at the court and in the administration of the Moghuls, they mainly constituted local population groups hailing from different ethnic communities, castes and tribes all over India.”²⁷⁸ Khan thus employs *qaum* in referring to

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Farooqui, *Besieged*, 8-9.

²⁷⁸ Reetz, “Enlightenment and Islam,” 207.

the gypsies (Kanjars) and tanners (Chamars) among the Hindus, and different castes (Sayyids and Shaikhs), classes (Nawabs, Amirs), and professional groups (judges, juriconsults) among the Muslims.²⁷⁹ In the midst of these divisions, the native consciousness at the time could not for the most part imagine such divisions to be integrated into a single *qaum*—one exception would be when divisions were drawn along religious lines of Muslims versus non-Muslims, say, in a local conflict between a Hindu and a Muslim group. Khan’s importance lies precisely in the ways he extended the *qaum*’s semantics in unprecedented ways, pushing them closer to the modern connotations. With Khan, it is the noun *qaum* that recurs in his usage, while the derivative *qaumiyyat* (nationhood) appears rarely. In other words, nationhood for Khan was mostly envisioned as a concrete, embodied collectivity, and not as an abstract idea. Given all the nuances of the word *qaum*, I will retain the original term, and translate it only when necessary to indicate a certain nuance.

THE MUSLIM RESPONSE AND THE SOLE SPOKESMAN

McDonough describes the Uprising as a “boundary condition,” symbolizing the death of the old world, and the self-assertion of the new.²⁸⁰ There was a dire need for

²⁷⁹ Safia Amir, “Semantics of the Word Qawm: A Study of Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan,” *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 49, no. 4 (2001): 53.

²⁸⁰ In situating Khan in his context, McDonough remarks that the “Revolt precipitated him personally into what might well be characterized as an extreme ‘boundary condition,’ since he had lived after the death of his world.” Sheila McDonough, *The Authority of the Past : A Study of Three Muslim Modernists* (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: American Academy of Religion, 1970), 5. Khan was personally involved in rescuing the British inhabitants of Bijnor district. He also suffered personal losses in the Uprising, losing a cousin, an uncle, an aunt, and later, weighed down by the shock of it all, his mother. Robinson, introduction to *Causes*, vii-xvi. Khan is known to have said, “I could not understand how the nation (*qaum*) will ever flourish (*panape gī*) again or gain its (lost) dignity.... This grief turned my hair white.” Hālī, *Ḥayāt-i Jāved*, 1:95. Khan detailed his eyewitness accounts of the rebellion’s proceedings in *Tārīkh Sarkashī-yi Zil’ah Bijnor* [The history of the Bijnor rebellion],

someone to speak on behalf of the Muslims, and Khan rose to the occasion, at the risk of suffering the British wrath, by penning a pamphlet entitled *The Causes of the Indian Revolt* (*Asbāb-i baghāvat-i hind*).²⁸¹ The *Causes* represents the first Muslim document written by a colonial subject on the behalf of his fellow countrymen, especially the Muslim community.²⁸² As the British had laid the blame for the Uprising upon the Muslims, hence, one of Khan's primary tasks in the *Causes* was to exculpate all Indians, but especially Muslims, from the charge of premeditated sedition. The *Causes* begins by scrutinizing the technical semantics of *sarkashī* ('rebellion,' 'revolt') as fighting, opposing, disobeying, and violating the rules of government. This implicates the rebels' responsibility for the violence, a conclusion at odds with Khan's purpose of absolving the Indian population of any premeditated conspiracy.²⁸³ Toward this end, he approaches the problem philosophically and anthropologically, raising the question not of the causes of this particular uprising, but of rebellions in general. His unstated premise seems to be that people do not rebel *en masse* without due cause. Accordingly, he proceeds to ascribe the

which Malik Hafeez identifies as the first report of a contemporary event published in India. See Hafeez Malik, preface to *Political Profile of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Documentary Record* (Islamabad, Pakistan: Institute of Islamic History, Culture and Civilization, 1982). For details of some personal experiences of prominent figures during the Uprising, see Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 138-155

²⁸¹ Khan, *Maqālāt* 9:47-124. The original publication of 1858 appears in the *Maqālāt*, vol. 9, entitled "Kiyā sabab huvā Hindustān kī sarkashī kā? [What Was the cause of India's rebellion?]." It was then translated by Auckland Colvin and Lt. Colonel (later General) G. F. I. Graham (Khan's first English biographer), and published in 1873 as *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*. The Urdu version was later published as *Asbāb-i Baghāvat-i Hind*. For Malik's summary and analysis of the *Causes*, see *Khan and Modernization*, 110-123.

²⁸² Raja, *Constructing Pakistan*, 33.

²⁸³ Other accounts also came forward later to vindicate the charge of the Uprising as a Muslim conspiracy. For instance, George Campbell's *Memoirs of My Indian Career* (1893) and E. Thompson and G. F. Garret's *Rise and Fulfillment of British Rule in India* (1934) absolved Muslims of scheming to foment the Uprising. J. M. S. Baljon, *The Reforms and Religious Ideas of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, 3rd ed. (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1970), 25, n. 1.

due cause to developments alienating to a people's nature and natural orientation (*ṭab 'īyat aur ṭainat*), intention, (*irādah*), resolve (*'aẓam*), customs (*rasm o rivāj*), and instincts (*khaṣlat aur jabillat*).²⁸⁴ It then follows that if the people rebelled, it could only be because something disrupted the natural course of their lives. Khan proceeds to quite astutely tie this anthropological observation to the liberal theory of politics, upheld by Europeans themselves, that the governed should be consulted in the matters of government,²⁸⁵ and that the government ought to be mindful of the culture and condition of its subjects.²⁸⁶ Khan holds the government's neglect of this principle as the root cause of the Uprising. This single cause, however, furcates into five sub-causes.

Khan identifies the first cause as the Indian public misconstruing the government's actions with the intention to convert them to Christianity. He points to a palpable uptick in Christian missionary activity and a rise in the number of missionary schools that the public interpreted as symbolic of government's proselytization policy.²⁸⁷ The second cause issued from a host of legislation offensive to Indian religions. For instance, Khan points to the Act 21 of 1850 that made it illegal for non-Hindus to convert to Hinduism, while permitting anyone to freely convert to Christianity. The Act also made it legal for a convert to Christianity to inherit the bequest of his deceased relatives. An offense to both Muslims and Hindus.²⁸⁸ Meanwhile, Act 15 of 1856 made it legal for

²⁸⁴ Khan, *Maqālāt* 9:51.

²⁸⁵ Khan, 9:61.

²⁸⁶ Khan, 9:61-62.

²⁸⁷ Khan, 9:68-70. It was not until 1813 that the EIC let missionaries run loose in South Asia because of "the Evangelical lobby in Parliament," "the Company was forced against its better judgement to lift the ban." Spilsbury, *The Indian Mutiny*, 9.

²⁸⁸ Khan, *Maqālāt*, 9:75-76.

Hindu female divorcees to remarry, which ran counter to Hindu ideals of familial fidelity.²⁸⁹ Third, Khan held that the first two causes demonstrated that the government was unacquainted and out of touch with local circumstances, habits, and mores. For example, the government was oblivious to the miseries of mass poverty.²⁹⁰ On the flip side, Indians could not see the beneficial changes brought about by the government such as lasting peace, ease of life, freedom, cleanliness, curbing of crimes, management of roads, ease of travel, transmission of money, and the secure delivery of mail.²⁹¹

Consequently, both the subjects and the government remained ignorant of one another's concerns. The fourth cause was the British government's failure to adhere to a necessary ethic of good governance. The British officials had left a long trail of contemptuous behavior toward their subjects: ridiculing the people's customs and religions, treating them with disrespect, hurling indignities upon them in various explicit and subtle ways.²⁹² The fifth cause is identified as the mismanagement of the military in organizing native recruits.

The *Causes* demonstrates the clash of modern and religious imaginations. The British legislation was intended for the efficient maintenance and the modernization of

²⁸⁹ Khan, 9:79-76. Sen, along with Khan, clarifies that the government had not adopted a deliberate policy of offending native religions. Sen hints at the legitimacy of British conviction in their superior civilization, which they intended to pass on to their colonial subjects to improve their conditions, materialistically and culturally. Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (Delhi?: Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1957), 2.

²⁹⁰ Khan, *Maqālāt*, 9.86-91.

²⁹¹ Khan, 9:90-91.

²⁹² Khan, 9:91-98. Colonial contempt of all things natives, however, was not always the order of the day. It has been noted that initial comportment of the British civil servants and army officers was much more congenial toward their native subordinates: "The old breed [of British officials]...had one redeeming virtue: a sincere love for India and its ways." Spilsbury, *The Indian Mutiny*, 9.

the colony. The latter task was identified by Mamdani (in Chapter 1) as “direct rule” aimed at “nation-building,” the quest to remake the colonial subjects in the image of the colonizer. The Indians, on the other hand, had not undergone a transition to a post-religious society. They continued to be influenced by their local traditions and imaginations. Hence, the legislation that symbolized modernization to the colonizer was symbolic of religious affront to the colonial subjects. As we saw with Greenfeld, political conflicts are cultural conflicts, and arise due to the incompatibility between cultures. Without the benefit of secularization, Indian imaginations were fundamentally at odds with the British imagination. As Hibbard had noted in Chapter 1, it is the state intervention into the religious realm that politicizes religion. The *Causes* thus offers us a glimpse into the colonial state’s omnipresence and omnipotence as it went about replacing or updating religious laws with secular ones that forced the public to respond. Khan’s recommendation to involve local representatives in the legislative process is to help navigate and manage the differences between the foreign and the local imaginations.

From his analysis in the *Causes* and personal experiences during the Uprising, Khan drew two primary principles, both significant for grounding Muslim national imagination. He noted that there were two reasons why Muslims fell victim to the call of the Uprising in the first place: (a) the deficit of education and cultural edification, and (b) the lack of association (*mel jol*) and solidarity (*ittiḥād*, literally ‘unity,’ or ‘alliance’) with the British.²⁹³ Khan’s proto-nationalism, therefore, does not offer any critique of colonialism per se. The two stated principles and his single-minded focus on Muslim

²⁹³ Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 37-38.

progress and competitive advantage *viz a viz* the Hindus governed the next forty years of Khan's public engagement, conditioned by anomie and *r  smentiment*.

ANOMIE AND R  SMENTIMENT

In Greenfeld's terms, nationalism is born in the disconcerting conditions of anomie, an awareness of "status-inconsistency" suffered by elite sectors. In Neville's terms, Khan's content experience of *sh  rafat* no longer harmonized with the cultural dignity, autonomy, and power historically associated with *sh  rafat*. When such disharmony is experienced with a symbol's content experience, it forces the interpreter to either reinterpret the symbol or strive to change the conditions responsible for the disharmony. In Khan's case, he came to terms with colonialism as the status quo, and within that context set out on a program for Muslim politico-economic reempowerment, adopting personal acculturation to the British professional ethic as the key to Muslim success.

Khan's proto-nationalism is replete with expressions conveying a deep sense of anomie expressed in evocative symbols tinged with deep emotions and negative values with which he appraises the Muslim culture.²⁹⁴ Early on in the post-Uprising period, Khan addressed a gathering of influential people at the Scientific Society of Aligarh in 1866.²⁹⁵ He begins by noting that the nobles (*shuraf  *) of every region (*mulk*) constitute

²⁹⁴ Other examples of intensely poignant, self-deprecating dirges serving as cultural criticism include Khan's biographer Alt  f Hussain H  l  i's poem *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* (Musaddas madd o jazr-i isl  m), the poetic sarcasm of Akbar of Allahabad, and Muhammad Iqbal's poem *Shikv  *.

²⁹⁵ Khan, *Khu  b  t*, 76-85, also *Maq  l  t*, 12:3-19. Established in 1864, the Scientific Society was originally named the Translation Society, founded for the purpose of translating European works and Indian manuscripts into Indian vernaculars. Rafiq Zakaria, *Rise of Muslims*, 35-36.

the reason for its dignity ('*izzat*), pomp (*ronaq*), and perfection (*kamāl*). However, it was shameful to see the Muslim nobility's state of ignominy (*zillat*) and humiliation (*rusvā'ī*). There was a time when noble families were the reservoirs of knowledge and excellence, but now these same families had been reduced to utmost depravity. If there were something that the Muslims excelled at, it was "enmity (*bughḍ o 'adāvat*) against one's own *qaum*, envy (*kīnah*), jealousy (*hasad*), ill will (*badkhvāhī*) and evil-mindedness (*badandeshī*) for [one's] *qaum*; and the paucity of *qaumī* dignity ('*izzat*), sympathy (*hamdardī*), and pride (*iftikhār*)."²⁹⁶ In the same vein, consider the following litany of criticism hurled by Khan at Muslims, on different occasions, for their shortcomings: dreamy oblivion (*khvāb-i ghaflat*), bereft of training (*tarbiyat ke libās se 'ārī*), seen as contemptible (*haqārat kī nazār*), left behind (*pīchāi rah ga'ī*), downtrodden (*pasmāndah*), unfortunate *qaum* (*badqismat*), (suffering from) *qaumī* ignorance (*jahālat*), slumbering *qaum* (*so 'ī huvī*);²⁹⁷ defined by backwardness (*idbār*), lowliness (*zillat*), misfortune (*badbakhṭī*), decline (*tanazzul*);²⁹⁸ ignorant (*jāhil*), lowly (*zalīl*), fallen in the eyes (of the world) (*naẓron se girī huvī*), poverty-stricken (*muflis*); suffering mutual antagonism and enmity, jealousy and envy; ill will; lacking national dignity ('*izzat*), sympathy (*hamdardī*), and pride (*iftikhār*);²⁹⁹ and "the most downtrodden of all the *qaums* in India."³⁰⁰ The sentiments conveyed by these negative values speak of a deep-seated anomie afflicting not only the *sharīf* imagination, but the Muslims in general. As

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Khan, 46-56.

²⁹⁸ Khan, 354-355.

²⁹⁹ Khan, 224.

³⁰⁰ Khan, 162.

Greenfeld has explicated, anomie, the quest for national dignity, and *r essentiment* against a competitor model go together. For nationalism is not only a positive cultural model *for something*, it is also *against* and in *competition with* a rival nation, a competition that manifests into *r essentiment*.

In Greenfeld’s explanation, *r essentiment* ensues upon adopting a foreign model of nationalism toward resolving the crises of anomie. Being a proto-nationalist, there is no question of adopting a model of nationalism as such in Khan’s case. However, he certainly promoted the emulation of Europeans in general and of the British in particular in education, professional comportment, and entrepreneurship. While this could not be without an element of envy, he shows little resentment toward them. Instead, his greater resentment and envy were reserved for the Hindus, his fellow countrymen.³⁰¹ It was the Hindus he really intended to compete against and whose accomplishments he wished to match. This is quite a peculiar kind of *r essentiment* as it sets Khan’s nationhood against a permanent native competitor, instead of a foreign model. Consequently, instead of contributing to national unity among all Indians against a foreign nation, Khan’s *r essentiment* holds the germs of communal disunity in terms of politics and material interests.

Khan reasoned that the Hindus were far ahead in urbanization (*tamaddun*) and culture (*thaq afat*), and the Muslims must set out to compete with them with full determination toward reaching parity.³⁰² Among the Hindus, he was most unnerved by

³⁰¹ Khan, 410.

³⁰² Khan, 52.

the regional rise of Bengali Hindus: “due to their education, Bengalis are the crown of all the *qaums* (in India), and owing to their educational prowess, they have transitioned from a low status (*darje*) to a high status in current society.”³⁰³ By implication, Muslims were lagging behind. It was not, therefore, immediately possible for them to take advantage of new employment and political opportunities under colonial rule given that this required modern education and training, which the Muslims lacked. Muslims simply were not yet trained to compete with Hindus on an equal footing: “in the whole *qaum*, there is not a single Muslim qualified to take a position in the Viceroy’s council so as to match the qualifications of his Hindu counterparts,” Khan lamented.³⁰⁴ Khan’s sense of foreboding was acute. “the Hindus could ruin us (Muslims) in an hour, if they so wished,” as they controlled local trade.³⁰⁵ He warned his audience that if the current state of affairs persisted, one in which Muslims remained backward and Hindus progressed, Muslims will be left with no dignity (*‘izzat*) in the world.³⁰⁶

We can now discern the factors contributing to Khan’s anomie. On the one hand, he found himself confronted with two other powerful *qaums*, the British and the Hindus; and on the other hand, he saw himself as belonging to a non-Indian *sharīf* lineage and cultural heritage, in both of which Islam appeared a necessary factor of distinction and a

³⁰³ Khan, 400. Generally, Bengalis were ahead of the rest of India because Calcutta had been the seat of the British government and the center of educational modernization introduced by the British. Owing to the fact that they took full advantage of the new opportunities presented to them, the Bengalis held posts in the offices of the central government, and were now making their appearance even in the offices in northern regions. H. K. Sherwani, “The Political Thought of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan,” *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 5, no. 4 (1944): 321.

³⁰⁴ Khan, *Khutbāt*, 397.

³⁰⁵ Sayyid Ahmad Khan, “Relation with the All-India National Congress,” in *Political Profile*, ed. Hafeez Malik, 372.

³⁰⁶ Khan, *Khutbāt*, 355.

marker of identity. Given his *sharīf* background, his actual experience in the midst of a colonizing force and an ascending Hindu majority was in disharmony with his expectation as a *sharīf* and a Muslim. Apart from being crisis-inducing, Greenfeld also presents anomie as potentially revolutionary, for it unleashes the struggle to overcome the crisis, leading to the invention of novel ideas and actions and/or the importation of foreign ones. The most important idea around which Khan’s proto-national discourse revolves is that of *qaum*.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF QAUM

After deciding in 1863 to found a scientific society, Khan delivered a lecture on the importance of modern education.³⁰⁷ He begins by setting the general anthropological premise that our humanity demands that as we work diligently for our own welfare (*falāḥ o behbūd*), so we should work for the good of all of God’s creation. He then advances his second premise that one wishes the good of another out of love (*muḥabbat*), and proceeds to explicate a universal hierarchy of love. The first and the highest degree of love is to care for all things so that one’s heart should ache even upon witnessing the unjustifiable plucking of a grass blade. The second degree concerns the love of all living creatures; the third, love of all humanity; and fourth, love of that which we “metaphorically (*majāzan*)” call ‘love of *qaum*’ (*ḥubb-i qaumī*). He readily acknowledges that in this scheme, love of *qaum* carries the lowest value; however, given that man proves a weak and frail (*naḥīf aur kamzor*) creature, love of *qaum* is declared to be of the highest level (*a’lā darjā*).³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ The original lecture was delivered in Persian. Panīpatī includes the original along with the Urdu translation. The Persian version appears in *Khuṭbāt*, 39-45, the Urdu in *Khuṭbāt*, 46-56.

³⁰⁸ It is not clear what exactly Khan means here. Perhaps he means that as the weakness of human

That value is further increased, Khan reminds his audience, in remembering that Prophet Muhammad recommended his followers to love their *qaum*. Hence, it is incumbent upon Muslims to work for the welfare of all Muslims so as not to fall into sin in neglecting this duty.³⁰⁹ Khan's intention in this address is to elevate the significance of love for *qaum* above all others, and accord it a sacred significance by linking it to a Prophetic command.³¹⁰

The strong note of universal humanism in this anthropology is a recurring theme in Islamic nationalism. We will witness Islamic nationalists speak of Islam's universal spirit with a deep longing, but feel compelled to turn to nationalism only as a temporary means to ultimate universal ends. As far as Khan's universal anthropology goes, *qaum* does not yet carry strong political or religious meanings. The novelty of Khan's usage is evident in his usage of *qaum* in reference to Muslims against the Qur'anic and Prophetic usage that tends to employ *ummah* (global Muslim community), which inflects the religious makeup of the Muslim community and global Muslim solidarity.³¹¹ With Khan,

character keeps it from truly rising to a universal perspective, the weakness devolves into unfortunate, narrow concerns with one's own nation. Or, being lower in importance, loving one's community is often neglected.

³⁰⁹ Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 48-49.

³¹⁰ It should be noted that in this hierarchy, Khan glosses over the emphatic injunctions of God and Prophet Muhammad who recommend loving them as the highest ideal for Muslims. In addition, the more popular Prophetic statement does not mention the love of nation (*ḥubb-i qaumī*), which is Khan's expression, but the love of homeland (*ḥubb al-waṭan*): *the love of (one's) homeland is part of faith*. Ibn Manzur's classical lexicon shows that *waṭan* in classical Arabic carried the primary meaning of residence, homeland, and territory, whereas *qaum*'s primary meanings had to do with human collectives (details in the next chapter). Similar universal anthropology is communicated in Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 221-230, and *Maqālāt*, 12:117-130.

³¹¹ In one description, *ummah* is explained as "a universal world-order governed by an Islamic government (the Caliphate) in accordance with *sharī'ah*, and therefore, it is not restricted to any particular territorial nation." Golam Dastagir and Ismath Ramzy, "Ummah," in *Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism*, ed. Zayn R. Kassam, Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, and Jehan Bagli (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2018), 709–711, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1267-3_2016.

however, it is not *ummat* (the Urduized *ummah*) that frequently appears in his discourse as a primary reference to Indian Muslims, but *qaum*. That in Khan's imagination the interests of the Indian Muslim *qaum* diverged with those of the *ummat* became apparent when the Ottomans defeated the Greeks in their bid to take the island of Crete in 1897, and Muslim India erupted with celebrations. Alarmed at the possibility of flaring up the British temper with such enthusiastic support for Britain's enemies, Khan attempted to temper Muslim sentiments by downplaying the Ottoman victory, arguing that it was improper to equate the Ottoman victory with the victory of Islam.³¹² One can then conclude that for Khan *qaum* came to rival, if not outright replace, *ummat* as a significant symbol of Muslim collective identity in colonial India.³¹³ Lelyveld discerns this shift in Khan's use of *qaum*: "The term [*qaum*] replaced the concept of *ummah* or *ahl-i Islām*, the people who had submitted to God, and *mazhab*, the category of a religious group, sect, or school. It referred now to 'Indian Muslims,' an ethnic group."³¹⁴ This is evident in his declaration that he is proud to be among the inheritors of the legacy of Prophet Muhammad, who died with the chant of "my *ummah* (people), my *ummah*" on his lips, and that it was Khan's own wish to die chanting "my *qaum*, my *qaum*."³¹⁵ Political theologians will later chastise Khan's politics for its pro-British and anti-Ottoman stance

³¹² Syed Tanvir Wasti, "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Turks," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 4 (2010): 534.

³¹³ In the same vein, "[f]or Sayyid Ahmad, being Muslim was defined in terms of membership in a *qaum*, a people of common descent, not the *ummah* of common belief....He realized that, in fact, not all Muslims were descended from the same progenitor, but kinship served as a living metaphor for forging Muslim solidarity in the midst of India's non-Muslim majority; Muslims were conceived of as an ethnic community." Ibid., 311.

³¹⁴ Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 143.

³¹⁵ Khan, *Khutbāt*, 286.

that implied indifference to the plight of the *ummat* under the leadership of the Ottoman Caliphate.

CONCILIATORY NATIONHOOD BETWEEN TWO QAUMS

The explication of Khan's semantics of *qaum* also acquaints us with his understanding of what I will call *conciliatory nationhood*, which advances a pragmatic argument for Hindu-Muslim cooperation conditioned on the advancement of Muslim interests. Addressing a mixed Hindu-Muslim gathering in 1867, on the topic of Indian progress, Khan states that after generations of domicile in India and despite their foreign origins, the blood and flesh of Muslims had become like that of other Indian *qaums*.³¹⁶ Decades later in 1884, Khan describes *qaum* as applicable to the residents of a country or domain (*aik mulk ke rehne walon par*), just as the people of Afghanistan and Iran were said to belong to their respective *qaums*.³¹⁷ He further elaborates that "since of old the word *qaum* is spoken for the residents of a single community although they possess different and varying distinctions (*ba 'd ba 'd khuṣūṣiyatain*).” He informs his audience that “‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ are [mere] religious terms, even as Hindus, Muslims, and Christians who live in this *mulk* are in fact one nation.”³¹⁸ Earlier, he opened this speech

³¹⁶ Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 87-88.

³¹⁷ Khan, *Maqālāt*, 12:161, also *Khuṭbāt*, 289-294. Khan tends to use *mulk* in two denotations: in referencing country in the meaning of independent state (e.g., India in distinction to China), and in referencing a regional affiliation within the Indian territory itself. His synonymous term for *mulk* is *vaṭan*, as in the declaration that his adopted city of Aligarh was not his *vaṭan* (ibid., 614), or referring to the state of Punjab as “*mulk-i punjāb*” (ibid., 161). In Lelyveld's explanation, *vaṭan* refers to ancestral home, remote past, distant city, village, and surname with broadly associated regional stereotypes. “But when the term denoted the town or village where a person actually lived or to which he continually returned, it could serve to identify a corporate group, a unit of social, economic, and political action.” *Mulk*, in its turn, meant an entire geographic area subject to the Mughal regime. Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 24.

³¹⁸ Khan, *Maqālāt*, 12:161.

with the declaration that “our homeland (*mulk*) India is inhabited by two *qaums* that have been divided in reference to the terms Hindu and Muslim.”³¹⁹ Speaking again to a mixed Hindu and Muslim audience in 1884, he remarks that

by the word *qaum* I intend both Hindus and Muslims. It is in this connotation that I interpret the (English) term ‘nation.’ To me it is of no consideration as to what religious creed they hold, as this remains out of bounds of our observation. However, what we do observe is that whether Hindus or Muslims, we all inhabit the same homeland, subject to the rule of the same [colonial] government, share the same source of benefits (*fā’ide*), [and] suffer together the hardships of famine.³²⁰

Elsewhere, this conciliatory nationhood is declared to be part of a divine plan: “ever since God resolved that Hindus and Muslims eat of, live on, and die in this land...God’s clear intention is that they should live together in friendship and brotherhood.”³²¹

At this stage in Khan’s imagination, shared territory (*mulk*) and common material interests hold the primary distinction of common identity, while religion holds only a secondary importance. The political and pragmatic nature of Khan’s conciliatory nationhood is all too obvious. Muslims and Hindus are, at the outset, two distinct *qaums* that, in the second instance, come to be bound together to form a single *qaum* due to their co-presence in a common land and owing to their common interests. The rub, however, is that should the interests of the two communities diverge, their respective national commitment too might diverge toward communal interests—which is just what begins to happen in 1885. Second, in downplaying the religious distinction in favor of conciliation, Khan’s intention is undoubtedly to highlight the dangers of seizing upon religious

³¹⁹ The awkward Urdu wording reads, “*Hamare mulk hindustān main jo ke ghāliban ṣadiyon se in do qaumon se jo hindū aur musalmān ke laḥẓ main taqsīm kī ga’yīn hain ābād hain.*” Khan, *Maqālāt*, 12:157. Similar ideas are found in *Khuṭbāt*, 222, and *Maqālāt* 12:170.

³²⁰ Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 340.

³²¹ Khan, 348.

differences as a threat to Hindu-Muslim unity. Khan's approach to bi-communal *qaum* is thus ethnosymbolic and pragmatic. In this convergence of two *qaums*, Khan's concern is with Muslims' material interests, and not their religious interests.

MODERNIZATION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF MUSLIM INTERESTS

In terms of his attitude toward Hindus, Malik divides Khan's trajectory into two phases: the first phase of conciliation from 1857 to 1884, and the second phase of antagonism from 1885 to 1898.³²² Malik spots the germs of Khan's second period already present in his first period due to Hindu activism around cow-protection [i.e., banning cow slaughter and beef consumption, forbidden to Hindus] and the movement to make the Hindi language the official language of the court system.³²³ According to Beg, Khan fully understood the implications of the language controversy that it would lead to "majority communalism," and thus sounded the alarm against it.³²⁴ In a letter to an acquaintance in 1870, Khan pointedly warns that

Hindus are roused to *destroy* the Muslims' (cultural) symbol embodied in the Urdu language and the Persian script....This proposal would *destroy* cooperation between the Hindus and the Muslims. Muslims would *never* accept Hindi [as the only official language] and if Hindus persistently demanded the adoption of Hindi

³²² Malik, *Khan and Modernization*, 244.

³²³ Malik, 245-246. It is important to mind Beg's observation that no issue had before mobilized Hindus in such large numbers than the question of language. Mirza Asmer Beg, "Understanding Sir Sayyid's Political Thought," in *Cambridge Companion to Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, eds. Yasmin Saikia and M. Raisur Rahman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 179.

³²⁴ Beg, "Sir Sayyid's Political Thought," 183. On a similar note, Sherwani observes that the change in tone and intensity of Khan's feeling toward the proposal of replacing Urdu was so palpable and egregious that the Commissioner of Benares was shocked to hear Khan advocate on behalf of a specific community in India, the Muslims, for the first time, "for up till now he had not allied himself to the question of progress of any particular community but had made the cause of the whole of India his own." Sherwani, "Political Thought," 315.

in preference to Urdu it would result in the total separation of the Muslims from the Hindus.³²⁵

Khan's ire against the Hindu attempt to "destroy" Urdu points to the relative value of symbolic systems. Not all symbols hold similar importance. At one point Khan was quite willing to cede on the banning of beef consumption as a gesture of interfaith harmony.³²⁶ For Khan, cow sacrifice was lower in symbolic value than language, which was more intimately tied to *qaum*'s identity than the consumption of beef. The intensity of Khan's language in expressing concern over the language controversy clues us to the readiness with which he was willing to surrender conciliatory nationhood in safeguarding Muslim interests. Khan saw those interests threatened further with the rise of the Indian National Congress (INC).

The INC was founded in 1885 by Western-educated, middle- and upper-class Hindus to represent Indian interests before the British government.³²⁷ For the first two decades of its operation, the INC made no "worthwhile contribution to the cause of nationalism....At that time, neither the INC nor Sir Sayyid and his friends were disloyal

³²⁵ Malik, *Khan and Modernization*, 246. Emphasis added. This is not the first time Khan had shown conscious concern with Muslim symbols *qua symbols*. His most important semiotically relevant pre-1857 work *The Remnants of Ancient Heroes* (Asārus ṣanādīd) surveyed the ancient buildings, and religious, literary, and artistic figures of Delhi. Here Khan's attention is turned to indexical, material symbols of the Muslim past in India. For an overview of the work, see C. M. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called *Āsāruṣ-Ṣanādīd*," *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 3 (2011): 669–708.

³²⁶ Ḥālī, *Ḥayāt-i Jāved*, 1:312.

³²⁷ The INC was not intended to be a Hindu organization per se. Its early leaders intended to incorporate all Indians, and that its Hindu majority was by the logic of circumstance, because it happened to be founded by Hindus, who were also more likely to take advantage of representative politics. Of course, the fact of Muslim absence in the INC was a reality, and did not work in the INC's favor. Its first meeting counted only two Muslims out of seventy-two. The second meeting counted 27 Muslims out of a total attendance of 413. Zakaria, *Rise of Muslims*, 47-52.

to or opposed the British Government.”³²⁸ However, Khan was alarmed by the INC’s advocacy for Hindi as the official language and a representative government.³²⁹ The INC “crystalized for the first time the new political forces in India” such that under its umbrella “[f]or the first time, perhaps, since the world began India as a nation met together.”³³⁰ In other words, no civil organization or movement of any kind had an “All-India” character before the rise of the INC. What is more, “the symbols, slogans, ideas, phrases, idioms used to bring the masses towards the INC were majorly Hindu in the religio-cultural sense.”³³¹ These prospects were unbearable for Khan who clearly understood the possible implications of such developments. His proto-nationalism is on full display in two of his most significant speeches that bear far-reaching implications for later developments in Muslim nationalism.

The first such speech of note was delivered impromptu at the second gathering of Muhammedan Educational Congress on December 28, 1887 in Lucknow, intentionally held at the same time as the INC’s meeting in Madras.³³² Khan prefaced his reflections with a disclaimer that he had not been in the habit of commenting on politics until now as

³²⁸ Beg, “Sayyid’s Political Thought,” 187. However, many of Khan’s friends and associates later on did turn against both the INC and the British.

³²⁹ Beg, 183.

³³⁰ Zakaria, *Rise of Muslims*, 47. The nested quotation is attributed to *The Times*.

³³¹ Beg, “Sayyid’s Political Thought,” 188-189.

³³² Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 389-404. The organization’s name was later changed to All-India Muhammedan Educational Conference (MEC). Farooq Dar makes an interesting observation that Khan established the Muhammedan Educational Congress to counter the INC. For just as the INC brought Hindus together on a single platform as never before, so the MEC brought a cross-section of Indian Muslims under the umbrella of a single organization for the first time, with the far-reaching consequence that in due time, after Khan’s death, the MEC transformed into the Muslim League, the Muslim organization that would champion the separatist movement. Farooq Ahmad Dar, “Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Hindu-Muslim Question in India,” *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan; Lahore* 55, no. 2 (2018): 11–24.

his focus had always remained on education. However, the activities of the INC necessitated comments on the correct course of political action.

Khan remarks that from the beginning the INC consistently advanced its demands for greater participation in the political management of India, which included the opening up of all posts in the Indian Civil Service to all Indians, and on the basis of merit-based examination.³³³ These proposals became sticking points with Khan, who advanced various arguments against them. The gist of his arguments was that Muslims, having fallen behind in education, were mostly unqualified to compete on an equal footing with others for the Indian Civil Service. He further argued that meritocracy served best those nations that had achieved the requisite level of parity among its members in terms of education, class, and/or belonged to the same race. As Indians were divided along religious, caste, class, and regional lines, a meritocratic basis for upward mobility was unsuitable for the Indian culture, and especially for Muslims. In electoral politics, in Khan's calculation, Muslims were likely to be out voted by Hindus one to four.³³⁴ This single insight became a permanent point of anxiety in Muslim politics in the region, and was a primary concern for the later separatist movement. Khan also underscores the specific elite anxieties that India's *sharīf* sectors will never countenance the authority of lower classes over them—should they reach high offices through meritocracy.³³⁵ As Lelyveld explains, the introduction of meritocracy “reached into areas of cultural self-

³³³ For an overview of this issue, see John R. McLane, chaps. 1 and 2 in *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

³³⁴ Lelyveld, 68.

³³⁵ Khan, *Khutbāt*, 395.

definition communicated to an individual in the experience of growing up. Childhood and family life, language, ideology, and religion all came into question, threatened with fundamental revision and an altered place in the total context of a person's life."³³⁶ In other words, meritocracy would have increased the *ashrāf*'s sense of status-inconsistency owing to the upward mobility of individuals from the lower classes.

According to Panīpatī, Khan's Lucknow speech was the first voice raised against the INC, and turned out to be highly prescient.³³⁷ For as the INC projected the birth of a Indian nation-state undergirded by Hindu ethnosymbolism, Khan attempted to turn the Muslims in the opposite direction of Muslim ethnosymbolic nationhood under colonialism. The simultaneous movement in diverging directions proved decisive for the region's history. In its criticism of meritocracy, democracy, and electoral politics, the Lucknow speech must also count among the first non-Western critiques of importing or imposing nationalism upon non-Western cultures ill prepared for it.

The second lecture of note was delivered by Khan on March 16, 1888 in Meerut to an *ashrāf* audience.³³⁸ He begins by noting that the Hindus of Bengal have formed a National Congress. He deemed this an auspicious development for the Bengalis as it showed their advancement. However, Khan noted that INC's latest activities were a cause of concern as it began to encroach upon Muslim interests directly. To begin with, Khan

³³⁶ Lelyveld, 68.

³³⁷ Khan, 403. Muslims, however, were not the only ones opposing the INC. Some prominent Hindus also rejected it. M. Raisur Rahman, "Creating a Community: Sir Sayyid and His Contemporaries," in *Cambridge Companion*, 105.

³³⁸ Khan, *Khutbāt*, 405-418. Among the audience were landlords (*ta'alluqdār*), government officials, military personnel, lawyers, journalists, members of important families, religious scholars, and some graduates of Indian and British colleges and universities—in sum, a cross-section of the *ashrāf* and the intelligentsia of the time. Malik, ed. *Political Profile*, 342.

blasted the INC's attempt to reach out to some Muslim constituencies so as to pressure them to join the INC. As for those few Muslims who positively answered the INC's call, Khan alleged that they were bought and paid for. Moreover, Khan argued, the INC's few Muslim members did not represent the Muslims of India, and therefore, it was illegitimate for the INC to claim itself as a body representing all Indians—this very argument would be repeated by Jinnah and the JUI decades later. Khan warns his audience that some Hindus were under the illusion that through the INC they will be able to suppress or curb certain Muslim religious practices, such as beef consumption. Khan then warns Hindus that they will not be able (read, allowed) to accomplish anything by way of coercion (*zor se*). Rather, he advises them to take the path of unity and cooperation.

Khan then offers a telling argument that allows another glimpse into his prescient thinking. He informs his audience of the crux of the communal problem, that the problem to be contemplated was the communal power struggle that is bound to ensue should the British quit India. He resolved that in such a scenario, Hindus and Muslims will not be able to rule together in cooperation as equals. The natural outcome will be for one to subjugate the other to its rule.³³⁹ He then vociferously announces that while the Muslim

³³⁹ Khan was an eyewitness to the destructive consequences of the dissolution of the British rule in India. In his autobiographical account of the rebellion of his district of Bijnor during the 1857 Uprising, he had witnessed looting, plundering, the oppression of Hindus by Muslims, and of Muslims by Hindus. Khan, *Maqālāt*, 9:448-449. He understood that nationalist politics implied politics of agitation, which can again stir violence and another British backlash. Allan Octavian Hume, a British official of the Indian Civil Service, was one of the founders of the INC. Alarmed by Khan's opposition to the INC, he countered Khan's charge that the INC was not attempting to impose parliamentary system, but that it merely wished to establish official contacts between Indians and the British government. Khan, however, was not appeased. Zakaria, *Rise of Muslims*, 50.

might be fewer in numbers, they were not to be considered meek, and were perfectly capable of defending themselves should the need arise. In a different scenario, he imagines the possibility of India being taken over by another European power in the absence of the British. Khan warned that all other European nations would prove worse than the British. Hence, in his estimation, to keep lasting peace in India, British should rule India forever!

Khan then takes a final radical step by declaring to the Muslims that even if all the Hindus opted to join the INC, Muslims must not follow suit. For it is in the Muslim interest to join up with those who are closer to them *in religion*. As Islam accords Jews and Christians the special status of “the People of the Book (*ahl-i kitāb*)”—that is, as belonging to the Abrahamic monotheistic family—Muslims should join up with the British for national progress. He thus declares, “[w]e do not favor becoming subjects of the Hindus (*muṭī‘ul hunūd*) over being subjects of the People of the Book (*muṭī‘u ahl-i kitāb*).” He reminds his audience that God has declared, in the Qur'an, Christians as friends of the Muslims, and God has now placed them as rulers upon India. Should Muslims be forced to choose, they should favor the British over all other nations in India.³⁴⁰ In other words, Hindu-Muslim bi-communal *qaum* was part of divine intention only under colonialism as a guarantor of Muslim safety and progress. Khan’s statements

³⁴⁰ Khan, *Khutbāt*, 416-417. Needless to say, Khan was lavishly praised, but also bitterly denounced for this speech from many circles, not the least by Bengalis, for example, as “a tool in the hands of our enemies,” “‘queer, foolish, childish, sycophantic,’” and senile. Zakaria, *Rise of Muslims*, 55. This was not the first occasion on which Khan argued for Muslim-Christian solidarity in India. After the Uprising, he had made a similar argument in *Loyal Muhammedans of India* (the Urdu originals serialized were in 1860-1861), included in Malik, *Political Profile*, 193-268. See Khan, *Maqālāt*, 7:39-42.

of anti-Hindu *r essentiment* can be taken as the most revealing in capturing the emotional heart, intellectual thinking, and pragmatic politics of modern Muslim imagination in post-1857 India.

Much has been made of these two speeches. In Pritchett’s estimation,

[i]f these speeches did not mark the introduction of the ‘two-nation theory’ into Indian political discourse, they certainly gave it all the impetus of Sir Sayyid’s personal prestige and powerful rhetoric. They did lay down the track and greased the rails, which eventually led straight to the logic of the ‘partition.’³⁴¹

Beg observes that “in the retrospectively constructed nationalist narrative, some have called him [Khan] a ‘separatist’ based on his call for nonparticipation in the early INC.”³⁴² Beg proceeds to underscore that “Sir Sayyid did have a point [in warning Muslim to reject the INC], but in this all-pervasive, entrenched nationalist narrative of the twenty-first century, there is a limited chance that many would appreciate his nuanced arguments.”³⁴³ Khan thus demonstrates that the later “logic of the ‘partition’” was already reflected in the ‘partitioning’ of Khan’s imagination in which Hindus and Muslims were always two distinct *qaums*, and when the controversy arose between the two *qaums*, the religious difference was stressed. Note Khan’s recourse to scriptural reasoning toward justifying a Muslim-Christian alliance against a Muslim-Hindu alliance. What I will highlight throughout the subsequent chapters is that the germs of the ‘partitioning’ of Muslim imagination are inherent in Islamic ultimacy. Khan’s recourse to scriptural reasoning is one allusion to its quiet pulsations in the Muslim subconscious.

³⁴¹ Frances W. Pritchett, “Defending the ‘Community:’ Sir Sayyid’s Concept of Qaum,” February 2017, http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00fwp/published/txt_sirsayyid_qaum.pdf. Pritchett is also disturbed, and rightfully so, by the anti-Bengali racist discourse of these speeches.

³⁴² Beg, “Sir Sayyid’s Political Thought, 187.

³⁴³ Ibid.

Khan's two speeches immediately stirred up controversy, especially by the people of Bengal for his sentiments against Hindu Bengalis. To assuage his critics, Khan sought to reassure them of his commitment to national cooperation: "India is like a bride whose two eyes are the Hindus and the Mahomedans. Her beauty consists in this—that her two eyes be of equal lustre."³⁴⁴ Yet, no sooner than he offers this warm reassurance, he again resorts to cautionary and belligerent rhetoric:

But when my Hindu brothers and Bengali friends devise such a course of action as will bring us loss and heap disgrace on *our* nation, then indeed we can no longer remain friends....I understand that the first duty of everybody is to work for the improvement and progress of *his* nation....The Congress is in reality a civil war without arms....We also like a civil war. But not a civil war without arms, we like it with arms.³⁴⁵

This is surely not the language of someone determined to privilege a united Indian *qaum* at the cost of compromising, let alone surrendering, his Muslim interests. A truly modern national consciousness would have seen Bengali progress as national progress, whereas in Khan's proto-nationalism such a possibility remains unthinkable.

It is tempting to exposit Khan's discourse on *qaum* as a straightforward linear trajectory validating either Muslim-separatist or Indian-nationalist appropriations.³⁴⁶ However, such easy readings must be resisted. As Amir demonstrates, Khan's discourse shows a "fluctuating pattern in his thought"³⁴⁷ with the pendulum of emphasis shifting with the changing context.³⁴⁸ In the final analysis, "it is unfair to impose on Sir Sayyad

³⁴⁴ Sayyid Ahmad Khan, "Reply of Sir Syed Ahmed to Some Criticisms," in *Political Profile*, 356.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 357. Emphasis added.

³⁴⁶ For example, Troll mentions Rajendra Prasad as reading Khan as a nationalist, and Ishtiaq H. Qureshi viewing Khan as a separatist. Troll, *Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*, 5-8.

³⁴⁷ Amir, "Semantics of *qawm*," 59.

³⁴⁸ Amir, 59.

later categories which did not then exist. He was neither a votary of composite Indian, nor of a separate Muslim nationhood, *although he may be regarded as the originator of both.*³⁴⁹

ISLAM, DIGNITY, AND QAUM

For Khan's project to be truly modern required a secularized view of religion. Such a condition is obviously necessary for him to earnestly support British presence in India as they would not tolerate any political role of Islam in the colony. Accordingly, this section will reveal the extent of Khan's secularized imagination. I say *secularized* as Khan's secular commitments were not framed in the language of 'secular' or 'secularism.' Yet, one can have a religious outlook that we today would describe as secular without consciously subscribing to the ideology of secularism.

Just as Khan based his reflections on nationhood on anthropology toward naturalizing it, so he explains religion anthropologically. Khan's first criterion for appraising the extent of a religion's validity applies the standard "whether it [religion] accords to human nature."³⁵⁰ Islam fulfills the criterion as "Islam is natural disposition, and natural disposition is Islam."³⁵¹ In another place, Khan concludes that true religion is to believe in God's oneness and the brotherhood of man.³⁵² In another place, after declaring in a speech that because he considers all humanity as one person, Khan stresses that he does not prefer to choose one religion or a certain group affiliation (*mazhab aur*

³⁴⁹ Amir, 60. Emphasis added.

³⁵⁰ Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 326.

³⁵¹ The expression is stated in Arabic: "*al-Islām huwa al-ḥiṭrat wa al-ḥiṭrat huwa al-Islām.*" *Khuṭbāt*, 327.

³⁵² Khan, *Maqālāt*, 5:324.

firqah aur guroh) over another for purposes of national distinction (*qaumī khuṣūṣiyat*). In fact, Khan goes on to explain, people are free to choose their religion, but more than that, each is compelled (*majbūr*) to be on his faith as one cannot help but follow one's heart, and such conviction is not transitive.³⁵³ It seems that for Khan religion is one's given and fixed disposition, which for Khan ought to remain confined one's privacy.

Not surprisingly, then, Khan traces all roots of human misfortunes to conflating an unchangeable religious essence with worldly matters.³⁵⁴

The *nature* (*necar*) of religious injunctions is entirely different than those of social life. Religious injunctions, which concern spiritual morals (*rūḥānī akhlāq*) and spiritual cultivation (*rūḥānī tahzīb*), are permanent and not subject to change as the *nature* (*necar*) upon which God has created man's spirit (*rūḥ*) does not change while man is in this world. In contrast, social and civil matters (*'umūr-i mu'āsharat o tamaddun*) change on a daily basis, and so must not interfere with religious matters. To do so is the very cause of (our) destruction.³⁵⁵

Elsewhere, Khan warns that a people that conflate the religious with the social remain in a state of decline (*tanazzul*), and a government based on such an understanding can never be stable, legislate laws, attain wealth, or achieve peace.³⁵⁶ “True religion does not concern itself with worldly matters;” and that “worldly matters are unconcerned with religious laws.”³⁵⁷ This is an unambiguously secularized version of Islam, established on a clear demarcation of private spirituality and non-religious sociopolitical sphere. Upon this view, religion does not directly impact politics and other worldly engagements. As

³⁵³ Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 185. Also, *Khuṭbāt*, 282-283, 357, 435; and *Maqālāt* 5:82, and 5:169-170.

³⁵⁴ Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 5:5.

³⁵⁵ Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 5:6. In a different place, Khan remarks that “religion and religious sciences, and the world and worldly science are completely separate. Ibid., 5:349-350. Similar ideas are found in *Khuṭbāt*, 221-222.

³⁵⁶ Khan, *Maqālāt*, 9:3.

³⁵⁷ Khan, 9:5. Also Ibid., 9:10-13 and 5:82.

Beg explains, for Khan humans in earlier times were created for religion, but in modern times, religion has been created for humans; and whereas earlier, religion addressed spiritual and physical needs, it now addresses spiritual needs only.³⁵⁸ Conversely, Khan holds, the absolute spiritual essence of religion need never fear from any worldly engagement as, by definition, it cannot be affected by any such engagement.³⁵⁹ Yet, nonetheless, religion is still affected by worldly engagement in a different sense.

In an address, after lamenting the indignity apparent in the state of his fellow Muslims, Khan equates the condition of Muslims as reflecting the worth of Islam itself. For if Muslims are lowly and bereft of dignity (*'izzat*) so Islam will be seen by the world.³⁶⁰ Whereas the bygone generations attained dignity (*'izzat*) in the world by reforming themselves according to the requirements of the time, and thus elevated the position of Islam in the world, so raising Islam's status in the world today demands the rise of the Muslim *qaum*.

Relating economic engagement and progress to nationhood and religion, Khan reminds his audience that Muslims are always ready to spend their wealth on charitable and religious causes, but found it hard to open their pockets to fund *qaumī* projects. He then makes a startling pronouncement: charity to religious causes supports one's otherworldly wellbeing, a form of selfish investment, which does nothing for the *qaum's*

³⁵⁸ Beg, "Sir Sayyid's Political Thought," 190. Beg refers to Khan's "Mazhabī Khayāl Zamāna-i Qadīm aur Zamāna-i Jadīd Main."

³⁵⁹ This also equips Khan and the later modernists with a weapon to subject everything else in religion other than its essence to scrutiny, critique, and reconsideration—just what Khan did in his theological thought. See Troll, *Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* for a succinct look at Khan's theological reinterpretations.

³⁶⁰ Khan, *Khutbāt*, 354-359.

welfare. The work of true *qaumī* sympathy and welfare is that which is undertaken neither for oneself, *nor for God*, but for the *qaum*, and this alone is true virtue.³⁶¹ He goes on to emphasize that it is a mistake to distinguish worldly dignity (*'izzat*) with religious dignity (*'izzat*). Accordingly, all struggle for worldly progress and dignity (*'izzat*) should be for the sake of Islam. It is sheer folly to seek worldly glory for the sake of the world. Khan stresses that “our intention behind worldly progress should be for the sake of Islam.”³⁶² The connection between the glory of Islam to Muslim glory is, therefore, simply by way of association for Khan. Personally, Islam ought to clarify one’s intention behind actions as always committed for the sake of Islam. In practice, however, no particular *religious* action is necessary to symbolize one’s religiosity, but worldly engagements should be carried on according to their own requirements. Internationally and historically, as long as the Muslim *qaum* ensures its worldly success, it will be associated with Islam and serve to glorify it. In Khan’s imagination, religion and worldly engagements have discernible essences, clearly marked zones of activity, and the maintenance of strict boundaries between them desirable and manageable.

Despite the overwhelming concern with the primacy of Muslim nationhood, which places *qaum* over *ummat*, there are moments in Khan’s reflections that surrender the primacy of *qaum*’s ethnosymbolic makeup before its spiritual makeup and move in the direction of Islamic nationalism. In a speech, which could only have been delivered to a Muslim audience, Khan reflects on the meaning of *qaum* in relation to Prophet

³⁶¹ Khan, 224-225.

³⁶² Khan, 226.

Muhammad's mission.³⁶³ He observes that ever since prehistory, *qaum* has been associated with either lineage or residency of a homeland (*mulk kā bāshindah hone se*). However, he notes that all the divisions among humans based on worldly (material, empirical) distinctions were erased by the Prophet, who established a

spiritual qaumī association (rūḥānī rishtah-i qaumī), strengthened by the firm rope of *there is no God but Allah [and] Muhammad is His messenger* [the quintessential Islamic creedal formula]. All other *qaumī* links and *qaumī* associations were made naught (*nīst o nābud*) before this spiritual association, and a new spiritual (*rūḥānī*), nay, a *sacred qaumī association (khudā'ī qaumī rishtah)* came into being.³⁶⁴

Islam does not ask anyone whether he be Turk or Tajik, African or Arab, Chinese or Tartar, Punjabi or Indian, Black or White, but whosoever strengthens his firm bond (*'urvatul wuṣqā*) of monotheism (*kalimah-yi tauḥīd*) becomes (part of) a single *qaum*, nay, but a son of a *spiritual* father [God or the Prophet]!³⁶⁵

Similarly, on another occasion when speaking on the education of young Muslims, Khan states that Islamic *qaumiyyat* rests on a national feeling (*qaumī fīling*) that transcends the other associations of lineage and homeland (*mulk*), and this is a point of pride (*iftikhār*) that is found nowhere but in Islam.³⁶⁶ In the same vein, addressing Muslim students of a Christian mission school, Khan instructs them on the *true* meaning of *qaum*.³⁶⁷ He impresses upon his young audience that Muslims belong to a single *qaum*, and as long as they practice and remain committed to their religion (*mazhab*), for which alone they must live and die, they will remain one *qaum*.³⁶⁸ Khan's spiritual nationhood is at odds with

³⁶³ The editor provides no historical context for this particular entry in the collection.

³⁶⁴ Khan, *Maqālāt*, 5:167. Literally, *khudā'ī* denotes 'divine,' but I find the more idiomatic 'sacred' a fitter rendering in the given context. A more literal translation of *rishtah* would be 'relation.'

³⁶⁵ Khan, 5:167.

³⁶⁶ Khan, *Khuṭbāt*, 618-619.

³⁶⁷ Khan, 277.

³⁶⁸ The same ideas reverberate in another speech about educating young Muslims. See *Khuṭbāt*, 614-624, and *Khuṭbāt*, 568-581.

his overall project of the Muslim *qaum*'s worldly advancement and bi-communal nationhood. Spiritual nationhood necessitates prioritizing religion over all other interests, and religious affiliation over all other *qaumī* affiliations. It also implies a turning away from *qaum*-based identity to an *ummat*-based identity, and the dilemma of upholding the *ummat*'s concerns over both the Muslim *qaum* and the bi-communal Indian *qaum*.

It turns out that *qaum* had three meanings for Khan. One the one hand, *qaum* came to mean all Indian Muslims. Two, *qaum* also meant for a bi-communal Hindu-Muslim nation. Three, *qaum* also meant universal Islamic brotherhood established upon monotheistic spirituality. I will stress that while the universal *qaum* was not a staple of Khan's discourse, its rare articulation alludes to the inherent supra-national religious outlook of Islamic ultimacy that finds nationalism to be beneath its spiritual dignity. Even for someone like Khan, committed to a pragmatic, secularized vision of Islam, the deeply ingrained Islamic ultimacy manages to assert itself in rare moments of theological reasoning. Such rare moments speak to my argument that Islamic imagination carries a nationalesque potential that is wont to be retrieved by Muslims in relevant contexts.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Structural changes brought about by colonialism created a context that compelled Sayyid Ahmad Khan to respond to a situation of Muslim disempowerment and humiliation. Acknowledging the fundamental change that had taken place under the influence of European culture and colonialism, Khan recognized that modernization, as he understood it, defined the path to Muslim empowerment and collective dignity. Khan's quest for modernization, however, was instrumental and utilitarian, as opposed to

being a matter of fundamental identity or heartfelt conviction. He was all for promoting modern sciences, use of technology, adopting some British manners, and inculcating an entrepreneurial spirit, but staunchly rejected electoral representation, a democratic order, meritocratic bureaucracy, and upward mobility as an individual responsibility. Rather, he wished Muslims to be represented before the colonial government as a *qaum*, and by its *sharīf* representatives. In this sense, Khan did not consciously grow out of his *sharāfat* consciousness. The modern idea of nationalism as an invitation for the plebs to enter the realm of nobility did not occur to Khan. Yet, his recasting of *qaum* on a nationwide, all-India scale served to put *sharāfat* under threat. For if the new path to dignity lay along the track of modern education, it opened up the possibility of any Muslim to traverse that path and acquire dignity. Modernization could potentially match or even surpass the dignity of *sharāfat*, especially if the old *sharīf* circles were outdone by non-*sharīfs*. Interestingly, while the secular Muslim nationalism of the ML drew its leadership from the *ashrāf*, quite a few of them affiliated with Khan's circles, political theology challenged that leadership both in terms of claiming the mantle of popular leadership and in doing away with the old rhetoric of *sharāfat* altogether.

In addition, Khan remained an unrepentant pro-colonialist to the end. This amounts to his rejection of popular sovereignty. Khan's resistance to nationalism belongs to a pre-modern imagination. However, to the extent that Khan was committed to Muslim progress in modern ways, his appropriation of modernity was instrumental, placed in the service of Indian Muslim interests, and contextualized according to the limitations of the Indian culture. While an affront to the modern political ideals, Khan's caution against

imposing all forms of modern politics in the colony represents a non-Western critique of modernity's cultural limitations. Yet, as a spokesman for the wellbeing of all Muslims in general, and popularizing Muslims' self-identification as an ethnosymbolic *qaum* whose fortunes were tied together, Khan qualifies as a proto-nationalist, whose ideas laid the seeds for the sprouting of Muslim nationhood.

Khan's proto-nationalism rests on a secularized role of religion in Muslim life. Religion is only one element in Khan's ethnosymbolic identity, and its relation to politics at most serves to cleanse one's intention of selfishness and personal glory toward ensuring a selfless service for the Muslim *qaum*. There is no sense in Khan of the progress of the Islamic religion, which might then translate into Muslims' collective dignity; rather, Muslims' worldly advancement by association symbolizes Islam's dignity. Restated in Neville's terms, Muslim advancement for Khan was the boundary condition without which Islam could not attain worldwide dignity. On rare occasions, however, Khan seemed to have slipped, perhaps unawares, below the surface-level logic of political utilitarianism to the more basic and subconsciously enduring religious imagination. At this level, the Muslim imagination more fully inhabits its sacred symbols, peering out into the secular arena from their vantage point and directed by their theo-logic, sees Islam as transcending secular associations of language, territory, ethnicity, and nationality. On these rare occasions, Khan spoke of Islam's spiritual nationhood defined only by its monotheistic symbols of God and the Prophet; thus, undermining the separation that was to be kept between religion and non-religion. This theo-logic is Islam's nationalesque premise that when coupled with the premise of nationalism leads to

the conclusion of Islamic nationalism.

Viewed through the problematic of Muslim emancipation, Khan's project was not one of emancipation of Muslims from other *qaums*, the British or the Hindus. Rather, his project of modernization was geared toward Muslims' emancipation from their own condition of disempowerment. Khan put the real blame and onus of this liberation upon Muslims themselves. The British were expected to guarantee Muslim safety from Hindu encroachment, freeing up the Muslims to pursue their own interests. The instrument of Muslim emancipation was modernization, but it was for the Muslims to seize it to their advantage.

**CHAPTER 4: ABUL KALAM AZAD, JAM‘IYYATUL ‘ULAMĀ HIND, AND
COMPOSITE NATIONALISM**

Having outlined the proto-nationalism of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, this chapter expounds the political theology of Aligarh movement’s archrivals, the *composite nationalists*, namely, Abul Kalam Azad and the *Jam‘iyyatul ‘Ulamā Hind* (Association of Indian Scholars, hereafter JUH).³⁶⁹ Composite nationalists advocated for a united, secular, post-colonial Indian state in which they hoped to achieve Muslims’ religio-cultural autonomy in majority-Muslim provinces. Toward this end, they elaborated one of the first modern Islamic political theologies, thereby, advancing a theological argument in favor of nationalism. The chapter begins with briefs on Azad’s biography and the JUH’s historical background. It then explicates the fundamentals of political theology of Azad and the JUH toward identifying the essential symbols of Islamic ultimacy that bear on Islamic exceptionalism and the partitioning of Muslim imagination. This is followed by their discourse on the two most important symbols of composite nationalism, namely, *qaum* and *khilāfat* (caliphate), and the pragmatics that they entailed. The chapter ends by outlining the composite nationalism’s turn to perennialist readings of Islamic nationalism.

³⁶⁹ While other figures and schools of thought also qualify as composite nationalists, my particular focus on political theology obviates the need to exposit the more secular composite nationalism of the Jamia Millia Islamia (National Muslim University) school of thought. Among the central ideas of this school was to mold and promote an “unhyphenated” Muslim Indian identity (to tone down the ‘Muslim’ in ‘Indian-Muslim’), which indicates the secondary significance of religion in this nationalist vision. See Mushirul Hasan and Rakhshanda Jalil, *Partners in Freedom: Jamia Millia Islamia* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2006).

AZAD'S BIOGRAPHICAL BRIEF

Abul Kalam Azad³⁷⁰ (1888-1958) belonged to a family with scholarly lineage dating back to the time of the early Mughals. His father was a highly renowned religious scholar and a Sufi *pīr*³⁷¹ with international repute across South Asia, Arabia, and other regions of the Ottoman Empire.³⁷² The spiritual pedigree and religious credentials of Azad's father implies his status as a scion of the Mughal nobility and the *sharīf* culture.³⁷³ Azad and his three siblings were homeschooled first by their father, and later by private tutors in Arabo-Perso-Urdu literary classics, and traditional Islamic sciences. The highly precocious Azad, known for his photographic memory, mastered at an early age all texts and disciplines he encountered, including the mastery of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu—and, in later years, learned to read English. His precocious learning, however, landed him into an early crisis. In his youth, Azad became an avid follower of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, whose theological reinterpretation of Islam in light of modern philosophy and science led Azad to atheism. He regained his faith after an intense internal struggle lasting some three years.³⁷⁴ Azad's personal crisis is symbolic of the larger relationship between

³⁷⁰ Named Muḥiyuddīn Aḥmad at birth, he was also given a chronogrammatic name, Firoz Bakht, but went on to be known by his pseudonym Abul Kalam Azad (from the Arabic *ab* meaning 'father', *kalām* meaning 'language' 'speech,' or 'discourse'; and the Urdu *āzād* meaning 'free'.

³⁷¹ *Pīr* is an honorific title given to Sufi guides (*murshid*) heading a branch of a mystical orders, usually associated with their own hospice and disciples.

³⁷² Sayyid Muḥammad Khairuddīn, was raised in Delhi, but moved to Mecca after 1857, there married the daughter of an Arab scholar, and finally returned to India. He was both a Sunni-Hanafī scholarly authority and a Sufi *pir* (head of a mystical order) with a large following, with his influence reaching the royal court. For details, see Abul Kalam Azad, *Azād kī Kahānī Khud Azād ki Zabānī*, ed. 'Abdur Razzāq Malīhābādī (Delhi: Hali Publishing House, 1958); Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, chaps. 1 and 2, *Maulana Azad, Islam and the Indian National Movement* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014); and a shorter account in Abul Kalam Azad and Humayun Kabir, *India Wins Freedom: The Complete Version* (Madras, India: Orient Longman, 1988), 1-25.

³⁷³ Azad details his spiritual inheritance in his autobiographies *Zikrā* and *Azād kī Kahānī*.

³⁷⁴ Azad, *Azād kī Kahānī*, 414-424.

modernity and the Islamic tradition: modernity effects a crisis of traditional faith, but the Islamic tradition's pull on the Muslim imagination compels the subject to recover his faith, but often with a more modern reorientation. The new orientation seeks vengeance on both the aspects of tradition that could not fortify one against the crisis, and the aspects of the modern condition that induced it.

Given my focus on Azad's political theology, I subscribe to Aijaz Ahmad's classification of Azad's trajectory into two phases: first phase from 1912 to 1920, followed by a period of transition until 1924, and a second phase from 1924 until Azad's death in 1958. Ahmad describes the second phase as a "monumental shift [that] changed everything, including his theology and his prose style."³⁷⁵ I identify the first phase as that of Islamic nationalism, and the second one as that of secular nationalism founded upon a theological humanism. By his own account, the factors contributing to the formation of the Azad's theopolitical views, leading up to the first phase, include his domestic and international travels following the partition of Bengal in 1905.³⁷⁶ Through these travels

³⁷⁵ Aijaz Ahmad, "Azad's Careers: Roads Taken and Not Taken," in *Islam and Indian Nationalism: Reflections on Abul Kalam Azad*, ed. Mushirul Hasan (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 129, and for the general discussion on the matter, 126-128. How to interpret Azad's trajectory is up for debate. Ashraf Ali divides his career into two stages: the period of pan-Islamism, ending roughly in 1924; and then the period of secular nationalism; with the transition governed by "two different methodologies and principles of exegesis." Ashraf Ali, "Azad's Religio-Political Trajectory," in *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, 102. Ian H. Douglas divides Azad's life into four periods, with the second period coinciding with what I have called the 'early' phase, and the third and fourth phases coinciding with my division of the later Azad. Francis Robinson, review of *A Nationalist Conscience: M. A. Ansari, the Congress and the Raj*, by Mushirul Hasan, and *Abul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography* by Ian Henderson Douglas, Gail Minault, and Christian W. Troll, *Modern Asian Studies* 23, no. 3 (1989): 609-19.

³⁷⁶ The partition of Bengal Presidency in 1905 by Lord Curzon into two zones turned eastern Bengal into a Muslim majority province, and western Bengal, in which Hindus would have held the majority, was to be united with Bihar and Orissa, which reduced them to a minority. Two consequences followed: one, Bengali Hindus turned to revolutionary activities in protest; two, the British succeeded in weakening the Bengalis as a single block by dividing up the region, and in the process,

(1905-1909), Azad came in contact with anti-imperialist revolutionary ideas and activities in Bengal, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and Turkey.³⁷⁷ Azad's biographers see in these encounters the inspiration for his own political vision of Indian nationalism, and his choice of journalism as a means of communicating to the public.³⁷⁸ Azad's travels served to intensify his anti-colonial sentiments as he witnessed the colonial rule in other Muslims lands. As a result, Azad turned his attention to India with a deeper sense of pan-Islamic sympathies and a commitment to Indian nationalism.

Upon his return from travels, Azad launched the weekly *Al-Hilāl* (The crescent) in July 1912, published from his own printing press—the technological side of modernity that was adopted by even the fiercest critics of modernization. The objectives behind the journal *Al-Hilāl* were stated on different occasions: to call the Muslims to Islam;³⁷⁹ or, to call Muslims to conform their practice and beliefs solely to the Qur'an and the Prophetic example (*sunnah*).³⁸⁰ What is not stated explicitly is the journal's additional commitment to a fearless criticism of colonialism, and a relentless critique of Khan's Aligarh movement and their pro-British policy that kept the Muslims politically docile while

antagonizing religious sensibilities in the region. The Bengal partition was later revoked in 1911, which was then protested by the Muslims.

³⁷⁷ In Egypt, he encountered two journals: Jurji Zaydan's *Al-Hilāl* (launched 1892) and Rashid Rida's *Al-Manār* (launched 1898), and two Egyptian nationalist visions: Muhammad Abduh's party *Ḥizbul Ummah* promoting a softer nationalism willing to use British colonialism to its advantage, and Mustapha Kamil's *Ḥizbul Waṭan* advocating an uncompromising nationalism seeking immediate British ouster. There is controversy whether Azad ever made these travels at all given the questionable dates he himself cites, and the lack of confirmation through external sources. Gail Minault, "The Elusive Maulana: Reflections on Writing Azad's Biography," in *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, 21-22.

³⁷⁸ Hameed, *Maulana Azad*, 40-41.

³⁷⁹ Azad, "Al-Hilāl kī politikal ta'lim," *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 8 (1912): 9.

³⁸⁰ Azad, "Al-hilāl ke maqāsid aur politikal ta'lim kī nisbat aik khaṭ aur uskā javāb," *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 9 (1912): 6.

other Indians were waging anti-colonial struggles. Azad's mastery of Urdu rhetoric, Persian verse, and Arabic texts; his flowery and hyperbolic prose, his novel religious rhetoric and rational presentation of ideas made the journal an instant sensation.³⁸¹ In two years' time, the journal's discourse proved too unpalatable for the colonial state, and it shut down *Al-Hilāl* in November 1914. Azad revived the journal under a different title, *Al-Balāgh* (The message), in 1915, but this too was shut down in March 1916. Thereafter, Azad was exiled from the provinces of Punjab, Delhi, United Provinces, and Bengal. He was eventually interned in Ranchi (in Bihar province) until January 1920.³⁸² Nearly four years of Azad's journalism proved decisive for invigorating the theopolitical imagination of Indian Muslims. In about seven years' time from the launch of *Al-Hilāl*, Azad's theopolitical discourse paved the way for an unprecedented mass movement in the region, the Khilāfat Movement, and the entry of the *'ulamā* in politics.³⁸³

Soon after *Al-Hilāl*'s launch, Azad went on the offensive against Khan's Aligarh movement, which he saw as suffering from a colonized imagination. At this time, the campaign for an accredited Muslim University spearheaded by the affiliates of Aligarh

³⁸¹ As Hameed explains, "Al Hilal's appeal to the Muslims of Calcutta was instant. The combination of style and subject-matter was electrifying. Erudition combined with clarity of thought and mastery of language made a formidable combination for an age that loved rhetoric." Hameed, *Maulana Azad*, 53. In a similar vein, Mushirul Hasan notes that the potency of Azad's pen "took educated Muslims by storm with its eloquence and fervor" who were, thereby, "'set on fire by his passionate words,' recalled Sulaiman Nadwi." Mushirul Hasan, "Secular and Communitarian Representations of Indian Nationalism: Ideology and Praxis of Azad and Mohamed Ali," in *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, 79.

³⁸² *Al-Hilāl* was revived in 1927, with the first issue published on June 10th, and lasted until December of the same year. Hameed, *Maulana Azad*, 137.

³⁸³ Francis Robinson captures the gist of the early Azad's influence and activities: "he was for a time India's leading Muslim journalist; the chief rationalizer of India [sic.] Muslim support for the Turkish Khilafat [the Ottoman Caliphate]; throughout his political life a fierce opponent of communalism and a distinguished servant of Indian nationalism...." Francis Robinson, review of *Abul Kalam Azad*, 613.

was on the move.³⁸⁴ In the twenty years after Khan's death, Azad admits that the Muslim University cause had taken on the character of a national campaign for Muslims as it mobilized and awakened Muslims far and wide, and no sector among the Muslims remained immune from its effects—just another instance of how Khan's ideas continued to bring Muslims together as a *qaum*.³⁸⁵ Azad's lament was that as the campaign came to naught—because the British government repeatedly refused to grant it a university status—valuable assets of time, efforts, and finances were lost at a time when the caravan bells of nationalism tolled loudly everywhere, and while the Ottoman Empire was in the midst of terrible ordeals.³⁸⁶ He found the University campaign a distraction handed to the Muslims by the British to keep them from addressing national issues.³⁸⁷ Meanwhile, Azad noted, the Hindus pressed on in fighting for India's liberation, and it was a shame that Muslims considered participation in the freedom struggle against their interests.³⁸⁸ In his estimation, the reason for Muslim apathy was that, under Khan's influence, they had been reduced to begging from and pandering to the British government.³⁸⁹ For Azad it was clear that the real concern for the Muslims should be fighting for national rights (*mulkā ḥuqūq*) and for Muslims' share in the government (*ḥukūmat main ḥiṣṣah*).³⁹⁰

Following the collapse of the Khilāfat Movement in 1922 (discussed below), Azad exited the theater of Islamic nationalism. Instead, he aligned himself with Gandhi

³⁸⁴ Gail Minault and David Lelyveld, "The Campaign for a Muslim University, 1898-1920," *Modern Asian Studies* 8, no. 2 (1974): 145–89.

³⁸⁵ Azad, "Ṣubḥ-i 'umīd," *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 11 (1912): 6.

³⁸⁶ Azad, "Shazarāt," *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 16-17 (1912): 2-3.

³⁸⁷ Azad, "Nashah-yi shām kī niṣf shab yā muslim univarsiṭī," *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 8 (1912): 7-9.

³⁸⁸ Azad, 8.

³⁸⁹ Azad, "Muslim univarsiṭī," *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 4 (1912): 3.

³⁹⁰ Azad, "Nashah-yi shām," 8.

and the INC. This political realignment was reflected in his semantics, which no longer invoked theology, but took recourse to a more rational and pragmatic discourse, although he continued to advocate for Muslims' interests as a leader of the INC. Azad consistently opposed the Pakistan Movement, and true to his commitment, remained in India post Partition. After the Partition, he was appointed India's first minister of education and remained in that position until his death in 1958.

JAM'IIYATUL 'ULAMĀ HIND

In the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising, the Muslims responded in two very different ways to their collective crisis. One response was that of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Aligarh movement of modernization, institutionally represented by Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (founded 1875) in the northern city of Aligarh. The second response was that of the more traditionalist Deoband school, institutionally represented by the Deoband Seminary (founded 1866) in the northern town of Deoband. The Seminary aimed to train religious scholars ('*ulamā*, sing. '*ālim*) in the traditional Sunni Islamic sciences centered on scriptural, Prophetic, and hagiographical authority (*taqlīd*).³⁹¹ The Deoband brand

³⁹¹ The Deoband Seminary (*madrasah*) is considered reformist partly due to its institutional organization that included some novel elements, which included a separate building, administrative division of labor, standardized curriculum, matriculation process, student hostels, library, salaried teachers, and public funding model intended to keep the Seminary independent of the colonial government's patronage and influence. For an overview of Deoband's historical and cultural background, see Nathan Spannaus, "Darul Uloom Deoband and South Asia Islam," in *Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change, Volume 1*, ed. Masooda Bano (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 217-43. A full study was carried out by Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982). For a more recent account, see Ebrahim Moosa, *What Is a Madrasa?* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015). Among the Seminary's reformist framework was to move the study of Islam away from rational subjects, such as logic and philosophy, toward an emphasis on Islamic law and Islam's foundational texts, especially the *ḥadīṣ* (statements of Prophet Muhammad). In addition, the Seminary sought to reform, more than any other existing traditional school, the lives of the ordinary Muslims,

exemplified the opposite pole of modernization. They resisted all personal manifestations of the modern culture having to do with dress, etiquettes, language, and the like. In this imagination, whatever resembled the West or was associated with a non-Muslim religion was subject to rejection. In relation to the role of religion, Ingram suggests that the Deoband leadership took deliberate advantage of the British demarcation of religion within the private sphere so as to keep the colonial state from interfering in its educational domain by declaring it a ‘religious’ enterprise. In so doing, Deoband, like Khan, legitimized or strategically accepted modernity’s secular/religious divide.³⁹² In this sense, Deoband’s acceptance of religion/secular divide seems to be instrumental. That is, they did not truly believe in the divide, but found it an expedient strategy to avoid colonial government’s scrutiny. The evidence of this instrumentality lies in the fact that the Deobandi *‘ulamā* remained apolitical until they found it advantageous to jump in the political fray in 1919. We will discover below that after the Partition, they vacated the political arena again in order to devote themselves to the matters of private religiosity.

During the First World War, the Turkish-Muslim Ottoman Empire found itself

that is, its agenda was much more consciously public in scope. Moreover, the Deoband school has far surpassed their sectarian competitors—the Ahl-i Ḥadis, the Barelvīs, and the Nadvatul ‘Ulamā—in terms of institutional franchise, production of scholars, and intellectual output. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Ashraf ‘Ali Thanawi: Islam in Modern South Asia* (Oneworld Publications, 2008), 2-4, and 10-11.

³⁹² Brannon D. Ingram, “‘Modern’ Madrasa: Deoband and Colonial Secularity,” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 44, no. 3 (2019): 206–25. Ingram’s reading is supported by Mushir-ul-Haqq who relates that the Deoband’s precursors in the post-Uprising period sought to convince the colonial government of their disinterest in politics. For example, one Muḥammad Aḥmad explained to the Lieutenant Governor of the time that the *‘ulamā* were neither patriots (*vaṭan parast*), nor nationalist (*qaum parast*), but only the worshippers of God. Mushir-ul-Haqq, “Religion and Politics in Muslim India, 1857-1947: A Study of the Political Ideas of the Indian Nationalist ‘Ulama with Special Reference to Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad, the Famous Indian Nationalist Muslim” (PhD diss., McGill University, 1967), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/302322083/>, 26-27.

fighting the British on the side of the Allies. The office of the Caliphate in Turkey was considered by many Muslims the central spiritual and political seat of the global Muslim community. The prospects of the Ottoman defeat, its dismemberment at the hands of the Allies, and the falling of the sacred sites in the cities of Mecca and Medina—then under Ottoman control—in the possession of non-Muslims created a situation too discomfiting and urgent to be ignored by Indian Muslims. In response, the *'ulamā* and the Muslim leaders responded by launching the Khilāfat (Caliphate) Movement to pressure the British toward guaranteeing the integrity of the Ottoman territories and the protection of Muslim sacred sites (the Movement is discussed below). The situation impressed upon the *'ulamā* the need to organize themselves on a single platform, thereby, leading to the formation of the JUH in November 1919, just as the Khilāfat Movement got underway.

While Azad himself was not a graduate of the Deoband school, he shared his religious commitments and imagination with the scholarly class, and closely collaborated with the JUH from 1919 until around 1924. As far as Azad was concerned, the *'ulamā*'s entry in politics was the result of the call raised in *Al-Hilāl*, which, he notes, sought to achieve similar objectives that the JUH adopted later.³⁹³ While the JUH on the whole did not validate or deny Azad's claim, it is supported by their leader Maḥmūd Ḥasan's admission that "[w]e [the *'ulamā*] were sleeping, Āzād has roused us from our slumber."³⁹⁴ This frank admission hints at the limitations of a purely religious

³⁹³ Speaking to a JUH convention in 1921, Azad remarked that a unique and distinct call for the revival of Islam in recent history was that of *Al-Hilāl*, and that the JUH was the answer to the question, fulfillment of his dreams, and the divine acceptance of his pleas. Abul Kalam Azad, *Khuṭbāt-i Āzād* (Lahore: Maktabah Jamal, 2010), 83-84.

³⁹⁴ Mushir-ul-Haqq, "Religion and Politics," 67.

imagination in responding to the modern situation without first being guided by a non-traditional imagination. Azad's background, experiences, and trajectory were peculiar and unconventional compared to an average Deobandi scholar. He understood better the dynamics of the modern world, hence, was able to develop a hermeneutic that tied traditional theology with modern politics. Moreover, in this first phase of his trajectory, Azad's own imagination was largely traditional, and he could not imagine non-religious ways of engaging in politics. Azad also understood the limitations of the Muslim public which could not be moved *en masse* except through religious appeal and sanction. Azad's wakeup call to the *'ulamā* and the public took the form political theology.

POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Azad on Islamic Ultimacy and Independent Political Action

Azad begins to lay out his political theology in the early issues of *Al-Hilāl*. He begins with the basic tenets of Islamic theology that the monotheistic God of Islam is "singular and unrivaled" (*waḥdahū lā sharīka lahū*) in His essence (*zāt*) and attributes (*ṣifāt*); the Qur'an is "singular and unrivaled" in its perfection (*kamāl*) and compendiousness (*jāmi'iyat*); while Prophet Muhammad remains "singular and unrivaled" in the perfection of his humanity, worship (*kamāl-i insāniyat o ta'abbud*), and the abilities of prophethood and reform (*qavā-i nubuvvat o īslāh*).³⁹⁵ It then follows for Azad that as believers in the unrivaled God, the Qur'an, and Prophet, Muslims too must imbibe in themselves "singular and unrivaled" characteristics so that all other *qaums* (*qaumain*) follow in their footsteps. Accordingly, Azad states, if there be any *qaum*

³⁹⁵ Azad, "Al-qistāsul mustaqīm," *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 13 (1912): 7.

possessing any good idea, truth, or practice, it is possessed by Muslims to the highest degree, and if not found therewith, then its claim to goodness is rendered untenable. For this reason, Azad laments, it is a matter of misfortune (*badbakhtī*) for Muslims that they take as their model other *qaums* in all fields of life, be it education, ethics, culture, or politics.³⁹⁶ Similarly, Azad claims that all kinds of excellence (*faḍā'il*), goodness (*maḥāsīn*), superiority ('*uluv*), and honor (*sharf*) issue forth from the true wellspring (*aṣṭī manba'*) of monotheism (*tauḥīd*). Consequently, monotheism makes one turn away from the submission and worship of all else other than God, thereby, breaking the bondage to rulership (*hukūmat*), family, lineage (*nasab*), customs (*rasm o rivāj*), and *qaumī* distinction (*tamīz-i qaum*).³⁹⁷

Azad explicitly drew out the implications of his theological discourse for interfaith politics in response to the question whether he was advising Muslims to follow the Hindu lead in politics? Azad answered by emphasizing to his readers that as the party of God it did not befit them to prostrate before any non-Muslim group or leadership. Islam was too lofty to follow Hindus or any other religious community. As the best community (*khayr-i umam*)—a Qur'anic expression—Muslims were crowned as God's representatives and vicegerents (*niyābat aur khilāfat*), hence, were obligated to inculcate in themselves loftiness (*bulandī*), self-respect (*khuddārī*), power (*tāqat*), and firmness (*istiḥkām*).³⁹⁸ Azad thus translated Islamic ultimacy in political terms as Muslims' self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and the need for independent political action. This

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Azad, "Al-ḥurriyah fil islām," *Al-Hilāl* 2, no. 25 (1913): 12.

³⁹⁸ Azad, "Al-hilāl ke maqāṣid," *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 9 (1912): 6-8.

interpretation of Islamic ultimacy will continue to reverberate throughout the formative period of Islamic nationalism.

Theological ultimacy for Azad also carries implications for the desecularization of politics, for the perfection implied in the “singular and unrivaled” religion can leave nothing outside its sphere of influence. Articulating his reading of the new, revivalist historiography, Azad notes that whereas in the history of Islam, Muslims separated the religious and the worldly (*dīn aur dunyā*), creating two distinct authorities, this was in fact a “satanic idea” that shatters the divinely instituted unity of authority and leadership. Azad considers such a division nothing short of disbelief (*kufr*) because in Islam, worldly engagement is not different than religious activity (*dīn*), “but that religion (*dīn*) is worldly engagement’s practical name (*balke dīn dunyā hī kā ‘amalī nām hai*).”³⁹⁹ Stated differently, the world provides the context for human engagement, and Islam is one model for such an engagement. Azad proceeds to announce that two things are decisive for the life of *qaum*: politics and religion (*mazhab*), and whereas other communities

³⁹⁹ Azad, “Shazarāt,” *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 14 (1912): 2. While the idea of inseparability of religion and politics might sound strange to a modern imagination, Azad’s articulation echoes the longstanding political principle of Islam. In explaining the Islamic political differential to a Western audience, Patricia Crone emphasizes that for Muslims the question of the *origins* of government or state was misplaced as that question was settled in its monotheistic theology: government, sovereignty, authority, or the power to legislate belongs to God who delegates some such responsibilities to prophets, from whose authority the Muslim community derives its authority. “What is so striking about early Muslim society is precisely that it started out without such a [secular] separation.....there was no religious community separate from the politically organized society, and no ecclesiastical hierarchy separate from the political agency.” Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 15. Jackson further explains that in later history, once a *de facto* bifurcation of religious and political authority in fact appeared, Sunni or Shi’i theorists, all the while accommodating the situation, did not on the whole articulate a theoretical principle of two separate realms constituted by separate authority performing separate functions. For example, just as the office of the caliphate seemed in most jeopardy, theorists like Ibn Taymiyyah insisted on the necessary mutuality of religion and politics. Roy Jackson, “Authority,” in Gerhard Bowering, ed., *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 25-36.

might find the principle of collective vitality in nationality, homeland, and other such distinctions, Muslims find it in religion alone.⁴⁰⁰ He thus recommends Muslims to base their politics on Islam, which is unsusceptible to change, rooted as it is in a firm creed (*muḥkam ‘aqīdah*), and not in external causes.⁴⁰¹

It follows in view of the preceding reasoning that the imperative of Muslim independence rooted in theology should also extend to nationalism. Azad thus notes that whereas Hindus animate themselves by inculcating purely a national or political spirit,

Muslims possess no *qaumiyyat* rooted in some specific race or ancestry, or some territorial division.... Their whole business rests with God. Hence, until they declare religion (*mazhab*) as the basis of all their actions, they will neither be able to animate in themselves the spirit of *qaumiyyat*, nor unify their scattered elements. Today, whatever potency (*ta’sīr*) is carried in [the words] ‘*qaum*’ and ‘*vaṭan*’ [homeland] for others, for Muslims it is to be found only in [the words] ‘*islām*’ or ‘God.’ In Europe, a person may be able to animate a thousand hearts by invoking the single word ‘nation,’ but if you [Muslims] possess a word comparable to it, it is ‘*islām*’ or ‘God.’⁴⁰²

Azad underscores the failure of the Muslim University cause and the resulting disappointment with the colonial government as a moment of reassessing and reorienting Muslim politics. He recommends resetting Muslim politics upon four principles. First, the source all Muslim inspiration and action lies in their religion. Second, the Qur’anic teaching encompasses more than matters of worship as it is a consummate (*kāmil o akmal*) paradigm of success (*qānūn-i falāḥ*) so that all Muslim policies and actions that deviate from Qur’anic teachings will lead away from success (*fauz o falāḥ*). Third, in all matters, Muslims must prostrate before God, and reject submission to (political) idols

⁴⁰⁰ Azad, “Al-qistāsul mustaqīm,” *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 15 (October 1912): 6.

⁴⁰¹ Azad, “Al-qistāsul mustaqīm,” *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 16-17 (November 1912): 7.

⁴⁰² Azad, “Al-qistāsul mustaqīm,” *Al-Hilāl* 1, no. 15 (1912): 7.

(*aṣṅām o tavāghīṭ*). Fourth, Muslims should adopt Islam as their ultimate objective (*naṣabul ‘ain*).⁴⁰³ Thus, the forceful schooling of the Muslim public in viewing the world solely in terms of religion, the composite nationalist unwittingly partitioned the Muslim imagination toward thinking of Muslims and Hindus as two distinct nations.

The JUH and the Desecularization of Islam

Some seven years after *Al-Hilāl*'s launch, as the ‘*ulamā* jumped into politics to lead the Khilāfat Movement, they marshaled religious arguments in justifying their involvement. Accordingly, speaking to an early gathering of the JUH in 1920, the head of the Deoband scholars and the leader of the JUH Maḥmūd Ḥasan declared that “Islam is not a name of [a religion of] worship alone, rather [it is] a *perfect and complete (kāmil o mukammal) system* addressing all the religious, cultural, moral, [and] political necessities (*zarūraton*).”⁴⁰⁴ Hence, those Muslims who deem it sufficient to confine their Islam to private practice were in fact “a blemish on Islam.” For they had confined their duties to prayer and fasting only, even though they were also responsible for attaining Islam’s dignity (‘*izzat*), and preserving its might and grandeur (*shān o shaukat*).⁴⁰⁵ ‘*Izzat* (dignity) was also an important concern for Khan, but its object was *qaum*, whereas Ḥasan’s concern mainly lies with Islam’s *religious* dignity. The gist of Ḥasan’s exhortation is that the threats against Islam do not so much emerge from the private sphere, but from the

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Emphasis added. For the exposition of the JUH’s leaders, with the exception of Madani’s discourse, I will reference Parvin Rozina, ed., *Jam ‘iyyatul ‘Ulamā Hind: Dastāvezāt-i Markazī Ijlās Hā’-yi ‘ām, 1919-1945*, 2 vols. (Islamabad, Pakistan: National Institute of Historical & Cultural Research, 1980) as my main primary text, which is a collection of welcome addresses and presidential addresses delivered at the annual conventions of the JUH.

⁴⁰⁵ Maḥmūd Ḥasan, “Presidential Address: Second Convention, November 19-20, 1920, Delhi,” in *Dastāvezāt*, 1:71.

arena of politics. Hence, it is only through political engagement that Islam can be protected. This seems to indicate that, on the one hand, it was state intervention that drew the *'ulamā* into politics, and, on the other hand, politics was a conditional engagement and not a fundamental undertaking for the JUH.

Along the same lines as Ḥasan, Ḥabībūr Raḥmān equates the JUH's objective with the "religious guidance (*mazhabī rahnumā'ī*)" of the Muslims. However, he clarifies, "religious guidance" entails not only worship (*'ibādāt*) and sociocultural ethics (*mu'āmalāt*), but also civic planning (*tanzīm-i bilād*), and preserving Muslim states (*harāsat-i mamālik-i islamiyyah*). God has ordained regulations (*aḥkām*) for all occasions (*her mauqī' ke li'ye*), and so no aspect of Muslim life remains free from religious influence. This is evident, he reasons, in that religious law covers not only matters of ritual worship, but also addresses matters pertaining to war, prisoners of war, spoils, regulations, treaties, and the like, all of which concern politics (*siyāsat-i 'ālam*) and state organization (*niẓām-i mamālik*).⁴⁰⁶ In justifying the *'ulamā*'s entry into politics, Raḥmān argues that as Indian Muslims of necessity associate with non-Muslims and deal with the government, the Muslim public was in need of the *'ulamā*'s guidance as much in political and worldly affairs as in matters of religion.⁴⁰⁷

Muḥammad Sajjād partly blames the *'ulamā* for the woeful conditions of the Muslim world after the Prophet's generation. For while the *'ulamā* had performed a great service in preserving the knowledge of traditional Islamic sciences, and ensuring their

⁴⁰⁶ Ḥabībūr Raḥmān, "Presidential Address: Fourth Convention, December 24-26, 1922, Goa in *Dastāvezāt*, 1:177.

⁴⁰⁷ Ḥabībūr Raḥmān, 1:178.

own spiritual fortification, they did not on the whole perform their political duty adequately. As a result, while a great many details have been worked out about the minutiae of personal law, this has come at the expense of corresponding developments in the matters of an Islamic (political) order (*islāmī nizām*). He laments that the ‘*ulamā*’ thought of politics as beneath them. However, it must be born in mind that God and the Prophet have placed the leadership of Muslims in the hands of the ‘*ulamā*’, and such leadership extends to all aspects of life. Sajjād argues that as *politics was intrinsic to religion* (*siyāsat ‘ayn dīn hai*), it was incumbent on the ‘*ulamā*’ to fulfill their religious obligation by entering the political arena.⁴⁰⁸

Sajjād’s enunciation that the ‘*ulamā*’ thought of politics as beneath them also indicates that the ‘*ulamā*’ had been genuinely secularized in their thinking, and did not in fact always subscribe to the political theology they were now articulating in the twentieth century. Be that as it may, the political theology that was now being articulated by the JUH amounted to the desecularization of politics. In the immediate context of the First World War and the Ottoman Caliphate’s involvement in it, political desecularization took the form of the Khilāfat Movement.

THE SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS OF KHILĀFAT

Considering Sajjād’s statement that the Muslim tradition bequeathed only a handful of political theories,⁴⁰⁹ Azad’s political theology must be counted among the first

⁴⁰⁸ Abul Muḥāsīn Muḥammad Sajjād, “Presidential Address: Sixth Convention, Special Session, January 11-13, 1925, Muradabad,” in *Dastāvezāt*, 258-264.

⁴⁰⁹ Notable among classical political theorists was Abul Ḥasan al-Māwardī’s *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sulṭāniyyah* in the eleventh-century, and in recent times, Rashid Rida’s work on the caliphate. Sajjād, *Dastāvezāt*, 1:258-260.

modern attempts of its kind. An important contribution of Azad in this regard was his treatise *Mas‘alah-yi Khilāfat (The Caliphate Question)* written for and orally delivered at the Bengal Khilafat Conference in October 1920 at Calcutta, at the height of the Khilāfat Movement.⁴¹⁰ It has been described as a “most comprehensive statement of the Indian Muslims’ theoretical position on the Khilafat to date.”⁴¹¹ As such, it was also the first comprehensive articulation of the revivalist historiography, which reevaluates Muslim history in terms of the pre-secular or unfragmented integrity of Muslim life.⁴¹² In relation to nationalism, the effect of the discourse on *khilāfat* served to articulate the terms of Muslims’ political emancipation. In so doing, it also unwittingly advanced another argument for distinguishing Muslim imagination and interests against those of Hindus.

Azad's Theory of Khilāfat and the Revivalist Historiography

Azad begins *Mas‘alah-yi Khilāfat* by scrutinizing the semantics of the relevant Arabic terms in the Qur'an. He notes that *khilāfah* means vicegerency (*niyābat*) and representation (*qā'immaqāmī*, literally, the act of ‘standing in place of another’). Azad observes that the verbal derivatives of *kh-l-f* are employed in the Qur'an in association with the expressions *istikhlāf fil arḍ* (‘making a successor or inheritor in the earth’) and *tamakkun fil arḍ* (‘to be firmly established, or to have dominion over’).⁴¹³ He interprets these Qur'anic expressions to mean *terrestrial rule* and *national dominion* (*zamīn kī*

⁴¹⁰ The Ateqad edition before me contains a later revised version in which Azad added additional sections. Abul Kalam Azad, *Mas‘alah-yi Khilāfat* (New Delhi: Ateqad, 1987).

⁴¹¹ Gail Minault, *The Khilāfat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 93-94.

⁴¹² An example of this historiography is Sayyid Abul A‘lā Maududi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*.

⁴¹³ The expressions appear in Qur’an 24:55, and 6:6 and 22:41.

qaumī ‘azmat o riyāsat aur qaumon aur mulkon ki hukūmat o salṭanat).⁴¹⁴ The objective behind such a rule, Azad explains, is the realization of divinely-ordained justice and peace.⁴¹⁵ Azad’s hermeneutic aim in this reading is to discover a theological basis for the justification of a political and a rational reading of *khilāfat*.

Toward a rational explication of *khilāfat* as an institution, Azad takes recourse to natural philosophy. Speaking of the law of centralization (*qānūn-i markaz*, ‘the law of the center,’ or *qānūn-i advār*, ‘the law of cycles’), he adverts to the presence and operation of centers throughout the universe, whether exemplified by the sun in the solar system, the roots in a tree, or the heart in a human. The general principle being that all things connect to, depend on, and are governed by some existential center (*markazī vujūd*).⁴¹⁶ In Islam, Azad observes, the same function was performed by the Prophets in history, monotheism in theology, and the Arabian peninsula housing the sacred sites in Muslim geography. The centrality of the sacred symbols of Mecca and the Sacred Mosque located there is greatly emphasized by Azad as they not only symbolize the sacred beyond the world, but also symbolize Islamic universalism and pan-Islamism. Explaining the “humanistic and universalist” scope of Azad’s theory, Willis states that Mecca represents “a universal sanctuary for all of humanity” and “the axis of the spiritual world that called all of humanity to its center.”⁴¹⁷ Willis also highlights Azad’s cosmopolitanism imagined around the city of Mecca as symbolizing the potential unity of all humanity, a spiritual-

⁴¹⁴ Azad, *Mas‘alah-yi Khilāfat*, 5-6.

⁴¹⁵ Azad, 6-7.

⁴¹⁶ Azad, 33-35.

⁴¹⁷ John Willis, “Debating the Caliphate: Islam and Nation in the Work of Rashid Rida and Abul Kalam Azad,” *The International History Review* 32, no. 4 (December 2010), 726.

geographical and Islamically-rooted universalism that offers an alternative to the modern universalism of abstract, liberal reason.⁴¹⁸ Elevating the universality of Mecca served Azad's immediate pan-Islamic purpose of connecting Islamic ultimacy with the Ottoman Caliphate.

Azad proceeds to note that the loss or weakening of Islam's various centers translates into its fragmentation and weakening. This is the reason why Islam abhors dispersion, fragmentation, and division (*ashtāt, intishār, tafriq*), and instead sets great store by concord, collectivity, and organization (*'i'tilāf, ijtimā'*, and *jamā'ah*).⁴¹⁹ From this insight, Azad derives a sociological principle that in the Qur'anic perspective, the individuals have meaning only within the collective as it is only through their cooperation (*ijtimā' o ta'līf se*) that the collective organization (*ijtimā'-i hai'at*) comes into being.⁴²⁰

In returning to the experience of first Muslim generation, Azad further laid out the revivalist historiography. He mentions that the Prophet was the center of concentration of all spiritual, cultural, and political forces. He was at once a legislator (*muqannin*), founder of an *ummat* (the global Muslim community), ruler over dominions (*mulkon k̄ā ḥākim*), and a sovereign authority (*saltanat k̄ā mālik*).⁴²¹ During the reigns of the first four Caliphs (following the Prophet's death), the Muslim world continued to enjoy a collective unity owing to the institutional organization centered upon the office of the *khilāfat/khalīfah*. This unity began to shatter thereafter—owing to the Great

⁴¹⁸ John Willis, "Azad's Mecca: On the Limits of Indian Ocean Cosmopolitanism," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, no. 3 (2014): 574–581."

⁴¹⁹ Azad, *Mas'alah-yi Khilāfat*, 21-23.

⁴²⁰ Azad, 23.

⁴²¹ Azad, 27.

Tribulation—giving way to political and intellectual discords, which later culminated into a threefold institutional fragmentation as political authority came to rest with the *khalīfah*, spiritual authority with the mystics (Sufis), and intellectual and legal authority with the scholars.⁴²² It then follows for Azad that to recover the lost integrity of Muslim life and the unity of the Muslim world, the universal law of centralization should be applied in modern times, for which purpose the institution of the *khilāfat* must be restored to its original, central function of enforcing Islam in society.⁴²³ After a long foray into the legal technicalities of the rightful modern contenders for the office of the caliph, and recounting the political fortunes and misfortunes of the caliphate throughout history, Azad argues for the Ottomans as the only viable contenders for the role during his time.⁴²⁴

The following year (1921), Azad delivered the presidential address at the JUH's Third Convention. In this address, Azad drives home the same points as in the Calcutta address. He emphasizes that the *sharī'at* (Islamic law, in Arabic *sharī'ah*) is the last and consummate code from God to humanity. It entertains no division between religion and secular life, guarantees happiness and guidance, and along with the Qur'an and Prophetic example, constitutes the basis of Muslim political, intellectual, moral, national, and cultural life.⁴²⁵ It then follows logically that the true basis of Muslim nationality (*qaumiyyat-i ṣādiqah*) is the knowledge and practice of *sharī'at*.⁴²⁶ He goes on to warn

⁴²² Azad, 26-32.

⁴²³ Azad, *Mas'alah-yi Khilāfat*, 34-40; and *Qur'ān kā Qānūn-i 'Urūj o Zavāl* (New Delhi: Areeb, 2017), 66-82.

⁴²⁴ Azad, *Mas'alah-yi Khilāfat*, 204-212.

⁴²⁵ Azad, *Khuṭbāt-i Āzad*, 80.

⁴²⁶ Azad, 80-81.

that Islam abhors that Muslims remain isolated, fragmented, divided, or separated from one another (*furādā, mutafarriq, alag alag, tashattut*), and instead commends unity and cooperation (*mujtami', mu'talif, muttahid, aur nafs-i wāḥidah*). Accordingly, Indian Muslims can neither rectify their present condition, nor fulfill their *sharī'ahtic* obligations until they gather under a national center (*markaz-i qaumī*) led by a single leader (*aik amīr o qā'id*).⁴²⁷ For this very purpose, Azad pointed out, Islam has made incumbent the office of the *Khilāfat (mansab-i khilāfat)*.⁴²⁸

In its general framing, Azad's theory of *khilāfat* was nothing novel. Hardy traces Azad's historiography to the classical theory of the Caliphate developed to counter other theories during and after the Great Tribulation: "Thus, an idealized version of the 'constitutional' history of the Muslim community between 632 [when the Prophet died] and 661 [the beginning of the Umayyad dynasty]...formed the groundwork of the sunni theory of khilafat to which Muslims have remained emotionally attached, for all the adaptations and practical abandonments it has suffered."⁴²⁹ What is new in Azad's reading is, first of all, its immediate application to modern politics toward serving the pan-Islamic cause of the Khilāfat Movement. Second, Azad's commitment to India's independence led him to interpret *khilāfat* as tied to the cause of Indian independence, for

⁴²⁷ Azad, 94.

⁴²⁸ Azad, 94.

⁴²⁹ The classical theory of the caliphate developed in face of the Shī'ī criticism and alternative theory of caliphate as a prerogative of Prophet Muhammad's family through his daughter Fātimah and her husband, 'Alī, thereby, rejecting the first three caliphs; and the dangers of the Kharijite theory of declaring apostates the perpetrators of major sins. To counter these alternatives the Sunni 'ulamā offered their more moderate reading. Peter Hardy, *Partners in Freedom and True Muslims: The Political Thought of Some Muslim Scholars in British India 1912-1947* (Lund, Studentlitteratur, 1971), 9.

at this stage the composite nationalists looked to the Ottomans as the bulwark against British colonialism. Hence, Khilāfat Movement's mobilization of Muslims on a nationwide scale served to nationalize the *khilāfat* idea as a symbol of Islamic *qaumiyyat*, on the one hand, and as an ultimate political objective of political theology, on the other hand.⁴³⁰ *Khilāfat* thus came to symbolize the institutional terms in which Indian emancipation in general and Muslim emancipation in particular was imagined. Azad's theory of *khilāfat* was echoed by the JUH leadership.

The JUH and the Unity of the Spiritual and Political Authorities

In explaining the reality or essence (*ḥaqīqat*) of the term *khilāfat*, Ḥabībūr Raḥmān states that the *sharī'at* entails religious injunctions (*aḥkām-i dīn*) comprising the preservation of religion (*hirāsat-i dīn*), politics, global peace, perpetuating the system of *sharī'at*, preserving Islam's might and power (*shaukat o quvvat*), protection of Islamic countries, and to enforce the Islamic penal code. These obligations necessitate Muslims to appoint a political authority (*imām*) for their implementation. As this authority in fact represents the duties of the Prophetic mission, it is properly labeled (the office of the) *khalīfah*.⁴³¹ Raḥmān also emphasizes the need for *khalīfah*'s investiture with actual powers and authority (*ikhtiyārāt-i tāmm aur tasarrufāt-i 'ām o shāmil*) as a necessary condition for the functioning of the *khalīfah*'s office. For these reasons, he explains, *khilāfat* is but another name for *sulṭanat* (power, rule, authority). Moreover, Raḥmān

⁴³⁰ This historiography is reflected in the readings of Islamic history by the contemporary religiopolitical movements in Islam, like the Arab Muslim Brotherhood, the South Asian Jamā't-i Islāmī, and the Pakistani Tanẓīm-i Islāmī.

⁴³¹ Raḥmān, "Presidential Address," 1:162.

stresses, the Prophet made it amply clear that there should always be a single *khalīfah* governing all Muslims—an implicit polemic against the Arab contenders for the post-Ottoman Caliphate. Finally, it goes without saying for Raḥmān that if a *khalīfah* is to be invested with true authority, it necessitates that he must also be obeyed by all Muslims—such obedience implies enforcement of political authority, which would be unnecessary if the *khalīfah* were a mere spiritual figurehead.⁴³² The upshot of Raḥmān’s argument is that the *khilāfat* entails the unity of spiritual and political power office.⁴³³

In 1924, the Turkish nationalists abolished the Caliphate delivering a great blow to the Khilāfat Movement. However, the JUH continued to deliberate over the *khilāfat* problem, now in the complete absence of a material referent, when all that remained was a memory, signifying a painful loss of something sacred and existential. In his address at a JUH convention, Sulaymān Nadvī—who belonged the school of *Nadvatul ‘Ulamā*, situated slightly to the left of Deoband in engaging with modernity—stated that Islam requires a single religious leader (*mazhabī peshvā aur imām*) to rule over all the Muslims. In his *ummat*-wide capacity, such a leader functions as a point of unity (*rishtah-yi ittiḥād aur rābṭah-yi vaḥdat*) of the global Muslim community, and the protection and implementation of religious rites and injunctions. Adverting to the leader’s function in Muslim history, Nadvī points out that Islam historically developed as a union between religion and political rule (*salṭanat*). Its *imām* (spiritual leader) is its king. Its house of worship at once serves as a religious, political, legal, and justice center. The early

⁴³² Raḥmān, 1:168-169.

⁴³³ Raḥmān, 1:166-167.

Muslims' religious organization was not separate from their political organization. It is no wonder to Nadvī why the historical experience of the destruction of political stability also brought about religious chaos. For, absent political authority, no system remained to oversee religious endowments, look after mosques, fund seminaries and missionary activities, or to adjudicate sacred law. Nadvī finds it unfortunate that, influenced by Europe's secular ideals, Muslim leadership was now deluded in thinking that the unity of religion and politics had become an obstacle in the way of progress.⁴³⁴ He sees the Muslim world in an upheaval, and the cure in the office of the *khilāfat*. Painfully aware of the post-Ottoman context, Nadvī recommends each able Muslim country to first establish a *national khilāfat* locally. This is both ironic and realistic, for the symbol whose materialization in the pre-1924 context could only be imagined in unitary and global terms was now being imagined in terms of the national fragmentation of the *ummat*.

All in all, *khilāfat* for the composite nationalists turned into a sacred symbol as it symbolized the existential fulfillment of divine injunctions, the preservation of the Prophetic model of governance that integrated the spiritual and the political, and the *khilāfat*-discourse spelled out the institutional terms of Muslim emancipation. All the preceding arguments were partly enunciated to raise the Muslim public's awareness of the significance of the *khilāfat* and tie its fate with the fortunes of the Ottoman Caliphate. Intellectual discourse was, however, limited in its efficacy in exacting guarantees from the British Empire for preserving the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Political action was necessary and it took the form of the *Khilāfat* Movement.

⁴³⁴ Nadvī, 1:330-331.

The Pragmatics of the Khilāfat Movement

As the Muslim apprehensions about the fortunes of the Ottomans grew feverish, the need for urgent action led the Muslims to form the All-India Khilāfat Committee on March 20, 1919 in Bombay. The Committee consisted of Muslims from different classes and walks of life, committed to varying Islamic orientations, ranging from the traditionalist to the modernist,⁴³⁵ alluding to the extent and power of the *Khilāfat*'s appeal. Meanwhile, Gandhi was looking for a way to launch a mass mobilization of all Indians in pressuring the British to quit India, and in this he needed to enlist Muslim support toward portraying himself a national leader, and thus leaving the British no excuse to play the minority card against the demand for independence.⁴³⁶ The Muslims, in turn, needed a personality like Gandhi on their side to lend nationwide and international legitimacy to the *Khilāfat* cause. But, the *'ulamā* could not simply adopt the novel measures of noncooperation without religious sanctions. Hence, their leader at the time Maḥmūdul Ḥasan issued a *fatvā* (authoritative religious opinion) in favor of Gandhi's noncooperation, "calling on all Muslims to withdraw from government-supported educational institutions, resign from government jobs and return titles, and

⁴³⁵ The All-India Khilafat Committee's founding members included Mohammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, (*pir*) Ghulam Mujaddid Sarhandi, Sheikh Shaukat Ali Siddiqui, Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari, Jan Muhammad Junejo, Hasrat Mohani, Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari, Abul Kalam Azad and Hakim Ajmal Khan. Minault, 92.

⁴³⁶ Gandhi confessed to Muhammad Ali—a leader of the Khilāfat Movement imprisoned because of his political activities during the Movement—that his endeavor to secure Ali's release from prison was "quite selfish" as they shared "a common goal, and I want to utilize your services to the uttermost in order to reach that goal. In the proper solution of the Mohammedan question lies the realization of Swaraj (home rule)." Gandhi quoted in Hasan, in *Islam in the Subcontinent: Muslims in a Plural Society* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002), 125.

refrain from participating in the new councils set up by the constitution reforms.”⁴³⁷ In this way, Gandhi joined hands with the Khilāfat Movement and test his methods of nonviolence and noncooperation. The Khilāfat Movement proved historical for mobilizing Islam’s nationalesque mobilization.

The Movement was launched on March 30, 1919 with a citywide strike in Delhi, and then a nationwide strike on April 6th. The Khilāfat Movement surged ahead with a call for an all-India Khilāfat Day on October 17, 1919, observed mostly by Muslims with a general strike, fasting, and prayers. The day’s largest gatherings ranged between 20,000 in Madras in the south to 50,000 in Delhi in the north, with large meetings also observed in Bengal in the east.⁴³⁸ This was followed by two more similar Khilafat Day mobilizations on September 21, 1919 and March 19, 1920. In preparing the masses for this unprecedented mobilization, the modern instruments of civil disobedience were put to effective use, including newspapers, handbills, posters, speeches, marches, modern transportation, and the aforementioned techniques of noncooperation.⁴³⁹

As the Khilāfat Movement progressed, however, violence could not be kept at bay for long.⁴⁴⁰ Realizing the severity of the situation and his inability to control it, Gandhi

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Minault, *Khilafat Movement*, 77.

⁴³⁹ Minault, 96.

⁴⁴⁰ For example, in August 1921 the southern Mapilla (or, Moplah) Muslim peasants rebelled against their Hindu landlords as they were under the impression that the *Khilāfat* had been established in India with the implication that the power of their landlords over them was broken, or that the Muslims now had power in their hands. The conflict was, of course, partly rooted in socioeconomic grievances of the indebted poor peasants against their landlords, but it played itself out in religious terms given the clear-cut division of class-religion alignments. W. Kesler Jackson, “A Subcontinent’s Sunni Schism: The Deobandi-Barelvi Dynamic and the Creation of Modern South Asia” (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 2013), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1452173580?pq-origsite=summon>, 185. A notable incident in the north occurred at a small village of Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces

called off civil disobedience and noncooperation on February 5, 1922. He was soon arrested, along with many prominent Muslims leaders of the Movement, including Azad, which took a major wind current out of the Khilāfat Movement's sails. Many Muslims felt betrayed by Gandhi for his unilateral decision. Tensions between the two communities arose to unprecedented heights, leading to some of the worst violence between the two communities ever witnessed. In Azad's observation, reactionary mentality, sadness, neglect, dissension, and sectarianism prevailed.⁴⁴¹ Malik describes the outcome between the Muslim and Hindus as "a bitter and disillusioned separation—a separation so complete that the two nations agreed never again to collaborate with each other on any platform."⁴⁴²

Nonetheless, the Ottoman question remained alive for Muslims, and they pressed on with the Movement without Gandhi's support, insisting on Muslims' independent political action. However, to the bewilderment of many, the Turks delivered the greatest shock to the Muslims as the Turkish nationalists under the leadership of Mustapha Kemal first separated the political rule (*salṭanat*) from the office of the Caliph in 1922, deprecating the title to only a spiritual significance, and then delivered the final blow by abolishing even the nominal title of the Caliph in March 1924. The occasion was devastating for Muslims oblivious to Turkey's internal politics, and this included most of

region, where a standoff with the police on February 5, 1922 led the non-cooperation protestors storming a police station killing twenty-two police officers therein.

⁴⁴¹ Azad, *Khuṭbāt-i Āzad*, 156-157.

⁴⁴² Hafeez Malik, *Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1963), 237.

the JUH membership.⁴⁴³

The Khilāfat Movement also demonstrates, in Neville's terms, how sacred symbols can elicit powerful “cognitive articulations” (semantics), inspire tremendous “existential responses” (pragmatics), and give ultimate definition to the individual and the community. The Khilāfat Movement created a context that not only brought disparate Muslim groups together for the first time as a *qaum* in an emotionally charged atmosphere, which served to further bind the Indian Muslims together as a *qaum*, and to the *ummat* at large. Abdulmājid Daryābādī, a celebrated literary figure of the time who served as the president of the Khilāfat Committee for the Oudh province, captures the mood of the movement as follows:

The period of the Khilāfat Movement was a memorable one in the history of Indian Islam. It is difficult to paint a picture of the time for the one who has not witnessed it. There was an uncontrollable tumult (*be panāh haijān*), a storm (*tūfān*). Due to the enthusiasm of the moment, brother disassociated with brother, father from son, and son from father. The chants of ‘God is Great’ (*allāhu akbar*), and ‘Long live Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali [brothers and prominent leaders of the Movement] were being raised from every house.’⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴³ The JUH membership was so taken aback by the very thought of the Caliphate’s abolishment that when the early whispers and later the news of the Caliphate’s abolition reached them, they dismissed it as British propaganda. For Azad’s refusal, see Ali, “Azad’s Religio-Political Trajectory,” 111-112. Aijaz Ahmad considers the possibilities that might have made Azad either ignore or downplay the secularizing trends afoot in Turkey in early twentieth century, the precarious position of the promoter of pan-Islamism, Sultan Abdul Hamid; or, that Azad knew of the actual situation, but hoped that the internal Turkish conflicts would eventually resolve in favor of the Islamist elements; or that Azad was simply ignorant of the actual situation. Ahmad, “Azad’s Careers, 150-162. For JUH’s refusal, see Ḥabībūr Raḥmān, “Presidential Address,” 1:161. Some Arab responses to the abolishment showed similar denial. Hilal Mengüç, “The Egyptian Response to the Abolition of the Caliphate: A Press Survey,” *Cumhuriyet Tarihi Arastirmalari Dergisi* 15, no. 30 (2019): 109–33. The Khilāfat Movement activities carried on in some sense until 1938 with conferences taking place in 1931, 1933, and finally in 1938. Muḥammad Anvārul Ḥasan Sherkoṭī, *Ḥayāt-i ‘Usmanī* (Karachi: Dārul ‘Ulūm, 2014), 213-214.

⁴⁴⁴ ‘Abdulmājid Daryābādī, *Ḥakīmūl Ummat: Nuqūsh o Asarāt* (Lahore: Maktabah-yi Khāvar and Muḥammad ‘Alī Akāḍamī, 1967), 58.

Muhammad Ali himself observes in relation to the Khilāfat Movement that the “Muslim society in India presented a level of uniformity and the bitterest opponents of a generation ago stood shoulder to shoulder.”⁴⁴⁵ The intra-Muslim uniformity and unity was of an overtly religious nature: “the movement gave secular, Westernized leaders a kind of ‘Islamic’ [theologically self-aware and religiously charged] rather than only a ‘Muslim community’, or interest-based, identity.”⁴⁴⁶ In a more nationalist vein, witness a Muslim youth’s poignant recollection of the Movement:

It was the only time when we fully tasted the ecstasy of national unity around India’s independence....The supreme reality for us was that we were a united nation, and could stand by each other, shoulder to shoulder unto death. No one outside India can realize the sacred emotion which swept over all India by the mere fact of complete unity between the Muslem [sic] and the Hindu.⁴⁴⁷

These are only a few illustrations of how, on the one hand, the sacred symbols of Allah, the Prophet, the Qur'an, *khilāfat/khalīfah*, *qaum*, and *ummat* were translated (pragmatically) into content experience of unity, solidarity, and universal brotherhood; and how, on the other hand, the content experience of Islamic ultimacy reinforced the symbols it embodied. In the process, political theology desecularized not only the Muslim imagination and the public sphere, but also nationalized Islam. For the Khilāfat Movement, in cooperation with Gandhi’s Noncooperation Movement, also aimed at India’s national liberation. Gail Minault captures the gist of the Khilāfat Movement’s

⁴⁴⁵ Mushirul Hasan, “Mediating the External,” in *Islam in the Subcontinent*, 105.

⁴⁴⁶ Barbara D. Metcalf, “Reinventing Islamic Politics in Interwar India: The Clergy Commitment to ‘Composite Nationalism.’” in *Living Together Separately: Cultural India in History and Politics*, ed. Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 391.

⁴⁴⁷ Hasan and Jalil, *Jamia Millia Islamia*, 22. The commend was made to Halide Edib during her visit to the Jamia Millia Islamia in 1935.

effects in relation to nationalism:

In their drive to create a united Muslim constituency behind their own leadership, and in cooperation with the nationalists, the Ali brothers [Muhammad and Shaukat] sought to harness Indian Muslim religious sentiments by means of the Khilafat symbol. The Khilafat now symbolized freedom, whether religious or political; self-government thus became a sacred cause, and noncooperation a religious obligation.”⁴⁴⁸

Apart from securing India’s sovereignty from colonialism, the composite nationalists were also intent on securing Muslim autonomy over their religio-cultural affairs in India, hence, freedom from the possible interventions of the postcolonial Indian state. For this purpose, they developed the idea of an Indian Emirate.

The Indian Emirate and Religiocultural Autonomy

During the Khilāfat Movement, the composite nationalists resolved to establish a branch of the Ottoman Caliphate in India. The plan was called *‘imāratul hind* that proposed an Indian Emirate to be instituted under an *‘amīrul hind* (‘Indian Emir’), who, on the one hand, would owe allegiance to the Ottoman Caliph, govern the affairs of Indian Muslims according to the *sharī‘at*, and to whom all Indian Muslims would owe loyalty. On the other hand, the Emir would represent Muslims before the post-colonial Indian state, and enter into an agreement with the Indian government to demarcate the framework of Muslim governance under the Indian federation.⁴⁴⁹ The Emirate scheme did not come to fruition on a nationwide scale to represent all Muslims. However, a provincial Emirate was established in Bihar in 1920, and remained operative for several

⁴⁴⁸ Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, 91.

⁴⁴⁹ Papiya Ghosh, “Muttahidah Qaumiyyat in Aqalliat Bihar: The Imarat i Shariah, 1921-1947,” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 34, no. 1 (1997): 1–20.

years. The need for such a scheme became all the more dire after the fall of the Caliphate in 1924.

Azad was rumored to be one candidate to head the Emirate. There is reason to believe that Azad's disappointment with the failure of the *imārat*/*amīr* venture was a major reason for his decisive relenting of religiopolitical discourse. In Mushir-ul-Haqq's assessment, Azad's assumption of the office of the Emir threatened the *'ulamā*'s authority, and they were unwilling to accept as their leader someone outside their official ranks.⁴⁵⁰ Douglas points to the period of 1922-1923, which Azad spent in prison brooding over the past events, as Azad's transition from the Islamist phase to the secular phase.⁴⁵¹ The abolition of the Caliphate would have only added to Azad's disappointments. All in all, while the political theology and pragmatics of the Khilāfat Movement did not directly invoke Islamic *qaumiyyat*, it served to impress upon the Muslim imagination the separate nature and interests of Muslim politics. The whole Indian Emirate scheme was essentially a political partition of India along religious lines. It was designed to grant Muslims limited political sovereignty within India. However, the failure of the Emirate scheme forced the JUH to reevaluate their position in foregoing political sovereignty in favor of religiocultural autonomy.

COMPOSITE NATIONALISM

As Indian nationalism gained strength under the leadership of the INC, Muslims had to ascertain how to respond to it. For those who rejected the INC's vision of India

⁴⁵⁰ Mushir-ul-Haqq, "Religion and Politics," 132.

⁴⁵¹ The quotation is from Douglas in Hameed, *Maulana Azad*, 133.

had been supplied with arguments by Sayyid Ahmad Khan. As for those who opted to support the INC's vision of a united, secular India, like the composite nationalists, had to both contend with Khan's arguments and face the question of nationalism's religious legitimacy. Systematic justifications for a united India, or the one-nation theory, was furnished by Azad and Husain Ahmad Madani. This discourse was in stark contrast with earlier arguments for Muslims' independence and self-sufficiency in regard to political alliances.

Azad's Composite Nationalism

In finding a religious justification for composite nationalism, Azad looked to theology and Muslim history for concrete precedents. Speaking before the Khilāfat Committee in Agra in 1921, Azad argued that Muslims could not fulfill their true national obligations unless they united with the Hindus.⁴⁵² Such cooperation with non-Muslims was predicated upon Islamic principles. To begin with, Azad reminded his audience that the Qur'an instructs Muslims not to make common cause against those non-Muslims who assume no hostile posture toward Muslims, as was the case with the Hindus.

Looking to Muslim history, Azad points to a document known as the Treaty (or, Chart) of Medina (*mīthaq-i madīnah*) that Prophet Muhammad contracted with the Jewish tribes in the vicinity of Medina. The language of the Treaty declared the Muslim and the Jewish signatories as *ummaḥ wāḥidah* (one *ummat*), which Azad translates as "one nation." From this Azad derived the lesson that if the Prophet could form "one nation" with non-Muslims, so could Muslim Indians with the Hindus. Hence, the need of

⁴⁵² Azad, *Khuṭbāt-i Āzad*, 36.

the time was that Muslims and Hindus “should both together form a one Indian *qaum* and nation” (*donon mil kar Hindustān kī aik qaum aur neshan ban jā'in*).⁴⁵³ The expression makes *qaum* synonymous with *neshan* (the transliteration of the English ‘nation’). In Ghosh’s conclusion, composite nationalism is better described as the “‘covenantal theory of nationalism,’ involving an implied covenant between Hindus and Muslims against the British.”⁴⁵⁴ Azad’s reading of the Treaty was quite novel. As noted by Malik, “Azad’s rendition of the key phrase *ummah wāḥida* gives it a connotation that is different from any of those which are generally accepted.”⁴⁵⁵ Accordingly, Azad’s interpretation did not go unchallenged (see Maududi’s criticism in Chapter 5). Among the problems with Azad’s reading was the fact that the Treaty did not last too long. Jews were accused of violating the Treaty for siding with the Meccans in the battle of Badr. As a result, the Prophet declared war on the accused tribes, which led to their exile from Medina. Azad explained this away by noting that the expulsion of the Jews was by God’s Will, and that the geography of Arabia called Hijaz, which contained Mecca and Medina, enjoyed the special prerogative of being reserved for Muslims alone.

Azad next describes the process through which Hindus and Muslims came to form a single nation. Echoing some of Khan’s sentiments on shared Hindu-Muslim history, Azad states that “this whole shared reserve (*mushtarak sarmāyah*) [of Hindu-Muslim coexistence] is a treasure (*dolat*) of our composite nationality, and we do not wish to

⁴⁵³ Azad, 39.

⁴⁵⁴ Ghosh, “Muttahidah Qaumiyat,” 11. The term “covenantal theory of nationalism” is attributed to Paul Brass.

⁴⁵⁵ Hafeez Malik, “Abu‘l Kalām Āzād’s Theory of Nationalism,” *Muslim World* 53, no. 1 (1963): 38; and *Moslem Nationalism*, 272.

leave it to return to a period when this composite (*milt̄ jult̄*) life had not yet begun.”⁴⁵⁶ In addition,

[t]his shared life of ours spanning a thousand years has shaped us into the mold of composite nationality (*muttaḥidah qaumiyyat*). Such casts cannot be manufactured (artificially). They are made organically (*khud ba khud*) over centuries by nature’s hidden hand. This cast has now been made, and the stamp of fate has been impressed on it. Whether we like it or not, we have now become one Indian *qaum*, and an indivisible Indian nation. No artificial imagination of separation can create a duality out of our unity. We should content ourselves with the judgement of fate (*qudrat*), and should work on building our destiny (*qismat*).⁴⁵⁷

This statement in a sense undermines the whole idea of composite nationalism as it offer a natural explanation of Indian nationality, which, if true, obviates the need for elaborate sermons to convince both sides of what was organic and natural. Sermons were needed precisely because the Indian imagination had to be trained to see itself as a nation.

Moreover, the composite nationalist wish to carve out a separate enclave within India for Muslim religiocultural and political autonomy militates against the very idea of nationalism.

Nonetheless, the preceding exposition shows the broadening of Azad’s religious outlook toward accommodating the realities of Indian society. He continued on this path in further broadening his theological outlook. However, in this process he moved away from Islamic exceptionalism toward what I call his perennialism.

Azad's Two Perennialisms

In religious philosophy, perennialism is a school of philosophy of religion that asserts, in Robinsons’s expression, the “essential unity of all religions,” with different

⁴⁵⁶ Azad, *Khutbāt-i Āzad*, 219-220.

⁴⁵⁷ Azad, 220.

religious traditions understood as historical and cultural manifestations of the single Truth.⁴⁵⁸ As the school of perennialism emerged in the twentieth-century, Azad's theological outlook qualifies as proto-perennialist.

Interestingly, perennialism also applies to a classification of nationalism, one that denies the naturalness of nations as emerging out of kinship structures, but holds them to be of early human origins. In this sense, the later Azad's nationalism qualifies as perennialism of this sort. While the early Azad does offer scattered insights of a perennialist outlook, a full-fledged elaboration is found with the later Azad in his Qur'anic exegesis *Tarjumānul Qur'ān*, first begun in 1915 and finally published in 1931-1932, after having been written thrice over, due to confiscations and losses of manuscripts by the colonial government.⁴⁵⁹

In Azad's reading, a common set of religious principles have persisted in history,

⁴⁵⁸ The expression "essential unity of all religions" is Francis Robinson's description of Azad's (perennialist) theology, whereas the perennialists themselves are more likely to employ the 'transcendent unity of all religions' as in Frithjof Schuon's *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*. Robinson, review of *A Nationalist Conscience*, 609–619.

⁴⁵⁹ There is a question as to when Azad formulated this perennialism? Was it there at the outset at the launch of his public political career with the publication of *Al-Hilāl*, or was it a post-Khilāfat Movement development? Mushirul Hasan considers it a post-Khilāfat Movement development. Hasan, introduction to *Islam and Indian Nationalism*, 10-11. Gail Minault notices the lack of religious arguments championed during the *Al-Hilāl* (1912) in the Khilāfat Movement period. Minault, "The Elusive Maulana," 24-25. Ashraf Ali finds a continuity of religious discourse even in the later period: in Azad's "secular, post-pan-Islamic phase, too, the religious-ideological basis of Azad's politics and activities had to be found in the Qur'an. This necessitated a new exegesis, a new interpretation of the Book of God." Ali, "Azad's Religio-Political Trajectory," 113. A clue is found in his own recounting of the writing of his exegesis, *Tarjumānul Qur'ān*, where his perennialism is detailed. Azad made three attempts at writing the exegesis, the final attempt lasting spanning 1927 to 1930. Recounting the third attempt, Azad speaks of a difficulty, a writer's block, that kept him from embarking on the third iteration, the impasse was finally broken through a sudden insight. I suspect that insight to be the dawn of a more elaborate perennialism and its justification for and application to Indian nationalism. It is also possible that as Azad came in contact with Gandhi during the Khilāfat Movement, Gandhi's own proto-perennialist outlook on Hinduism might have inspired Azad to more diligently work out his perennialist insights.

and this alone constitutes essential religion (*haqīqī dīn*: true religion, *al-dīn*: the religion, and *al-islām*: the Islam). To be sure, the insight is original to the Qur'an,⁴⁶⁰ and later Sufi thought developed elaborate 'perennialist' outlooks. Azad's novelty lies in that he made his theological perennialism the basis of nationalism. Azad claims that all of God's Prophets, the recipients of special revelation, proclaimed the essential religion in demanding the worship of one God and righteous conduct (*īmān aur 'amal ṣāliḥ*).⁴⁶¹ It then follows for him that religious differences cannot be attributed to the essential religion, but to the secondary bases of the particular ways (*shara'*, or *minhāj*) and modes of worship (*nusuk*) followed by particular traditions.⁴⁶² In each tradition, such differences were introduced by later generations in overemphasizing the branches (the ways and modes) and ignoring or undermining the essential root.⁴⁶³ Consequently, all religions were one and true in their essence, and their differences artificial and artifices.⁴⁶⁴ This exegesis contrasts with the early Azad's Islamic exceptionalism as it no longer claims Islam to be singular and unrivaled, hence, carries the effect of downgrading Islam and Muslims from their previously articulated position of superiority.

Azad's perennialist philosophy points to a related anthropology (also inspired by the Qur'an),⁴⁶⁵ which provides a further pathway to legitimating composite nationalism.

⁴⁶⁰ For example, the Qur'an states, "Humankind was one people (*ummah*), then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed" (Qur'an 2:213). And, "And mankind was not but one people [by implication, on one religion], then they differed" (Qur'an 10:19).

⁴⁶¹ Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjūmānūl Qur'ān* (Lahore, Pakistan: Islami Akademi, 1976), 1:183.

⁴⁶² Azad, 1: 187.

⁴⁶³ Azad, 1: 189.

⁴⁶⁴ Azad, 1: 192-193.

⁴⁶⁵ For example, "Mankind was one single nation and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they

Azad notes that at its beginning all humanity was one, free from dissensions or conflicts. In time, the differences of color, language, nationality, and homeland were misappropriated toward instituting artificial, unholy divisions. If there is a way to restore human unity, it can only be accomplished on the basis of a single principle—stated by Prophet Muhammad—that all humans belong to God’s family (*‘ayāl*).⁴⁶⁶ That is, by the dint of their common creator, humans were all one in creation, fragmented by the assertions of non-ultimate differences. While the *Tarjumān* does not make explicit the philosophical connections with nationalism, it is obvious that this anthropology provides an Islamic basis for reducing religious tensions, promoting interfaith harmony, and advocating for Hindu-Muslim unity. In this background, Azad’s statement in a 1927 article “Islam and Nationalism,” written in his second phase, is brought into greater relief.

“Islam and Nationalism” was in part a response to the charge that Muslims cared more for pan-Islamism than Indian nationalism. Azad’s reply does not simply assert Muslims’ nationalist commitments, but criticizes nationalism itself as narrow and divisive. He presents nationalism as influenced by the specific European territorial-cultural realities, and driven by the sinister principle of European supremacism. In contrast to European trends, the world was fast changing in transition toward a larger framework of human association than hitherto imagined by nationalism, namely, that of human brotherhood, the very ideal that Islam laid out over a millennium ago, but could

differed; but the People of the Book after the clear Signs came to them did not differ among themselves except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace guided the believers to the truth concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guides whom He will to a path that is straight” (Qur’an 2:213).

⁴⁶⁶ Azad, 1:184.

not fully materialize.⁴⁶⁷ Hameed's observation is instructive that this particular discourse of Azad tallies with the (perennialist) discourse of his exegesis in the *Tarjumān*. In other words, Azad had more fully worked out the relation between perennialism and nationalism by 1927, while he was still working on his exegesis during his second phase. However, when exactly did he begin to think in this direction is hard to ascertain. In Willis's estimation, in his exegesis

Azad had abandoned the notion of the Islamic umma as a political community and instead emphasized it as a community of belief and right practice that was all the more powerful because it recognized the common origins of all faiths. His theology created common ground for Indian national politics in a way that some of his contemporaries were unable to do.⁴⁶⁸

Given the novelty of Azad's perennialism, Ashraf Ali remarks that one would be hard pressed to find in the whole tradition of Qur'anic exegesis anything comparable to Azad's "universal humanism."⁴⁶⁹ This universalism, however, has limitations. As far as the purely religious argument of Azad's perennialism goes, Douglas points out that Azad's "seeming sympathy towards other religions incorporates an unmistakable opposition to them in their present form."⁴⁷⁰ To this observation Madan adds that Azad was equally dissatisfied with the way Islam was understood and practiced in his own

⁴⁶⁷ Hameed, *Maulana Azad*, 139.

⁴⁶⁸ Willis, "Debating the Caliphate," 728. Azad was not the only Muslim in the region at the time to hold proto-perennialist ideas. Notable were the leading lights of the Jamia Millia Islamia school. This project included, indeed necessitated a proto-perennialist philosophy of religion that espoused a "fundamental unity of all religions" constituting "universal moral religion of humanity." This transcendental religious unity can then provide a basis for an Indian secular state "based on some of the highest moral values which all religions have promoted." Laurence Gautier, "A Laboratory for a Composite India? Jamia Millia Islamia around the Time of Partition," *Modern Asian Studies* 54, no. 1 (2020): 199–249. For further details, refer to Hasan and Jalil, *Jamia Millia Islamia*.

⁴⁶⁹ Ali, "Azad's Religio-Political Trajectory," 116.

⁴⁷⁰ Ian H. Douglas quoted in T. N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 168.

time. In addition, universal humanism cannot be the basis of a particular nationalism, for nationalism thrives on uniqueness of a people, not their equality with other nations. Yet, when the backlash came from the *'ulamā* against Azad's perennialism for reducing Islam's singular status, he undermined the very premise of his perennialism by reasserting Islam's supersession over other religions.⁴⁷¹

The JUH and the Instrument of Composite Nationalism

Azad's insights on composite nationalism, especially his reading of the Treaty of Medina, was further elaborated by the JUH's leader, Ḥusain Aḥmad Madani.⁴⁷² Speaking at a JUH convention in 1923,⁴⁷³ when the First World War had concluded, and the Ottoman Caliph had been reduced to a spiritual figurehead, Madani identifies a hierarchy of key Muslim priorities, among them working for the freedom of India for both political and religious reasons. He tells his audience that

[e]verywhere and in every country, Islam can persist only by being elevated high [over other religions], not by being subjected or enslaved by [forces of]

⁴⁷¹ Madan, *Secularism and Fundamentalism*, 168.

⁴⁷² Ḥusain Aḥmad Madani graduated from the Darul 'Ulūm Deoband, having studied under Maḥmūd Ḥasan (1851-1920)—the most revolutionary and influential figure among the second generation of Deoband until his death in 1920. When Ḥasan was arrested for sedition as he traveled across the Middle East with the goal of arriving in Turkey to orchestrate an anti-British revolt in India in league with the Turks and the Afghans—the attempt is known as the “Silk Letters Conspiracy”—Madani volunteered to accompany him as his caretaker during Ḥasan's imprisonment in Malta. Upon their release and return to India, Ḥasan soon died, and Madani became the head of Deoband school, and of the JUH, occupying an influential position of intellectual and charismatic authority. Madani's biography is found in Ḥusain Aḥmad Madani, *Naqsh-i Hayāt: Khud Navisht Savāniḥ*. Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Husain Ahmad Madani: The Jihad for Islam and India's Freedom* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008). Shah Abū Salmān Shāhjahānpurī, *Shaikhul Islām Maulānā Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī: Aik Siyāsī Muṭāla'ah* (Karachi, Pakistan: Majlis Yadgar-i Shaikul Islam, 1993). Sayyid Muḥammad Miyān, *Asīrān-i Mālṭā* (Delhi: Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, 1976).

⁴⁷³ Ḥusain Aḥmad Madani, “Presidential Address: December 19, 1923, Kakinada,” in *Dastāveẓāt*, 1:194-212.

disbelief. . . . It is therefore incumbent upon every Muslim to strive for independence so as to save his religion from being under the tutelage of another religion.⁴⁷⁴

The trouble was that the JUH could not free Islam from the British tutelage without Hindu support. The question for Madani was whether Indian Muslims could make common cause with non-Muslims on religious grounds? His most detailed answer was elaborated in a booklet entitled *Muttaḥidah Qaumiyyat (Composite Nationalism and Islam)*. The argument in the booklet revolves around three main points: the semantics of sociopolitical association in Islam, the Treaty of Medina as a historical precedence for composite nationalism, and anti-British *réssement*.

The occasion for Madani to elaborate on composite nationalism arose when he spoke at a gathering in January 1938 in Delhi.⁴⁷⁵ He later noted that his controversial comment was made in the larger context of what he saw as the great losses (*nuqsānāt-i ‘azīmah*) inflicted upon all Indians, but especially upon Muslims, by the British. He thus remarked that due to the modern fact of nations (*qaumain*, sing. *qaum*) now being founded upon homelands (*auṭān*, sing. *vaṭan*), all Indians nowadays were received as one people across the world, and by that dint, treated in equally contemptible manner. He attributed this humiliation to India’s enslavement by the British.⁴⁷⁶ When Madani’s address was reported by the newspapers, some of them misquoted Madani as saying that nowadays *millatain* (sing. *millat*, religious community), as opposed to *qaumain* (nations),

⁴⁷⁴ Madani, 1:215.

⁴⁷⁵ Two dates of the occasion for the Delhi gathering are noted. The text quoted here notes January 8, 1938, whereas Metcalf’s introduction to the English edition notes December 1937. Barbara D. Metcalf, introduction to *Composite Nationalism and Islam*, trans. Barbara D. Metcalf (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), 37.

⁴⁷⁶ Ḥusain Aḥmad Madani, *Muttaḥidah Qaumiyyat* (Delhi: Al-Jamiat, n.d.). 6-7.

were founded upon homelands.⁴⁷⁷ As the misquotation reached the celebrated poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal, he was dismayed by what he saw as an influential scholar's attempt to legitimize secular nationalism. Iqbal was thus moved to craft three scathing couplets in Madani's rebuke. The gist of Iqbal's rebuke was that the non-Arabs (like Madani) had yet to fully appreciate the deeper subtleties of the Arabian Prophet's message, and were guilty of conflating religious community (*millat*) with homeland (*vaṭan*). The venerable poet's eloquent rebuke created an uproar, giving the Muslim opponents of composite nationalists an excuse to deride them.⁴⁷⁸

Madani responded by publishing a more elaborate clarification in February 1938. This was in turn followed by Iqbal's rejoinder (discussed in the next chapter). The scandal occasioned an indirect correspondence between Iqbal and Madani through a third party, in which Madani clarified to Iqbal that his statement was not prescriptive, but descriptive of a modern fact. The clarification cleared up the matter for Iqbal, who withdrew his rebuke, and the matter was laid to rest for a short while.⁴⁷⁹ Iqbal died later that year (1938). Following his death, Iqbal's poetic work *The Gift of the Hijaz* (*Armaghān-i Hijāz*) was published, containing the mentioned couplets against Madani. The old controversy was stoked again, leading Madani to pen the mentioned booklet.

⁴⁷⁷ Major parts of the address were published the following day in the Delhi newspapers *Tej* and *Anṣārī*. A few days later, edited versions were published in *Al-Amān* and *Al-Vahdat* in Delhi, which were then copied by the *Inqilāb* and *Zamīndār* in Lahore.

⁴⁷⁸ Metcalf, introduction to *Composite Nationalism and Islam*.

⁴⁷⁹ The correspondence through the third party, 'Abdur Rashīd (pseudonym Ṭālūt), is recounted in Yūsuf Salīm Chishtī, "Mas'alah-yi Qaumiyyat Par," in Ḥabībūr Raḥmān Qāsmī, ed., *Mas'alah-yi Muttaḥida Qaumiyyat 'Ulamā-yi Islām kī Naẓar Main* (New Delhi: Markaz-i Da'vat-i Islām, n.d.), 48-69.

Madani's argument scrutinizes the Qur'anic terms of collectivity pertinent to his argument, namely, *qaum*, *jamā'at*, *millat*, and *ummat*. Part of Iqbal's argument stated that the Qur'an deliberately constructs Muslim *qaumiyyat* (nationhood) on the basis of *millat* (religion), meaning that any secular basis of Muslim nationalism was un-Islamic. In contrast, Madani points to the lexical meaning of *qaum* as a reference to any group of people without qualifications of race, nationality, or religion. *Millat* refers to a way of religious law (*shara'*), and *dīn* to religion ordained by God through a Prophet. The Qur'an always attributes *millat* to a Prophet (as in "the *millat* of Abraham"), but *dīn* (religion) to God (as in Qur'an 3:19: "the *dīn* with Allah is indeed Islam"). Hence, Madani finds it incorrect to conflate *millat* and *qaum*, as Iqbal insists.⁴⁸⁰

The Qur'an, Madani clarifies, tends to attribute *qaum* to a Prophet in the possessive construction, as in *qaum Nūḥ* (the *qaum* of Noah), and such terms reference both Muslims and non-Muslims as belonging to the same *qaum* (Nuh being Muslim, and his *qaum* consisting of Muslims and non-Muslims). Similarly, *ummat* too lexically means 'group' (*jamā'at*), hence, its reference is not confined to Muslims either. Madani thus concludes his first argument that given its general character, a *qaum* can be based on any association of color, race, language, or homeland, and given that such an association will cut across religious affiliations, composite nationalism is legitimized by the Qur'an.⁴⁸¹

After lexical analysis justifying *qaum*'s ascription to a composite Hindu-Muslim

⁴⁸⁰ Husain Ahmad Madani, *Muttaḥida Qaumiyyat aur Islām* (Delhi: Al-Jam'iyyat Book Depot, n.d.), 7-13.

⁴⁸¹ Madani, 8-18. In responding to this second bout of the controversy, Madani's supporters buttressed his argument by backing up his semantic analysis. See the entries by Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī, and Husain Ahmad Najīb in *Mas'alah-yi Muttaḥidah Qaumiyyat*, 12-15, and 16-23, respectively.

nationhood, Madani proceeds to explain composite nationalism by returning to the Treaty of Medina.⁴⁸² His reading of the Treaty closely parallels Azad's and declares it an instance of composite nationalism that made Muslims and the Jews one nation. Stressing the provisions of the Treaty, Madani repeatedly points out that the Treaty declares Jews and Muslims one *ummat* while making it clear that "the Jews shall adhere to their religion and Muslims shall adhere to theirs."⁴⁸³ That is to say, composite nationalism need not erase the distinct identity of its constituent religious communities, as warned by people like Iqbal. The Treaty upheld the right to maintain one's religious identity within its larger purpose, the joint defense of Medina. Madani thus concludes that the Prophet prepared to confront his enemies by unifying the Jews and the Muslims into a single *qaum*.⁴⁸⁴

Madani then works out the implications of his exegetical-lexical reading of the Qur'an and the Treaty for the Indian context. In India, he explains, composite nationalism means

that very same composite nationalism whose foundation was laid by the respected Messenger [of God], God's blessing and peace be upon him, in Medina, to wit: the residents of India, regardless of their religious affiliation, in their capacity as Indian residents of the same homeland, should become one *qaum*, and secure their rights by waging war (*jang kar ke*) against that *qaum* which is annihilating all [Indian *qaums*] by depriving them of their common territorial benefits; and by expelling this oppressive and unmerciful power, break the chains of slavery....⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² Madani refers to an earlier address in which the Treaty was mentioned in relation to composite nationalism by the Deobandi ḥadīṣ scholar Anvar Shāh Kāshmirī on the occasion of his presidential address at the JUH convention at Peshawar in December 1927. Madani, *Muttaḥida Qaumīyyat*, 31-36.

⁴⁸³ Madani, 32-34.

⁴⁸⁴ Madani, 35.

⁴⁸⁵ Madani, 37-38.

Madani's point is that composite nationalism was originally an Islamic idea that the JUH was now trying to revive. Hence, the secular interpretation of nationalism were an European aberration. He thus cautions his readers not to conflate the two. For it is possible that the Europeans might intend by nationalism some particular meaning and refer to some particular collective organization (*hai'at-i ijtimā'iyah*). It is also possible, he surmises, that the particular European interpretation might even lead them to find their religion incompatible with nationalism, thereby, foregoing religion altogether. However, he questions rhetorically, why should Muslims ascribe the same characteristics (*kaifiyāt*) and concomitants (*lavāzimāt*) to their (original) understanding of composite nationalism?⁴⁸⁶ Madani stressed upon his readers to stay focused on the ouster of the British from India as the real goal of composite nationalism. His anti-British *réssement* is on full display as he lists the level of destruction the British have brought about in India, which includes the destruction of religion, wealth, government, power, trade, handicrafts, dignity, bread, knowledge, skill, language, writing, prosperity, chastity, growth, development, good etiquettes, self-esteem, confidence, unity, harmony, compassion, humanity, and decency.

Accordingly, Madani finds that the only protection against religious and worldly life in India was through freedom from colonialism. "Composite nationalism indeed means joint action (*ishtirāk-i 'amal*), and not any other meanings imposed on it by our opponents such as our subservience to an irreligious (*lādīnī*) and atheistic (*dahriyyat*)

⁴⁸⁶ Madani, 42.

system in lieu of Islam.”⁴⁸⁷ In Madani’s estimation, the possibility of Muslim assimilation to other religions by way of coexistence can come about only if either religious freedom is denied, or if the religious practitioners remain immature and weak in their faith. As for the first possibility, the INC continues to make and suggest policies that will safeguard religious freedom in postcolonial India.⁴⁸⁸ In short, as Madani saw it, the only appealing factor (*jāzibah*) that can bring Indians together to resist the British was nationalism.

The instrumentality of composite nationalism as a means to anti-colonial resistance implicit in the preceding exposition is made explicit at the end of the booklet. Madani finally expresses his ultimate intentions in formulating composite nationalism in terms of Islamic ultimacy and universality.

All in all, there are two problems before us: one personal and eternal (*zāti aur dā’imī*), the other thisworldly and particular (*arzī aur k̄huṣūṣī*). The first problem is that of universal salvation (*najāt-i ‘āmmah*) [of humanity]....This is in fact the ultimate objective of Islam and its founder....The second problem is that of the salvation of Indian residents from their current afflictions (*maṣā’ib se najāt kā*). This is temporary and particular, and persists only until such time as all the residents of the country enter into Islam. This [second problem] no longer remains when all become Muslims.”⁴⁸⁹

This is perhaps the most revealing passage in the JUH’s literature on composite nationalism on its immediate and ultimate objectives. For it explicitly lays out the terms in which the JUH envisioned the role of nationalism. Madani situates the national struggle in the larger framework of Islamic ultimacy, namely, the spiritual objective of otherworldly salvation. However, the path to that ultimate goal passes through

⁴⁸⁷ Madani, 43.

⁴⁸⁸ Madani, 44.

⁴⁸⁹ Madani, 49. This particular argument is repeated again in 55-56.

thisworldly engagement, which requires the optimum conditions to work for one's salvation. India's emancipation from colonialism then becomes a necessary thisworldly condition for Muslims' otherworldly salvation. Composite nationalism, for Madani, facilitates the road to India's emancipation. Returning to early Islam, Madani notes, that in applying himself to the first problem, the Prophet proselytized people in Islam. The Treaty of Medina, on the other hand, was for the Prophet a response to the second kind of problem.⁴⁹⁰ Madani, however, considers it imprudent to await the conversion of all Indians to Islam in order to establish "a complete Islamic government" (*khālīṣ islāmī ḥukūmat*) in India—as the Prophet did in his case. He finds it more prudent to adopt the principle of choosing the lesser evil (*ahvanuḍ ḍararain aur akhafful bulliyyatain*) of composite nationalism.⁴⁹¹ For any weapon that can be used in a war to weaken one's enemy ought to be utilized. "This is what is meant by the use of the words 'Indian freedom' and 'self-government' (*svārāj*)."⁴⁹²

Barbara Metcalf evaluates Madani's composite nationalism as rooted in "hard-headed pragmatism" for his insistence on coming to terms with the unfolding, harsh realities of a new world: "Siyaasiyyaat (politics) is not resolved", he says, "through Falsafiyyaat (philosophy)."⁴⁹³ It was important for Madani, Metcalf stresses, to attend to "history and contemporary constraints" the failure to heed which could lead to communal "suicide."⁴⁹⁴ In Madani's pragmatic politics, "nationalism, democracy, and the

⁴⁹⁰ Madani, 55.

⁴⁹¹ Madani, 50-51.

⁴⁹² Madani, 51.

⁴⁹³ Metcalf, "Reinventing Islamic Politics," 399.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

importance of public were the political currency of the day,” in which he saw the Indian society as “‘composed’ of religious ‘communities’ ...who would participate in a fundamentally secular political life to deal with law and order, economic life, and so forth, with communities themselves sustaining distinctive customs and personal law as they long had done.”⁴⁹⁵ In contrast to Metcalf’s reading, my exposition of Madani’s “hard-headed pragmatism” shows that his pragmatism was not really in the service of democratic politics per se, but in the service of Islam that dreamed of one day overcoming the constraints of nationalism and recovering Islam’s total supremacy in the region, as opposed to the limited sovereignty confined to the territory of Pakistan that the separatists would demand later. Moreover, Metcalf’s insinuation is that Madani’s opponents in the separatist camp were devoid of pragmatism. However, given the hysteria of nationalism gripping the world at the time, both composite nationalism and separatism were two different *pragmatic* ways of dealing with the minority problem and trying to avert communal suicide by a minority under a large majority.

The JUH’s articulation of composite nationalism did not stop here. For the instrumentality of composite nationalism was not lost on some Hindus, and they accused the composite nationalists of insincerity and having only a provisional interest in promoting their version of nationalism. This led Madani to develop his theo-logic in the direction of perennialism.

⁴⁹⁵ Metcalf, 392.

Madani's Perennialism

In *Hamārā Hindustān aur Uske Fazā'il* (Our India and its merits), Madani responds to the Hindu “misunderstanding” that Indian Muslims were foreigners in India, hence, not Indians at all.⁴⁹⁶ Madani claims that according to Muslim textual sources, the first human and the Prophet of God, Adam, is said to have descended from the heavens to India.⁴⁹⁷ Descended on Adam’s Peak in Ceylon, Adam was the first manifestation of the primordial, spiritual light of Muhammad. Hence, it was in India that the Islamic prophetic tradition started, from whence the first pilgrimage to Mecca was embarked on, and where Adam brought from heavens specimen of flora and fauna. Consequently, the first human and the first Muslim was Adam, which makes all humans Indians.⁴⁹⁸ For this reason, Madani announces, Muslims *alone* comprised India’s indigenous inhabitants, and no other community was entitled to the same claim.

Madani further adds that whereas Hindus cremate their dead, Muslims inter their dead underground, which keeps intact a Muslim’s connection to the Indian soil even after death. What is more, given that in the Islamic perspective the soul will return to its terrestrial body upon resurrection, the souls of Muslim Indians will return to their Indian

⁴⁹⁶ Husain Ahmad Madani, *Hamara Hindustan aur Uske Faza'il*; and Muḥammad Miyān, *Darbār-i Madīnah aur Hubb-i Vaṭan* (Delhi: Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, 1941)—this one binding contains both works. Madani discusses the Hindu attacks on Islam in his autobiography, *Naqshe Hayāt: Khud Navisht Savānih*, vol. 2.

⁴⁹⁷ The sources referenced include Mir Ghulam Ali Husaini Wasiti’s (a.k.a. Ghulam 'Ali Azad Bilgrami) Arabic title *Sabḥah al-Marjān fī Āthār Hindistān; Tafṣīr Ibn Kathīr*, vol. 1; and the Bible, with no specific references. Barbara D. Metcalf, “Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani and the Jami‘at ‘Ulama-i-Hind against Pakistan, against the Muslim League,” in *Muslims Against the Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan*, eds. Ali Usman Qasmi and Megan Eaton Robb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 54-55.

⁴⁹⁸ Metcalf, “Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani,” 55.

homeland upon resurrection for their final accountability before God. In addition, Madani noted, as most contemporary Muslims were the descendants of converts from Hinduism, *their* physical presence in India is as at least as old as that of Hindus.⁴⁹⁹ The point of this discourse is to prove India a Muslim homeland, and for Muslims to own India as their very own. Mushir-ul-Haqq is right to point out that even in this tortuous argument, it is Islam and Muslims that come to sanctify the land, not the land that sanctifies Muslim presence in India. The composite nationalists, Mushir-ul-Haqq observes, were oblivious to how a Hindu might be completely put off by such a self-serving discourse, for to the Hindus the Indian soil was intrinsically sacred hence sanctifying, without needing something else to impart sanctity upon it extrinsically.⁵⁰⁰ “India was as inspiring for the Hindus as Islam was for Muslims;” and whereas the Muslims bowed before God, the Hindu and other Indian nationalists bowed to “Mother India”, as hymned in the opening line of the India national song, which, paradoxically, offends Muslims.⁵⁰¹ Instead, to claim India as Muslims’ original fatherland implied the dethronement and denigration of her ‘Motherhood,’ which could only prove highly irascible to Hindu sensibilities. In sum, *Hamāra Hindustān*’s reconstruction transforms composite nationalism into a full-fledged Islamic myth, meaningful to Muslims willing to adopt it, but unnerving and offensive to Hindus, and entirely meaningless to secular nationalists.

⁴⁹⁹ Madani, *Hamārā Hindustān*, 3-11.

⁵⁰⁰ Mushir-ul-Haqq, “Religion and Politics,” 151.

⁵⁰¹ Mushir-ul-Haqq, 151-153.

Against Muslim Separatism

The final point of consideration in relation to composite nationalism concerns its opposition to the Pakistan proposal. A most lucid and succinct argument is made in Madani's small tract *What is Pakistan?* which presents the composite nationalist case against Pakistan and the Two-Nation Theory. For Madani, anti-British *r s sentiment* was the only lens through which he could make sense of Pakistan. He thus saw Pakistan as part of the old European agenda of divide-and-rule. This same agenda concocted the ML in 1906 to drive a wedge between Muslims and Hindus, and later set the League on the path to separatism. Consequently, in a world beset with the competition for national survival, in Madani's calculation, a divided India would only dissipate Muslim strength in the region.

Madani's second salient argument attacks the secular profiles of the ML's leadership, who would ensure Pakistan to be no more than a "European-style democracy." For this reason, Madani considered all the League's promises of creating an Islamic Pakistan untrustworthy.⁵⁰² This is an enigmatic argument as post-colonial India that Madani was advocating for was headed precisely in the direction of a "European-style democracy." The fact of the matter was that just like the *'ulam * declined Azad's candidacy for the Indian Emir, so were they unwilling to submit to the League's leadership that did not share in their spiritual, intellectual, and cultural pedigree. In the end, this argument finally failed to convince the majority of the Muslim public.

⁵⁰² Husain Ahmad Madani, *Pakist n Kiy  Hai? Tahrik-i Pakist n k  Pasma n zar* (Delhi: Jamiat Ulama Hind, 1946), 1:6-17.

Interestingly, Madani himself hints as to why his arguments did not appeal to the Muslim masses:

It is true that the slogans of Pakistan and an Islamic state appear very appealing (*dilfaraib*). It is also true that the idea of founding of two Muslim states [East Pakistan or eastern Bengal, and West Pakistan] induces in the common Muslims a certain contentment (*surūr*) and excitement (*josh*). It is also true still that many differences persist between the Hindus and Muslims. Despite all of this, it is not correct that solely dismayed by Hindu narrow mindedness (*tang dilī*), we commit an error that might prove disastrous for us in the future.⁵⁰³

This frank admission underscores some of the potent reasons why Pakistan appealed to the Muslim imagination. The idea of an independent and free ‘Pakistan’ as a safeguard against their fear of Hindu “narrow mindedness” held great appeal for the Muslim masses. What the composite nationalists could not see was that behind that appeal lay amassed a discourse of political theology, championed by the composite nationalists themselves, which only served to highlight and deepen the “many differences” between Muslims and Hindus. This is why, in my reading, composite nationalism failed to produce a compelling religious argument against Pakistan.

Exiting Theopolitics

After the fall of the Khilāfat Movement, Azad and the JUH diverged in their specific paths in the course of time. Azad not only exited the stage of religious nationalism, he left behind a notorious conclusion owing to his tortuous experiences. On the last page in his final autobiography, Azad announces that

[i]t is one of the greatest frauds on the people to suggest that religious affinity can unite areas which are geographically, economically, linguistically and culturally different. It is true that Islam sought to establish a society which transcends racial, linguistic, economic and political frontiers. History has however proved that after

⁵⁰³ Madani, *Pakistān Kiyā Hai?*, 33.

the first few decades or at the most after the first century, Islam was not able to unite all the Muslim countries on the basis of Islam alone.”⁵⁰⁴

While Azad remained involved in the thick of Indian politics until his death, in the case of the JUH, their course of action was even more enigmatic. Once India achieved independence, they announced their exit from politics altogether. In Madani’s explanation, as the JUH’s objectives of India’s liberation, eradication of communalism, and separate electorates for minorities had been achieved;⁵⁰⁵ and as sufficient safeguards for protecting religious liberties had been built into the Indian constitution, there was no longer any need for them to engage in politics.⁵⁰⁶ Rather, the “JUH’s scope of operation henceforth shall be confined to issues of religious, cultural, and educational rights.”⁵⁰⁷ In taking a swipe at separatism, Madani further quipped that political domination (*iqtidār*) is not concomitant with being Muslim, but that it is conditioned upon its main objectives of (personal) deeds and morals.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁴ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 248. In Minault’s observation, the later Azad begins to speak in terms of “historical realism” and “no longer relied on specific Quranic arguments, but he nevertheless remained faithful to his larger Islamic instincts.” Minault, “The Elusive Maulana,” 25. Aijaz Ahmad in his turn finds Azad moving in a completely diametrical direction of repudiating his discourse in *Al-Hilāl* and during the Khilāfat Movement period in favor of a secular polity. For Aijaz, Azad’s is new language becomes that of secular democracy, progressive economics, decentralized administration, and a federal constitution. Ahmad, “Azad’s Careers,” 128. Madan for one does not consider this alleged secularist turn in Azad’s thinking as two years prior to the launch of *Al-Hilāl* in 1912, Azad had written a tract on the mystic Sarmad whom Azad presented as having discarded the mosque and the temple in his mystical quest. “Having stated this pluralist credo (at the age of 22), he abided by it until the very end of his life half a century later.” Madan also thinks it entirely possible that Azad was disciplined enough to discard religious references in purely political issues—which, in my estimation, is how he finally approached the Muslim predicament in India. Madan, *Secularism and Fundamentalism*, 170.

⁵⁰⁵ Razi Ahmad Kamal, *Jam ‘iyyat ‘Ulamā-yi Hind: Dastāvezāt Markazī Ijlās Hā’-yi ‘Ām, 1948 tā 2003* [Association of Indian Scholars: Documents of annual general sessions, 1948-2003] (New Delhi: Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, 2004), 65.

⁵⁰⁶ Kamal, 26.

⁵⁰⁷ Kamal, 26.

⁵⁰⁸ Kamal, 34.

It is hard to believe that the preceding statements were made by the same people who for about four decades relentlessly tried to convince the world that Islam could not separate religion and politics without shattering its integrity. Azad's conclusion about religion being a fraudulent basis for constructing durable nationalism rings hollow in view of the theology of the early Azad. As for the JUH, their rationale for exiting politics circles round to their erstwhile secularized imagination. This can only mean that their political activity was but an extraneous, extra-ordinary undertaking, and that their voluntary return to private religiosity was a homecoming to their thoroughly secularized comfort zone. Considering that the principle of religious/secular dichotomy was a colonial introduction in South Asia, the colonialist-induced partitioning of the JUH's imagination was quite permanent. In the end, if religious nationalism was a fraud, the composite nationalists were its original architects, and helped partition Muslims theopolitical imagination that eventually took the form of separatism.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The broader crisis of Muslim anomie in colonial India led Azad to formulate a political theology in order to address the challenge of Indian sovereignty and Muslim emancipation. A fundamental insight of political theology expresses Islamic ultimacy in the terms of Islam's sacred symbolic complex, God, the Qur'an, and the Prophet as singular and consummate. Islam's singularity is interpreted as the necessity of all aspects of life to be governed by Islamic principles. Islam's interests thus transcend material interest of the Muslim community. The idea of extending the scope of Islamic ultimacy over all life amounts to the desecularization of Muslim imagination.

Politically, political theology translates Islamic ultimacy into the Muslims' self-sufficiency and the imperative of independent political action. The political imperative resulted in a most explosive way in the form of the Khilāfat Movement. In taking up the *khilāfat* question, political theology developed a new historiography of Islam that reevaluates Muslim history according to the fate of the institutional caliphate. This historiography presents the Medinan society under Prophet Muhammad's leadership as the ideal embodiment of Islamic ideals, for, in part, it rested on a unity of the spiritual and the political. Medina also came to symbolize the most consummate fulfillment of divine intention. In this light, Islam's fate in the modern world was tied with the Ottoman Caliphate, the disintegration of which was presented as the loss of something sacred and existentially necessary to Islam's functioning in the world. The institutional *khilāfat* thus came to symbolize a boundary condition, something finite symbolizing the infinite, in the absence of which the divine intention pertaining to collective life could not be fulfilled, nor certain meanings and experiences be availed by Muslims.

The Khilāfat Movement was a pragmatist translation (in Asad's sense) of a traditional symbol, *khilāfat*, and was highly significant in that it enabled so many Muslims, even if they did not understand the theology behind it, to experience the *khilāfat* symbol (content experience with Neville) in peculiar ways. While most Indian Muslims never encountered the Caliphate in any sense, the Khilāfat Movement enabled them to experience pragmatistically its promise of Muslim unity, solidarity, and power. This was an experience that can only unfold pragmatistically as an embodied experience in a sociopolitical setting *with the qaum*. This was the first occasion in Indian Muslim

history that so many Muslims marched together as a *qaum*, and that for the sake of their sacred symbols. This content experience in turn reinforced the efficacy, promise, and conviction in the symbols that enabled it. The Khilāfat Movement thus demonstrated in a most conspicuous manner the political promise of Islam's sacred symbols and the related discourse of political theology.

Anti-British *r essentiment*, which implied emancipation from colonialism, was a major, if not the primary, impulse that led to the emergence of Islamic nationalism. People like Madani blamed the British depravity and machinations for all that had gone wrong with India. Hence, despite all the sermons of Muslims' political independence, ousting the British necessitated joining hands with the Hindus, and this demanded a religious basis and semiotic consistency with Islamic ultimacy. The justification took the form of composite nationalism. Composite nationalists integrated *qaum* with nationalism by reading nationalism into the Qur'an and early Muslim history. Yet, regardless of the complex semantics it weaved together to justify nationalism, in the end nationalism remained a mere instrumental convenience for the composite nationalists. True to their original theology of Islam's ultimate purpose of salvation, they kept thisworldly, political emancipation subservient to otherworldly salvation.

**CHAPTER 5: MUHAMMAD IQBAL AND SAYYID ABUL A‘LĀ MAUDUDI:
NATIONALISM AS NEO-IDOLATRY**

This chapter presents the political theologies of Muhammad Iqbal and Sayyid Maududi, and their critique of secular nationalism as antithetical to Islam. The chapter explicates Iqbal’s early nationalism and his later transition to a staunch critic of nationalism, his philosophy of individuality and its relation to nationalism, and finally his critique of Madani’s composite nationalism. Turning to Maududi, the chapter expounds his theories of culture as a dialectic of *khilāfat* and *jāhiliyyat* (non-monotheistic culture), his criticism of Madani’s composite nationalism, and his alternative reading of religion as state.

MUHAMMAD IQBAL

Born in 1877 in Sialkot (Punjab), Iqbal’s early intellectual influence unfolded under the inspiration of his teacher Mīr Ḥasan, who was a confluence of traditional religiosity and modernist influences flowing from Aligarh.⁵⁰⁹ Iqbal embarked on higher studies at Government College, Lahore, where he encountered the philosopher Thomas Arnold, the Chair of Philosophy, specializing in Islam, and Oriental languages, who had previously taught for ten years at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College. During these years, Iqbal established himself as a popular poet, one who sang of Indian nationalism.

Iqbal’s intellectual development is conventionally divided into three periods, the

⁵⁰⁹ Born in the north Indian town of Sialkot (Punjab), Iqbal was a descendent of Brahmin Hindus from Kashmir who are said to have converted to Islam in the seventeenth century. Iqbal Singh, *The Ardent Pilgrim: An Introduction To the Life and Works of Mohammed Iqbal* (Delhi: Oxford, 1997), 2.

first period of Indian nationalism ending in 1905, the second period of reorientation from 1905 to 1908 spent in Europe, and the third period of Islamic nationalism from 1908 until his death in 1938.⁵¹⁰ In the second period (1905–1908)—when Azad too was travelling the world—the young poet embarked on an intense philosophical journey to Europe for graduate studies, first at the Cambridge University’s Trinity College for B.A. and law, and then at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich for a doctorate (1908).⁵¹¹ During this time, he studied under the neo-Hegelian John M. E. McTaggart, and was influenced by Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson, and British romantic poets.⁵¹² The European exposure induced in Iqbal a “process of change and reorientation which was completely to transform his outlook, his social and political philosophy, his whole personality.”⁵¹³ Owing to his academic studies and personal observations in Europe, Iqbal came away with a deeper appreciation of Islam’s spiritual, intellectual, and historical heritage, and of the more dynamic and evolutionary intellectual currents flowing in Europe. Singh describes Iqbal’s reorientation in semiotic terms: this was a time when although Iqbal

⁵¹⁰ In his first Urdu poetic collection, *Bāng-i Darā*, Iqbal himself identifies three phases of his intellectual evolution: from birth until 1905, 1905-1908, after 1908. Saeed A. Durrani, “Encountering Modernity: Iqbal at Cambridge,” in *Muhammad Iqbal A Contemporary: Articles from the International Seminar Held at the University of Cambridge*, Muḥammad Suhail ‘Umar and Basit Bilal Koshul, eds. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2008), 61-62. Chishtī points to a tripartite division from birth to 1905, 1905-1908, and from 1908 until his death. Yūsuf Salīm Chishtī, *Sharḥ-i Bāng-i Darā* (Lahore: Maktabah-yi Ta‘mīr-i Insāniyyat, n.d.). 5-12.

⁵¹¹ He submitted a dissertation entitled *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* to Friedrich Hommel.

⁵¹² For Iqbal’s familiarity with European thinkers and their influence on him, see Durrani, “Encountering Modernity;” Nicholas Adams, “Iqbal and the Western Philosophers,” in *Iqbal A Contemporary*; and Manzoor H. Khatana, *Iqbal and Foundations of Pakistani Nationalism, 1857-1947* (Lahore: Book Traders, 1992), 139-155. Khatana suggests Hegel’s theory of state as a transcendent self, and Rousseau’s stress on freedom, equality, fraternity, and social contract theory as major influences.

⁵¹³ Singh, *Pilgrim*, 22.

remained with the “old symbolism,” “but the terms of reference have changed and the terms themselves are struggling towards new significations” in the attempt to formulate “a doctrine of activism.”⁵¹⁴ In other words, Iqbal realized the drastic change in context in which Islam would now have to operate. Unwilling to completely convert to the modern semiotic ideology, Iqbal’s quest became one of semiotic integration.

Transformed and imbued with a renewed sense of purpose, Iqbal returned to India in 1908. He wasted no time in articulating his new political orientation as he went about delivering lectures, reciting poems, and getting involved in national politics. Iqbal is said to have been influenced by the early Azad’s *Al-Hilāl* discourse.⁵¹⁵ However, he supported Azad’s call for the Khilāfat Movement only in theory,⁵¹⁶ and remained aloof from pragmatist participation in the Movement as he saw the effort to pressure the British government a sign of weakness.⁵¹⁷ That Iqbal had transitioned to a committed Islamic nationalism by this time is evident in his critical attitude toward any unconditional Hindu-Muslim unification. He warned that a “bargain with the Hindus at the cost of Islam cannot be tolerated. Alas! The advocates of the Khilafat Movement...are leading us to such a nationalism which no sincere Muslim can accept for a minute.”⁵¹⁸ Iqbal, Jinnah,

⁵¹⁴ Singh, 44-45.

⁵¹⁵ Tahir Kamran, “Problematizing Iqbal as a State Ideologue,” in Dharampal-Frick, Gita, Ali Usman Qasmi, and Katia Rostetter, eds. *Revisioning Iqbal* (Heidelberg: Draupadi Verlag, 2010), 123. For a comparison of Iqbal and Azad, see Malik, 134-152. Malik relates that when Azad launched his *Al-Balāgh* journal, a poem of Iqbal appeared on the title page in full. Fatiḥ Muḥammad Malik, *Iqbāl kā Fikrī Nizām aur Pākistān kā Taṣavvur* (Lahore: Sang-i Mel, 2003), 135-136.

⁵¹⁶ Iqbal’s resolve at a crucial meeting to decide for or against noncooperation is said to be ambivalent and overly cautious. Inayatullah Baloch, “Islamic Universalism, the Caliphate and Muhammad Iqbal,” in *Revisioning Iqbal*, 135-157.

⁵¹⁷ Singh, *Pilgrim*, 61-62.

⁵¹⁸ Iqbal’s letter to Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī quoted in Moinuddin Aqeel, *Iqbal from Finite to Infinite: Evolution of the Concept of Islamic Nationalism in British India*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy

and Ashraf ‘Alī Thanavī (Chapter 6) were among the few prominent individuals who did not participate in the Movement. While Iqbal voiced ethical reason for avoiding participation in the Movement, his expositors suggest cowardice as the real reason. Iqbal was careful as not to come out against the British government in the open. Eschewing a direct challenge to the British authorities during the Khilāfat Movement allowed him to avoid imprisonment. That the British did not feel threatened by him is evident in their awarding him knighthood in 1923, a time when many Muslims and Hindus had surrendered their titles in relation to the Noncooperation Movement. Despite this political nuance and wavering, Singh underscores the importance of the Caliphate for Iqbal as it “represented the principle of continuity in the Islamic fraternity; it was a link with a great and glorious past. The fact that it had vanished into thin air was heart-breaking and unbearable.”⁵¹⁹

Iqbal’s position on Islamic nationalism generally remained consistent in favor of safeguarding Muslim interests as a separate *qaum*. His direct political engagement involved membership of the Punjab Legislative Assembly (1926–1929), the presidency of the All-India ML in 1930, and an ongoing advocacy in the Punjab province for Muslim interests and the poor in general.⁵²⁰ The year 1930 proved eventful as in this year Iqbal delivered his famous Allahabad address in which he proposed the consolidation of the

Pakistan, 2008), 57. Iqbal also found the methods of popular agitation and civil disobedience in violation of Islamic law (*sharī‘ah*), but announced that he would abide by the call to noncooperation if a religious decree in its favor were issued by all the leading ‘*ulamā*’. Syed Abdul Wahid, *Studies in Iqbal* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 2007), 268.

⁵¹⁹ Singh, 62.

⁵²⁰ For excellent primers on Iqbal’s political activities, see *Studies in Iqbal*, 244-304; and ‘Abdulḥamīd Kamālī, “Jināḥ, Iqbāl, aur Tasavvur-i Pākistān,” in *Iqbāl: Tasavvur-i Qaumīyyat aur Pākistān*, ed. Tabassum Kāshmirī (Lahore: Maktabah-yi ‘Āliyah, 1977), 77-132.

majority-Muslim northwestern regions into a single state, designed to ensure Muslim cultural autonomy through a quasi-territorial sovereignty. Interestingly, in the same year he also delivered his famous philosophical lectures, later published as *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. In 1932, Iqbal delivered another important address in which he included Bengal as part of his territorial scheme, thereby, arriving approximating at the final map of what later became Pakistan. For this reason, Iqbal is celebrated as the ‘architect’ (*muṣavvir*) of Pakistan in the official Pakistani history.

Like Khan before him, Iqbal too was alarmed by the INC’s direct outreach to Muslim constituencies starting in 1936, and the promotion of the INC leader Jawaharlal Nehru’s socialist vision among Muslims. Spooked by the appeal of socialism to the labor class, Iqbal impressed on Jinnah, the president of the Muslims League at the time, the need to transform the ML from a platform for the Muslim elites into a truly national political party by incorporating the problems of the poor into the party’s platform.⁵²¹ A harsh critic of both communism and capitalism,⁵²² Iqbal was convinced of the *sharī‘at*’s welfare vision, and sought to convince Jinnah of the same. Jinnah seems to have heeded at least some of Iqbal’s recommendations as he finally began to speak of Pakistan in religious terms. Iqbal died in 1938, and was buried in Lahore, Pakistan.

⁵²¹ Rizwan Malik, “Preservation of Muslim Identity in South Asia: Iqbal, Jinnah, and the Nationalist ‘Ulama,” in *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* 20, no. 1 (1999), 1-21.

⁵²² Instances of his scathing poetic critiques of Western civilization, especially its imperialism, capitalism, nationalism, and communism are the poems “Lenin before God,” International Iqbal Society, access January 01, 2021, <https://www.iqbal.com.pk/poetical-works/english-translations/939-gabriels-wing-poems/1342-lenin-before-god>; and “To Satan’s Advisory Council,” International Iqbal Society, access January 01, 2021, <https://www.iqbal.com.pk/poetical-works/english-translations/the-gift-of-hijaz/the-gift-of-hijaz-poems>.

Early Indian Nationalism

Iqbal's views on nationalism show a drastic difference in his first and second period. In Akram's assessment, "Iqbal's thought on the issue of nationalism has ranged from his soft view of nationalism [in the first period] to a critically hard one [in his second period], especially when it came to European experience of nationalism."⁵²³ Iqbal's "soft view" was a piece with conventional nationalist sentiments in which the nation is imagined in religionesque terms. At this stage, Singh tells us, Iqbal's "Muslim nationalism did not run counter to the mainstream of Indian nationalism, but in a direction parallel with it."⁵²⁴ Although, even at this stage, too neat a trajectory of Iqbal's nationalism should be resisted, for even in his first period Iqbal wrote Islamic poetry and spoke of Indian Muslims as a *qaum*; and even in his later period, he is found versifying nationalist themes.⁵²⁵ Nonetheless, the change in semantics was decisive.

Just as with Khan, Azad, and Madani, nation and homeland for Iqbal too were objects of intense pathos arousing lament, nostalgia, anxiety, despair, and criticism, but also promised hope, renewal, and triumph. Iqbal's early poems convey his nationalist convictions. An early poem "The Himalayas"⁵²⁶ addresses Mount Himalaya—an obvious metonym symbolizing the tall stature, solid edifice, firm grounding, and the long history of the Indian homeland—in religious language by comparing its streams to heavenly wellsprings. "An Ode to India" became an anthem during India's anticolonial struggle as

⁵²³ Ejaz Akram, "Iqbal's Political Philosophy in the Light of Islamic Tradition," in *Iqbal A Contemporary*, 134.

⁵²⁴ Singh, *Ardent Pilgrim*, 14 and 29.

⁵²⁵ Khurram Ali Shafique, *Muhammad Iqbal: A Contemporary*, 67 (n. 1).

⁵²⁶ Muhammad Iqbal, "The Himalayas," Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, accessed October 10, 2020, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/urdu/bang/translation/part05/01.htm>.

it proclaimed “Better than the whole world is this India of ours.”⁵²⁷ Iqbal laments the various divisions distancing Indians from one another: “Our land (*sarzmīn*) foments excessive mutual enmity/ What unity! Our closeness harbors separation.”⁵²⁸ Elsewhere, the poet locates the cause of dissension among Indians, “Sectarianism is the tree, prejudice is its fruit/ This fruit caused expulsion of Adam from Paradise.” Toward prescribing a healing remedy, Iqbal dreams of universal humanism unifying all humanity that evokes Azad’s religious proto-perennialism: “Soul-invigorating wine is the Love of the human race,” and “Sick nations have been cured only through Love/ Nations have warded off their adversity through Love.”⁵²⁹ Toward the end of the same poem, Iqbal tries to rouse his audience to attend to the nation’s dangerous condition: “Distinction of sects and governments has destroyed nations (*qaumon*)/ Is there any concern for the homeland (*vaṭan*) in my compatriot's hearts?” The perennialist inclination continues to peer through in “The New Temple,”⁵³⁰ which Chishtī interprets as a reference to nationalism (*vaṭan parastī*).⁵³¹ Iqbal expresses displeasure at religious divisions, “God also has taught fighting to Muslim preachers,” and despairs of finding any tolerance and love in the houses of worship, “Becoming tired, I finally abandoned the temple and the Haram [a Muslim place of worship].” Criticizing the Hindus for conflating idols and

⁵²⁷ Iqbal, “An Ode to India,” Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/urdu/bang/translation/part05/39.htm>.

⁵²⁸ Iqbal, “The Painful Wail,” Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/urdu/bang/translation/part05/16.htm>.

⁵²⁹ Iqbal, “The Portrait of Anguish,” Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/urdu/bang/translation/part05/34.htm>.

⁵³⁰ Iqbal, “The New Temple,” Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/urdu/bang/translation/part05/43.htm>.

⁵³¹ Chishtī, *Sharh Bāng-i Darā*, 139.

homeland (*vaṭan*), Iqbal denigrates the idols in favor of homeland as his deity, “You take the stone idols to contain God/ Every speck of the homeland's dust (*khāk-i vaṭan*) is holy [*devtā*; literally, deity] to me.”⁵³²

The religionesque terms in which Iqbal speaks of nationalism mimic the terms in which he will later speak of the plight of Islam and Muslims. The emotions conveyed above, however, did an about face as Iqbal journeyed through Europe, and came away with quite a transformed understanding of religion and politics. A major hindrance in the way of a true appreciation of Iqbal’s political theology is that it rests on a philosophical foundation that links God, individual, and the collective in a metaphysical framework.

The Dialectic of the Individual and Collective Selves

In pointing to the overall guiding principle of his whole philosophical outlook, Iqbal noted that humanity was in need of three things: “a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis.”⁵³³ It is Iqbal’s spiritual vision of reality that lies at the heart of his metaphysics, anthropology, and political theology. Iqbal’s central insight is the idea of God as the “Ultimate Reality” and the “Ultimate Ego,” defined as spiritual, infinite, and individual.⁵³⁴ Ascribing spirituality

⁵³² Iqbal, “The New Temple.” Even at this stage, however, a more universal vision beyond nationalism appears in Iqbal. “May my tongue be not bound with discrimination of color/ May mankind be my nation, the whole world my country be.” “The Morning Sun,” Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/urdu/bang/translation/part05/20.htm>.

⁵³³ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, ed. M. Saeed Sheikh (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 142.

⁵³⁴ Consider the following passage as an example: “...the ultimate ground of all experience, a rationally directed creative will which we have found reasons to describe as an ego. In order to emphasize the individuality of the Ultimate Ego the Qur’an gives Him the proper name of Allah, and

to God intends to emphasize God as an absolutely free creative agent unhindered by limitations of space, time, and matter.⁵³⁵ The result of God's perpetual creative activity is the creation of finite, imperfect, but perfecting or perfectible individualities. The universe is a whole emergent from spiritual individualities.⁵³⁶ Iqbal believes that human agency is possible only if it is derived from the divine Agency.⁵³⁷ Animated by God's spiritual essence, the life of individual human is defined by the quest to discover and unite with God (an essential Sufi insight), which means growth of and struggle for greater freedom. Given the ultimate goal of unity with the divine, the quest for freedom becomes a religious endeavor. Finite individuality is thus a boundary condition in Iqbal's metaphysics, for without individuality there is no world, no finitude, and no religion to symbolize God.⁵³⁸ In this sense of a finite/infinite contrast, individuality functions as a sacred symbol.

The novelty of his conception of individuality led Iqbal to coin a neologism for it,

further defines Him as follows: 'Say: Allah is One: All things depend on Him; He begetteth not, and He is not begotten; And there is one like unto Him' (112:1-4)." Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 50.

⁵³⁵ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, chaps. 2-3.

⁵³⁶ Iqbal states that "from the Ultimate Ego only egos proceed....Every atom of Divine energy, however low in the scale of existence, is an ego. But there are degrees in the expression of egohood. Throughout the entire gamut of being runs the gradually rising note of egohood until it reaches its perfection in man." Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 57. In this and other aspects, Iqbal can be considered among the founder's of post-modern thought, perhaps the first in the Muslim world, and a kindred spirit to Peirce, who was also a panpsychist like Iqbal. Vahid summarizes Iqbal's conception of Ultimate Reality as "transcendent and immanent and yet neither one nor the other," and in which finite egos endure without losing their individuality. Iqbal's metaphysics is panentheistic. Vahid, *Studies in Iqbal*, 44. Also see, Basit Bilal Koshul, "The Contemporary Relevance of Muhammad Iqbal," in H. C. Hillier and Basit Bilal Koshul, eds., *Muhammad Iqbal: Essays on the Reconstruction of Modern Muslim Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 56-87; and Richard Gilmore, "Pragmatism and Islam in Peirce and Iqbal: The Metaphysics of Emergent Mind," in *ibid.*, 88-111.

⁵³⁷ Vahdat, *Islamic Ethos and the Specter of Modernity* (Anthem Press, 2015), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1gsmz2q.7>, 1.

⁵³⁸ Singh, *Pilgrim*, 52-53.

namely, *khūdī*. Recounting the process that led him to the neologism, Iqbal points to the negative values attached to the Arabic, Persian, and Urdu terms for ‘I’ and ‘I-ness’ (e.g., *anā*, *anāniyyat*, *nafs*, *shakṣ*, and the like), all of which carry different connotations of selfishness, narcissism, arrogance, rigidity of character, stubbornness, and so on. Iqbal was thus compelled to coin a new term unencumbered with negative meanings. Taken from the Perso-Urdu *khūd*, which can mean ‘self,’ ‘own,’ ‘private,’ or ‘by myself,’ Iqbal describes *khūdī* in axiological terms:

that indescribable feeling of ‘I,’ which forms the basis of the uniqueness of each individual. In its positive, ethical signification the term symbolizes the values of “self-reliance, self-respect, self-confidence, self-preservation, even self-assertion when such a thing is necessary, in the interests of life and the power to stick to the cause of truth, justice, duty, etc., etc., even in the face of death.”⁵³⁹

The mentioned qualities are the ultimate values for *khūdī* to achieve. The attainment of these values necessitates effort and a suitable context that Iqbal conveys in terms of rights: “practically the metaphysical Ego [*khūdī*] is the bearer of two main rights that is the right to life and freedom as determined by the Divine Law.”⁵⁴⁰ Life and freedom for Iqbal are in fact synonymous. By life Iqbal means a process of change and growth that, in the human context, requires a world in which to exercise freedom.⁵⁴¹ Iqbal’s theology thus gives rise to an anthropology of emancipation in the *khūdī*’s quest to be God-like by overcoming material forces. This anthropology carried concrete implications for Muslim emancipation in the immediate context of colonial India. Majeed has explored the anti-

⁵³⁹ Muhammad Iqbal, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, ed. Syed Abdul Wahid (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1992) 243-244.

⁵⁴⁰ Wahid, *Thoughts and Reflections*, 244. In Wahid’s explanation, the self for Iqbal “is a sort of system or unity of psychic experiences or activities. Wahid, *Studies in Iqbal*, 32.

⁵⁴¹ Singh, 52-54.

colonial implications of Iqbal's conception of *khūdī*:

The images and conceits of khudi counter that fixing of consciousness which characterized British ethnological views of the inhabitants of India, frozen by caste or religion. In addition, through the narratives and poetry of khudi, Iqbal undermines the incarcerating effect which the limiting and homogenizing term 'Muslim' had, and continues to have, when used by those in the West. In Western usage, the term is generally rooted in suppositions about the static nature of the consciousness of any person identified as 'Muslim.'⁵⁴²

In other words, Iqbal's spiritual anthropology was at once a critique of, a challenge to, and an endeavor to undo the colonial deployment of modern semiotic ideology for the purposes of Muslim subjugation. Moreover, we should add, *khūdī*'s ontological spirituality and its relation to God also sets it against the secular views of the self that might reduce it to a material entity or an epiphenomenon of material interactions.

Iqbal first elaborated his philosophy of *khūdī* in his first Persian poetic collection *The Secrets of the Self (Asrār-i Khūdī)*, published in 1915 at a time when Azad's *Al-Hilāl* had taken Muslim India by storm. Structured after Rumi's *Maṣnavī*, the *Secrets* is a unique work in Indian Muslim poetry that weaves together metaphysics, theology, anthropology, and projects contemporary theopolitics in different ways given the regional context of the time. The argument of the *Secrets* follows from Iqbal's basic metaphysical principle, the essentially spiritual and individualized nature of all reality. The opening verses of the poem thus proclaim, "The form of existence is an effect of the Self/ Whatsoever thou seest is a secret of the Self."⁵⁴³ Given the human *khūdī*'s default

⁵⁴² Javed Majeed, *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics and Postcolonialism* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009), 23.

⁵⁴³ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self*, trans. Reynold. A. Nicholson, Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/persian/asrar/translation/02.htm>.

imperfection, its path to perfection is driven by purpose (*mud‘ā*), desire (*ārzū*), and ideals (*maqāṣid*). Of all the desires or ideals that determine individuality’s proper evolution, the ultimate is that of love (*muḥabbat* and *ishq*).⁵⁴⁴ For Iqbal, love means “the desire to assimilate, to absorb. Its highest form is the creation of values and ideals and the endeavor to realize them.”⁵⁴⁵ In one explanation, “one *is*, according to Iqbal, in the measure that one loves that which is.”⁵⁴⁶ In its evolution, *khūdī*’s desire and the object of its love move through stages, in which every material object is to be assimilated and overcome, or resisted for its deleterious effects, until it finds true fulfillment in the love of God. Attainment of the love of God, the Absolutely Free Agent, is the climax in the quest for the “spiritual emancipation of the individual.”

Despite its concern with metaphysics and anthropology, the *Secrets* alludes to its theopolitical purpose in various ways. Among them, Iqbal’s identification of Prophet Muhammad as one of the great objects of love and the highest ideals for Muslims to emulate: “In the Muslim’s heart is the home of Muhammad/ All our glory is from the name of Muhammad.” Theopolitics comes into view as Iqbal adverts to the Prophet’s

⁵⁴⁴ Iqbal, *Secrets*, 28. In addition to love, the self is also strengthened by *faqr* (self-sufficiency, self-confidence, and humility), courage, tolerance, and creativity. Vahid, *Studies in Iqbal*, 40. Mir explains *faqr* as follows: “Literally ‘poverty’, the word, as used in Iqbal’s poetry, represents an attitude of self-sufficiency and indifference to the trappings of power and fame. Mir, *Poet and Thinker*, 12.

⁵⁴⁵ Iqbal’s letter to Nicholson. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self*, trans. Reynold. A. Nicholson (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2010), xxv-xxvii. The “metaphysical or ontological conception of love” is so central to Iqbal’s whole philosophy that Kazemi calls it the “principal trajectory” of Iqbal’s thought, for “one *is*, according to Iqbal, in the measure that one loves that which is.” Reza Kazemi, “Iqbal and Ecumenism: The Inescapability of Love,” in *Iqbal A Contemporary*, 27.

⁵⁴⁶ Kazemi, “Iqbal and Ecumenism,” 27. Javid Iqbal, Iqbal’s son, lists additional values that proceed from Iqbal’s metaphysics, namely, love, freedom, courage, high ambition, and “supreme indifference towards the acquisition of material comforts.” Javid Iqbal, “Iqbal’s view of Ijtihad and a Modern Islamic State,” in *Iqbal A Contemporary*, 168.

distinct accomplishments: “And he founded a state and laws and government.”⁵⁴⁷ If *khūdī* evolves through the creation and realization of ideals, and if the Prophetic ideals were to institute the state, laws, and government, it follows that Muslims should espouse the same ideals.

Theopolitics is also hinted at the stages that *khūdī* must traverse in achieving its ideals. The *Secrets* identifies three stages in *khūdī*'s development: obedience (*īṭā'at*), self-control (*zabt-i nafs*), and vicegerency (*niyābat*). Iqbal recommends obedience to God's law (*sharī'ah*) and the Prophet: “Whoso would master the sun and stars,/ Let him make himself a prisoner of Law!”⁵⁴⁸ He adds, “Do not complain of the hardness of the Law./ Do not transgress the statutes of Muhammad.”⁵⁴⁹ Tethering oneself to law seems to be antithetical to freedom. However, Iqbal presents Islam's sacred law as a necessary framework for individual freedom. For *khūdī*'s obedience to the sacred law (*sharī'at*) and the Prophet habituates *khūdī* to breaking the hold of materiality and material things upon it. Activities of worship, like the pilgrimage, one context in which obedience to the divine law and the Prophet are exercised, has the following effect: “It teaches separation from one's home and destroys attachment to one's native land.”⁵⁵⁰ The vicegerent is the highest manifestation of *khūdī*'s obedience, a spiritual station that reflects divinity in finite form in its relationship to other creatures and things. Whosoever achieves this stage gains power over material forces and laws of nature, of which race, land, and nation comprise

⁵⁴⁷ Iqbal, *Secrets*, Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/persian/asrar/translation/04.htm>.

⁵⁴⁸ Iqbal, *Secrets*, Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/persian/asrar/translation/10.htm>.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

notable examples.

['Tis] sweet to be God's vicegerent (*nāyib-i haqq*) in the world
And exercise sway over the elements.
God's vicegerent is as the soul of the universe,
His being is the shadow of the Greatest Name [Allah].
He knows the mysteries of part and whole,
He executes the command of Allah in the world.⁵⁵¹

Niyābat (vicegerency) was how Azad translated *khilāfat*. To be sure, in the context of the *Secrets*, vicegerent (*nāyib*) does not reference the institutional *khilāfat*. However, the traditional referents of caliph (vicegerent) and caliphate (vicegerency) nonetheless project the political and institutional meanings of *niyābat*.

The centrality accorded to the individual self in the *Secrets* is complemented by attention to the collective self in Iqbal's second collection of Persian poems *The Mysteries of Selflessness* (*Ramūz-i Bekhūdī*) published in 1918. The reason behind the poem's publication on the eve of the Khilāfat Movement, when Indian Muslims were to enter politics *en masse* as a *qaum*, is made apparent in Aqeel's observation that the *Mysteries* was written with the purpose of articulating the Islamic concept of nationalism.⁵⁵² If *khūdī* is self, then lexically *be* in *bekhūdī* negates the self as it means 'without' and conveys absence or lack. However, *bekhūdī* should not be confused with the literal sense of being 'without self,' 'loss of self,' or self-annihilation for the sake of the collective, but selflessness in serving the community as a necessary pathway in *khūdī*'s development. Connecting the links between the *Secrets* and *Mysteries*, 'Uṣmān explains that the idea of the individual perfection entails intellectual and spiritual

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Aqeel, *Iqbal from Finite to Infinite*, 44 (n. 134).

development, and thereafter dedicating this achievement for collective wellbeing toward the growth of one's society.⁵⁵³

The central idea of the poem is captured in its opening verses: "The link that binds the individual (*fard*)/ To the Society (*jamā'at*) a Mercy is;/ His truest Self in the Community (*millat*)/ Alone achieves fulfilment."⁵⁵⁴ Service to the community need not entail undue constraints on the genuine growth of *khūdī*: "Self negates itself/ In the Community, that it may be/ No more a petal, but a rosary."⁵⁵⁵ "Yet only in Society he finds/ Security and preservation."⁵⁵⁶ The process of human perfection, therefore, necessitates the mutuality of *khūdī/bekhūdī*, in which the individual and community persist in balanced communion with one another, helping one another to grow in perfection in their journey toward God. The individual self needs the community for its growth. But, community implies placing limits on the individual.⁵⁵⁷ One point of mediation between the individual and the community is law. For law demands self-discipline in obeying its restrictions and rules, and society must have law to regulate itself. "For Iqbal this willing submission of khudi to the law is essential to the formation of an Islamic community."⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵³ Muḥammad 'Uṣmān, "Qaum kis taraḥ bantī hai? [How is a Nation Formed?]," in *Iqbāl: Tasavvur-i Qaumīyyat aur Pākistān*, 43-55. A primer also appears in Luce-Claude Maitre, *Introduction to the Thought of Iqbal*, trans. M. A. M. Dar (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, n.d.). For an overview of Iqbal's philosophy of selfhood, see Diagne, *Islam and Open Society*, 5-17.

⁵⁵⁴ Muhammad Iqbal, *Mysteries of Selflessness: A Philosophical Poem*, trans. Arthur J. Arberry, Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/persian/ramuz/translation/02.htm>.

⁵⁵⁵ Iqbal, 7.

⁵⁵⁶ Iqbal, 8.

⁵⁵⁷ Majeed, *Iqbal and Postcolonialism*, 51.

⁵⁵⁸ Majeed, *Iqbal and Postcolonialism*, 48.

As in the *Secrets*, the general message of the commitment to monotheism and the Prophetic example, along with the critique of thisworldly ideal of nationalism, also runs throughout the *Mysteries*:

Thinkest thou the Community (*millat*) is based
Upon the Country (*vaṭan*)?

...

Other are the foundations that support
Islam's Community (*millat*); they lie concealed
Within our hearts. We, who are present now,
Have bound our hearts to Him who is unseen,
And therefore are delivered from the chains
Of earthly things.⁵⁵⁹

In effect, Iqbal means to caution Muslims to not rest their social organization on “earthly” objects and symbols unworthy of serving as *khūdī*'s ideal, and liable to obstructing its growth. Rather, he recommends to found the Muslim community on the basis of its faith in religious ultimacy (“He who is unseen”), which alone can ensure the proper growth of the Muslim community toward its historical destiny, and of the individual *khūdī* toward its ultimate union with God.

The theopolitical importance of the *Secrets* and the *Mysteries* is that they articulate anthropology through Islam's sacred symbols, and the mutual quest of the individual and society discloses nation and homeland as material obstacles to spiritual growth. These insights are systematically developed in Iqbal's theopolitical writings and lectures.

⁵⁵⁹ Iqbal, *Mysteries*, Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://allamaiqbal.com/works/poetry/persian/ramuz/translation/04.htm>.

Political Theology

Upon his return from Europe—ten years after Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s death and four years before Azad’s launch of *Al-Hilāl*—we find Iqbal meditating on political theology, first, in an article entitled “Political Thought in Islam” (1908). The article addresses what Iqbal considered the basis of Islam’s constitutional theory through an analysis of the early Medinan and the post-Medinan Caliphate. Iqbal continues to meditate on the same themes in an address published as “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal”⁵⁶⁰ (1909), which articulates the ethical foundation of Iqbal’s political theology. A second article published in 1910 was entitled “The Muslim Community: A Sociological Study,” which discusses in philosophical prose the general theme of *beḥūdī*.

As Iqbal’s political theology rests on his anthropology, it too addresses the mutuality of *khūdī/beḥūdī*. Accordingly, the language of individuality is retained as Iqbal moves from the individual to the collective in political terms. He observes that “the purely political aspect of the Islamic ideal” means “the ideal of Islam as entertained by a corporate individuality.”⁵⁶¹ The emergence of Islam’s corporate individuality for Iqbal does not rest with extraneous, structural forces (say, the state) imposing a corporate unity from without, but is inherent in Islam. “Islam is something more than a creed, it is also a community, a nation. The membership of Islam as a community is not determined by birth, locality or naturalization; it consists in the identity of belief,” “a pure idea.”⁵⁶² The

⁵⁶⁰ Muhammad Iqbal, “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal,” in *Thought and Reflections of Iqbal*, ed. Syed Abdul Wahid (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf: 1992), 29-55.

⁵⁶¹ Iqbal, “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal,” 50.

⁵⁶² Iqbal, 50.

idea is further elaborated in Iqbal's assertion that the

law of Islam does not recognize the apparently natural differences of race, nor the historical differences of nationality. Nationality with Islam is not the highest limit of political development; for the general principles of the law of Islam rest on human nature, not on the peculiarities of a particular people. The inner cohesion of such a nation would consist not in ethnic or geographic unity, not in the unity of language or social tradition, but in the unity of the religious and political ideal; or, in the psychological fact of "like-mindedness" as St. Paul would say.⁵⁶³

We learned from Greenfeld that modern individuality is caught in the problem of identity creation, solved in part by nationalism within whose purview each individual creates a more personal identity. In the quoted passage, Iqbal defines Muslim identity based on "identity of belief," which both encompasses and transcends national identity. The ideal territory for such a religious nation, Iqbal tells us, would be the whole earth.⁵⁶⁴ The salient difference between two identities is that while religious identity is given, largely constructed for the individual, identity within the national purview must be created by the individual. In addition, Islamic identity is universal as it remains open to any non-Muslim willing to convert. National identity is, in contrast, parochial and exclusive. It can never include all of humanity.

We saw in the previous chapters that political theology has difficulty granting individual too much freedom. Iqbal's explicit focus on individuality as a metaphysical and cosmic fact goes a long way in rehabilitating the significance of individuality in

⁵⁶³ Muhammad Iqbal, "Political Thought in Islam," in *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, ed. Syed Abdul Wahid (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1992), 60. Elsewhere, Iqbal speaks of the Muslim culture as defined by "a uniformed mental outlook, a peculiar way of looking at the world, a definite standpoint from which to judge the value of things which sharply defines our community, and transforms it into a corporate individual, giving it a definite purpose and ideal of its own." "The Muslim Community," 126.

⁵⁶⁴ Iqbal, "Political Thought in Islam," 60.

Islam. However, the mutuality of *khūdī/bekhūdī* places limits on the pursuit of personal interests: “the interests of the individual as a unit are subordinate to the interests of the community as an external symbol of the Islamic principle. This is the only principle, which limits the liberty of the individual, who is otherwise absolutely free.”⁵⁶⁵ The danger of overwhelming the individual under collective imperatives, however, is tempered by Iqbal’s ethical ideal that “[t]hat which intensifies the sense of individuality in man is good, that which enfeebles it is bad.”⁵⁶⁶ Accordingly, “intensification of the sense of human personality, [is] to be the ultimate ground of all ethical activity. Man is a free responsible being; he is the maker of his own destiny his salvation is his own business.”⁵⁶⁷ To make oneself and to work for one’s own salvation requires a context of operation suitable for the endeavor. Iqbal thus resolves that the most suitable form of government for Muslims is democracy as “the ideal of which is to let man develop all the possibilities of his nature by allowing him as much freedom as practicable.”⁵⁶⁸ In terms of the process to achieve this, Iqbal returns to the early Muslim history to discern universal principles. He analyzes the different ways in which the early Muslim leaders were appointed in consultation with the public opinion. After reviewing various such examples, Iqbal derives from them the following political principles

⁵⁶⁵ Iqbal, “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal,” 51.

⁵⁶⁶ Iqbal, 36-37.

⁵⁶⁷ Iqbal, 38. Similarly, the “whole system of Islamic ethics is based on the ideal of individuality; anything which tends to repress the healthy development of individuality is quite inconsistent with the spirit of Islamic law and ethics.” Iqbal, “Political Thought in Islam,” 61.

⁵⁶⁸ Iqbal, “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal,” 51. As in many other things Western, Iqbal was also nuanced and critical of democracy as actually implemented in the West. In one poem he declares, “Have you not seen the democratic system of the West?/ —Fair-countenanced, but more black-souled than Jenghiz Khan.” “Satan’s Advisory Council.” Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct79/9.htm>.

that *Political Sovereignty de facto resides in the people*; and that the electorate by their *free act of unanimous choice embody it in a determinate personality* in which the *collective will* is, so to speak, *individualized*, without investing this concrete seat of power with any privilege in the eye of the law except legal control over the *individual wills* of which it is an expression. The idea of *universal agreement* is in fact the fundamental principle of Muslim constitutional theory.⁵⁶⁹

This is a difficult passage to unpack as it seems to move in conflicting directions. First, Iqbal comes closest to upholding democracy on religious grounds than his predecessors. Sayyid Ahmad Khan was openly hostile to democracy. Azad supported democracy in all earnest only after he discovered religious nationalism to be a fraud. His perennialist vision, however, renders democracy a polity of religions, and not of autonomous individuals. Iqbal's turn to popular sovereignty, "collective will," "individual wills," and "unanimous choice" begin to point to the possible birth of liberal democracy in Iqbal's thought. However, two things mitigate such a possibility. One the one hand, he trashed secular democracy in his verse. For example, "A European gentleman has disclosed this secret/ that men of wisdom do not disclose what they have in their mind/ ...[that] democracy is a kind of government, in which/ individuals are counted and not weighed."⁵⁷⁰ Iqbal too thus rejected Western democracy as unsuitable for India. On the other hand, he touted the idea of a "spiritual democracy" as the ultimate aim of Islam.⁵⁷¹ In the final analysis, Iqbal's view of democracy was in principle similar to that of Maududi, one in which democracy is limited within the bounds of *sharī'at*. Akram captures the nuance of Iqbal's perspective: democracy was "merely an instrument of

⁵⁶⁹ Iqbal, "Political Thought in Islam," 58. Emphasis added.

⁵⁷⁰ Iqbal quoted from *The Rod of Moses*, "Iqbal on Democracy," Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/apr92/5.htm>.

⁵⁷¹ See the discussion in Akram, "Iqbal's Political Philosophy," 129-166.

awakening Muslim masses and their mobilization for the sake of collective action and not a cardinal principle of Iqbal's worldview."⁵⁷² Hence, even for Iqbal, who was enthusiastic about many modern developments, and made an effort to earnestly incorporate liberal ideas, aspects of modernity remained instrumental.

Returning to the passage under discussion, the other factor mitigating the possibility of liberal democracy in Iqbal's thought is the individualization of the many wills into a "determinate personality," which carries the germs of authoritarianism. In fact, such authoritarianism is in keeping with the Prophet's rule in Medina, where he ruled as God's agent. Second, in the Prophet's absence, Islam's sacred law as an embodiment of the divine and Prophetic intentions takes precedence. For, one of the "two basic propositions underlying Muslim political constitution," according to Iqbal, is that the "law of God is absolutely supreme. Authority, except as an interpreter of the law, has no place in the social structure of Islam."⁵⁷³ Popular sovereignty, therefore, is restricted within the bounds of the sacred law. Iqbal's Islamic nationalism thus limits the role of two central principles of nationalism: popular sovereignty and individual freedom. He does, however, go farther in upholding the principle of egalitarianism. Iqbal expresses the second principle of Muslim polity as the

absolute equality of all the members of the community....There is no privileged class, no priesthood, no caste system. Islam is a unity in which there is no distinction, and this unity is secured by making men believe in the two simple propositions—the unity of God and the mission of the Prophet.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷² Akram, 153.

⁵⁷³ Iqbal, "Political Thought in Islam," 52.

⁵⁷⁴ Iqbal, 53.

Iqbal's political theology demonstrates its continuity with composite nationalists in grounding itself in Islamic ultimacy. While they share the same sacred symbols (God, Prophet, Qur'an, *sharī'at*, etc.), Iqbal is much more inclined toward accommodating democracy owing to his focus on individuality. Yet, even Iqbal is not willing to transgress the bounds of religion. In practical politics, Iqbal also agreed with the composite nationalists' emancipatory ideal of restoring Muslim religio-cultural autonomy within majority-Muslim politics. However, Iqbal was willing to go much farther than the composite nationalists. In so doing, he too, like other Islamic nationalists, entangled his universality in territorial preferences.

Toward Pragmatics of Muslim Sovereignty

In the 1910 lecture, "The Muslim Community: A Sociological Study," Iqbal likened society to a "social organism" that is more than the sum of its parts. He states that "[s]ociety is much more than its existing individuals; it is in its nature infinite; it includes within its contents the innumerable unborn generations."⁵⁷⁵ As such, Iqbal finds that the most significant problem before the social organism is "the problem of a continuous national life."⁵⁷⁶ The 'how' of perpetuating national life depends on the nature of a given society. What distinguishes the Muslim society from other societies is its religious basis that transcends the limitations of all forms of materiality. Overcoming materiality for Iqbal requires training the individuals pertinent to the task, and that is the task of religion. The purpose of religion, Iqbal emphasizes, "is not thinking about life, its main purpose is

⁵⁷⁵ Iqbal, 120.

⁵⁷⁶ Iqbal, 120-121.

to build up a coherent social whole for the gradual elevation of life.”⁵⁷⁷ Accordingly, in order to

participate in the life of the communal self the individual mind must undergo a complete transformation, and this transformation is secured, externally by the institutions of Islam, and internally by that uniform culture which the intellectual energy of our forefathers has produced.⁵⁷⁸

Unfortunately for Iqbal, the community built by the forefathers no longer existed in his contemporary India, and this led him to reconsider the political makeup of the region during and after colonialism. It thus came to pass that the philosophical theologian who so forcefully rejected Islam’s association with territory resolved to safeguard Muslim autonomy within the confines of majority-Muslim territories in India. In 1930, Iqbal took over the leadership of the ML at a time when, due to the collapse and the violent aftermath of the Khilāfat Movement, the Muslims were in disarray, splintered into different political groups, and without a unified leadership. In this backdrop, Iqbal delivered the presidential address at the annual meeting of the ML at Allahabad in December 1930, in which he is said to have enunciated the idea of Pakistan.

Iqbal presents Islam as an “ethical ideal plus a certain kind of polity,”⁵⁷⁹ which is described as “a social structure regulated by a legal system.”⁵⁸⁰ The exceptional nature of the Islamic polity is that in it “God and the universe, spirit and matter, Church and State, are organic to each other.”⁵⁸¹ In these assertions, Iqbal’s intention is to impress on his

⁵⁷⁷ Iqbal, “Muslim Community,” 124.

⁵⁷⁸ Iqbal, 125.

⁵⁷⁹ Muhammad Iqbal, “Presidential Address Delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim League, 29th December 1930,” in *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, ed. Latif Ahmad Sherwani (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 2015), 4.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Iqbal, 5.

audience what he finds to be the internal consistency of Islamic ultimacy, culture, and politics. Assessing the situation in South Asia at the time, Iqbal expressed his universalist desire, in a manner reminiscent of his early nationalism, that “religious differences should disappear from this country,” “a beautiful idea” with a “poetic appeal.” Unfortunately, Iqbal concluded that the South Asian imagination on the whole was not prepared for a truly pluralistic nationality.⁵⁸² A truly plural society not forthcoming, Iqbal resolves to take a more expedient path to Muslim emancipation. Justifying Khan’s anti-INC stance, Iqbal announced that “the policy guidelines that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan laid down for the Muslims were correct...that if the Muslims have to live as Muslims in India...they should have an independent political program of their own.”⁵⁸³ We thus find here a point of continuity between Khan’s proto-nationalist project and Iqbal’s full-blown Islamic nationalism. Both Khan and Iqbal were moved by the rising tide of Indian nationalism, and by the necessity of Muslim emancipation, animated by the nostalgic memory of the Muslim power in the region.

Iqbal proceeds to enunciate his famous territorial solution for the consolidation of the majority-Muslim provinces of Punjab, North-West Frontier, Sindh, and Baluchistan to be “amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire.”⁵⁸⁴ Iqbal explains his rationale behind the proposal as “actuated by a genuine desire for free development which is practically impossible under

⁵⁸² Zia-ud-din Chishti, “Iqbal’s Criticism of the Western Concept of Nationalism,” (Master thesis, University of Peshawar, 1996), 93.

⁵⁸³ Chishti, 96. Emphasis added.

⁵⁸⁴ Iqbal, “Presidential Address 1930,” 11.

the type of unitary government contemplated by the nationalist Hindu politicians with a view to secure permanent communal dominance in the whole of India.”⁵⁸⁵ In Iqbal’s imagination, Muslims could not pursue their “free development” under majority-Hindu India, and without the benefit of Islamic institutions and culture. Iqbal’s second reason for proposing territorial consolidation was that “Islam is not a Church. It is a state conceived as a contractual organism long before Rousseau ever thought of such a thing.”⁵⁸⁶ Logically, then, if Islam were a state, it needed territory to govern.

Sevea finds Iqbal’s Allahabad proposal closer to the JUH’s scheme of securing Muslims’ religio-cultural autonomy in the context of provincial autonomy.⁵⁸⁷ In fact, Iqbal’s scheme at this stage resembled the Indian Emirate scheme to the extent that both sought to bring Muslims under a single theopolitical authority within India. There were, however, differences between Iqbal and the JUH. For the composite nationalists, no accommodation or adjustment could be made with British colonialism. However, Iqbal was imagining Muslim self-government “within the British Empire, or without the British Empire.” Self-government within the British Empire obviously implies perpetuating colonialism; whereas “without the British Empire” hints at Muslim emancipation not only from colonialism, but independence from India. For the latter reason, Iqbal’s proposal is credited with an articulation of an independent Pakistani state in Pakistan’s official narrative. However, the official reading of the address’s real significance has been questioned. Singh points out that the address neither advocates for a separate state,

⁵⁸⁵ Iqbal, 12.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Sevea, *Political Philosophy*, 188.

nor makes any mention of Pakistan.⁵⁸⁸ Sevea highlights that the session was so poorly attended that it lacked quorum.⁵⁸⁹ Kamran further points to a letter of Iqbal in which he disassociated himself from the Pakistan scheme itself, clarifying that his idea was of a Muslim state within India.⁵⁹⁰ Singh further notes that even in 1937, a year before his death, Iqbal talked of “redistribution,” and not division, of India along racial, religious, and linguistic lines.⁵⁹¹ Nonetheless, Majeed’s point needs to be heeded above all that “Iqbal’s work is incomprehensible without the multiple significations of the trope of separatism.”⁵⁹² This partially supports my point that the tropes of partition have been the staple of Muslim political discourse since Khan. In Singh’s speculation, therefore, “had Iqbal lived another ten years, he would have championed Pakistan with an ecstatic fanaticism.”⁵⁹³ Finally, it should be noted that unlike Khan and later separatism, Iqbal’s territorial solution was not determined by anti-Hindu *r essentiment*. Rather, in Malik’s clarification, it was animated by “the practical necessity of first acquiring a Muslim state, which would then make it possible for Indian Muslims to proceed with their experiment of building a society in accordance with the Shari’a.”⁵⁹⁴ Territorial sovereignty for Iqbal, however, did not constitute the basis of Muslim identity or an organizing principle.

⁵⁸⁸ Singh, *Pilgrim*, 91. Vahid lists other proposals of partitioning India made prior to Iqbal’s. However, he credits Iqbal with articulating such a proposal for the first time from the Muslim League’s platform and the first to grab worldwide attention. *Studies in Iqbal*, 300-304.

⁵⁸⁹ Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal: Islam and Nationalism in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 188.

⁵⁹⁰ Kamran, “Problematizing Iqbal as a State Ideologue,” in *Revisioning Iqbal*, 127.

⁵⁹¹ Singh, *Pilgrim*, 92.

⁵⁹² Majeed, *Iqbal and Postcolonialism*, 81.

⁵⁹³ Singh, *Pilgrim*, 95.

⁵⁹⁴ Malik, “Preservation of Muslim Identity.”

Critique of Nationalism as Neo-idolatry

Husain Ahmad Madani's peculiar interpretation of nationalism had denied any religionesque possibility of nationalism that might replace Muslims' emotional repertoire or its worldview by rejecting out of hand all its secular, "atheistic" connotations. As the critics of nationalism, on the other hand, Iqbal and Maududi draw attention to the inherent conflict between Islam's nationalesque and nationalism's religionesque dimensions. Iqbal had declared in the 1910 lecture that the "essential" difference between Islam and other communities was Islam's "peculiar conception of nationality," which emerged out of "a certain view of the universe" and the "historical tradition" founded by Prophet Muhammad. Given that "Islam abhors all material limitations,"⁵⁹⁵ the basis of such a community was thus discordant with the "territorial conception of nationality."⁵⁹⁶ For "the feeling of patriotism which the national idea evokes is a kind of deification of a material object, diametrically opposed to the essence of Islam which appeared as a protest against all the subtle and coarse forms of idolatry."⁵⁹⁷ Iqbal's equation of nationalism with idolatry finds its most forceful expression in his poetry.

Iqbal's most trenchant attack against nationalism occurs in the poem "Vaṭaniyyat" (territorial nationalism).⁵⁹⁸ After denouncing the modern age for carving new idols (*ṣanam*) and (nationalist) Muslims everywhere for constructing their own pantheons (*haram*) for harboring the new idols, Iqbal declares, "Country (*vaṭan*), is the biggest

⁵⁹⁵ Iqbal, "Muslim Community," 121.

⁵⁹⁶ Iqbal, 122.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Iqbal, "Patriotism," Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, access January 01, 2021, http://www.allamaiqbal.com/poetry.php?bookbup=22&orderno=103&lang_code=en&lang=2&conTy pe=en.

among these new gods! (*khudā'on*)/ What is its shirt is the shroud of Din (religion)/ This idol which is the product of the new civilization/ Is the plunderer of the structure of the Holy Prophet's Din [religion]."⁵⁹⁹ In contrast, the poet tells the Muslims, "Your arm is enforced with the strength of the Divine Unity (*tauḥīd*, monotheism)/ You are the followers of Mustafa [Muhammad], your country [*des*] is Islam." As Iqbal sees Islam's essence under threat of annihilation by nationalism, he implores the Muslims, "O Mustafa's follower! You should destroy this idol [*but*]."⁶⁰⁰ The idol that threatens Islam, also threatens universal fraternity: "The antagonism among world's nations is created by this [idol] alone," so that "God's creation is unjustly divided among nations by it/ The Islamic concept of nationality (*qaumiyyat-i islām*) is uprooted by it." Iqbal's scathing critique of nationalism connects with the anti-colonial implications in the anthropology of *khūdī*. Just as *khūdī* was cast against the colonial anthropology of class, caste, and race, so Iqbal's critique of nationalism is set against a polity founded upon race, caste, color, nationality, or territory. In this connection, Majeed concludes that Iqbal's critique of nationalism as antithetical to Islam is to present Islam as a project of "deracialization."⁶⁰¹ Similarly, Sevea presents Iqbal as anticipating "the later third-worldist critiques of colonialism as a totalitarian exercise of power which extended into the realms of culture and ideology, and sought to challenge western intellectual hegemony."⁶⁰² Equating nationalism with idolatry signifies a nationalist's relationship with her nation as one of a

⁵⁹⁹ Khalil's translation ends the couplet with "dīn," whereas in the original the word is "mazhab." Both are usually translated a 'religion.'

⁶⁰⁰ Mustafā ('chosen') is one of the names given to Prophet Muhammad.

⁶⁰¹ Majeed, *Iqbal and Postcolonialism*, 66-70.

⁶⁰² Sevea, *Political Philosophy*, 63.

worshipful attitude. That attitude, as we variously learned in Chapter 2, is rooted in the spirituality of nationalism that entails sacrifice, hero-worship, and the like. This emotional relationship with a secular deity of the nation is part of the reason that worries Iqbal.

Iqbal's anxieties over nationalism as idolatry find a semiotic explanation with Neville. Religious semiosis devolves into idolatry when something finite is misappropriated as the infinite, thereby, carries over false values from the idol into interpreter. The result is irreligious effects on the soul of the interpreter and the whole community. Where salvation is a concern, idolatry can frustrate the hopes of eternal salvation. The Urdu words Iqbal uses for 'idol' are *ṣanam* and *but*, and both refer to physical representations. Iqbal's condemnation of nationalism cautions Muslims to beware of the more subtle forms of modern idolatry, the non-sacred symbols in imagination that might creep in to replace sacred symbols. The value of secular nationalism may have held a liberating value in the culture of the colonizer, but its blind and unconditional importation in the colony was deleterious on two counts: first as idolatry, and second as a continuation of colonialism. Hence, political theology's construction of Islamic nationalism was intended to first neutralize nationalism of its secular venom by Islamizing it, and then deploying it as a weapon of emancipation against colonialism. Iqbal continued his critique of nationalism in his debate with Madani.

Critique of Madani's Composite Nationalism

We saw that the early Iqbal started out as a nationalist. He once confessed to an acquaintance that whereas after being a staunch advocate of composite nationalism, he came to reject it in totality as his ideas matured.⁶⁰³ Iqbal elaborated his critique of composite nationalism in his rebuttal to Ḥusain Aḥmad Madani. Iqbal frames the debate as an answer to the following question:

“are Muslims collectively a single, united and definite party founded on the Unity of God and the Finality of Prophethood as its basis, or are they a party which owing to the requirements of race, nation and color can, leaving aside their religious unity, adopt some other social order based upon a different system and law?”⁶⁰⁴

The composite nationalist answer to Iqbal's question was that the Muslims were a distinct nation founded upon monotheism and the Muhammadan model. However, they contended that the federal model for India that they espoused saw no difficulty in handing over the strictly non-religious, non-cultural aspects of governance to the Indian government, which guaranteed religious freedom and protection of minority religions from Hindu and secular influences. Iqbal, however, found the composite nationalist argument untenable. To argue his case, he first resorts to scriptural hermeneutics. In constructing this argument, Iqbal shows more clearly than Khan, Azad, or Madani, the partitioning of Muslim imagination.

Toward scrutinizing the Qur'anic terms that might signify nationhood, Iqbal concurs with Madani that *millat* “stands for a religion, a law and a program” and “a

⁶⁰³ The acquaintance was Sayyid Muḥammad Shāhiddudīn Jāfarī. Sevea, *Political Philosophy*, 145.

⁶⁰⁴ Iqbal, “Islam and Nationalism,” Koranselskab, access January 01, 2021, <http://www.koranselskab.dk/profiler/iqbal/nationalism.htm>.

particular way of life,” whereas *qaum* references any group or any number of groups, and without any necessary association with religion or a prophet. However, should a *qaum* adhere to a particular way of religious life, it is sufficient to then label it *millat*, without distinguishing it as a *qaum*, for *millat* presupposes a *qaum*. Accordingly, the Qur'an labels Abraham's monotheism his *millat* (*millah Ibrāhīm*), and those who enter this *millat* do so only after “renouncing [all other] different qaums and millats.”⁶⁰⁵ The uniqueness of Abraham lies in that he was the first Prophet who cut loose religion's affiliation with nation, race and land—and, we should add, even family. Iqbal remarks that with Abraham, humanity was classified into only two classes: “monotheists and polytheists,” and since then there is “only one millat confronting the Muslim community, that of the non-Muslims taken collectively.” “It is for this reason that the Quran openly declares that any system other than that of Islam must be deprecated and rejected.”⁶⁰⁶ In this perspective, Islam “admits of no modus vivendi and is not prepared to compromise with any other law regulating human society. Indeed it declares that every code of law other than that of Islam is inadequate and unacceptable.”⁶⁰⁷ As far as Iqbal is concerned, this logic alone explains why Prophet Muhammad did not attempt to reconcile with his own tribe in Mecca on the basis of (composite) tribal nationality, but instead wielded the sword of religion against all ties of race, tribe, lineage, and land. What is more, Iqbal observes, the Meccan Muslims deserted their homeland in migrating to Medina to establish a polity. In contrast to *qaum*, “[m]illat, on the contrary, will carve out of the

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

different parties a new and common party. In other words *millat* or *ummat* embraces nations but cannot be merged in them.”⁶⁰⁸ The tenor of Iqbal’s argument seems to be that *millat* is the organizing principle, the formal cause, that organizes a *qaum*, the material cause, into a *distinct people, a nation*. This discourse of Iqbal is conspicuous in conveying the partitioning of Muslim imagination as inherent in Islamic ultimacy. For if there are only the two *millats* of Abrahamic monotheism and the rest of humanity, and *millat* founds *qaumiyyat*, then owing to their separate *millats*, Muslims and Hindus belong to separate *qaumiyyats*. Lexical hairsplitting for Iqbal, however, misses the whole point of his contention against composite nationalism.

Iqbal readily admits Madani’s pronouncement that modern-day nations and nationalism are founded upon homeland (*vatan*). However, Iqbal’s contention is that if Madani’s declaration *prescribes* nationalism as the foundation for Muslims’ political organization then it must be rejected—as it implies a substitution for *millat*. For nationalism does not regard nation or country as a merely geographical fact of association; “it is rather a principal of human society, the word ‘country’ when used as a political concept, comes into conflict with Islam.”⁶⁰⁹ Discerning the ideological underpinnings and corresponding cultural effects of nationalism, Iqbal emphasizes that nationalism entails political consequences beyond the simple semantics of shared nationality. These consequences include, but are not limited to, “indifference towards religion.” The deleterious consequences for religion in a multi-religious society like India

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

entail that “the communities generally die away and the only common factor that remains in the individuals of that nation is irreligiousness,” or “relativity of religions.”⁶¹⁰ In such a case, “Islam will be reduced to an ethical ideal with indifference to its social order as an inevitable consequence.”⁶¹¹ Iqbal’s discourse against nationalism demonstrates that he understood in his own way both the religionesque threat of nationalism in mimicking and replacing religion’s emotional and axiological functions, and the threat to Islam’s nationalesque dynamics as nationalism seeks to domesticate religion as a matter of individual privacy. In Sevea’s recapitulation, Iqbal found Islam in conflict with nationalism as it demanded and commanded loyalty and obedience which was owed to Islam.⁶¹²

In the Muslim context, Iqbal’s political theology was unique due to his systematic, philosophical interpretation in light of modern semiosis. The difficulty in engaging with Iqbal is the terseness of his discourse, abstractions of his philosophical insights, and the lack of detail in analysis. While Iqbal and Maududi were poles apart in their general approach to Islam, they shared many common points in their criticism of nationalism. In this sense, Maududi can be seen furthering Iqbal’s line of thought.

SAYYID ABU’L A’LA MAUDUDI

Sayyid Abu’l A’lā Maududi was born in 1903 in Aurangabad, Deccan to a Chishti Sufi family, which situates him within the *sharīf* culture. His formal education included the traditional subjects of the time such as Persian, Urdu, Arabic, logic, Islamic

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² Sevea, *Political Philosophy*, 160.

jurisprudence, and so on. Like Iqbal and Azad, Maududi too was precocious in his intellectual abilities, with advanced writing capabilities, demonstrated in his translation of a modernist Arabic work into Urdu at the tender age of eleven.⁶¹³ Unable to continue his education at an Islamic seminary due to his father's illness, Maududi was forced to find work at fifteen, and chose journalism as his profession.⁶¹⁴ Without the benefit of the kind of education Iqbal imbibed in Europe, Maududi still managed to become conversant with European thinkers, including Greek philosophers, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Darwin, Marx, and Lenin, among others.⁶¹⁵

In this first intellectual phase, Maududi shows composite nationalist convictions, evident in his autobiographical works on two prominent Hindu leaders spearheading the Indian national movement, namely, Madan Mohan Malavia (written in 1918) and Gandhi (written in 1919).⁶¹⁶ In 1920, deepening his involvement with composite nationalism, Maududi and his brother took over the editorship of the pro-INC newspaper *Tāj* (The crown, published in Jabalpur).⁶¹⁷ At this stage, Maududi wrote on the conventional topics of discussion in the Urdu press at the time, such as pan-Islamism and Turkish war activities—some of the same topics that filled the pages of Azad's *Al-Hilāl*.⁶¹⁸

Beyond journalism, Maududi thrust himself in organizing the activities of the

⁶¹³ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 13.

⁶¹⁴ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 14.

⁶¹⁵ Roy Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi and Political Islam: Authority and the Islamic State* (London: Routledge, 2011), 22.

⁶¹⁶ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 15-16. Gandhi's biography by Maududi was never published, and was later denounced by Maududi. Vahdat, *Islamic Ethos and the Specter of Modernity*, 58.

⁶¹⁷ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 16.

⁶¹⁸ Hartung already detects communal concerns even at this stage. Jan-Peter Hartung, *A System of Life: Mawdudi and the Ideologisation of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17.

Khilāfat Movement in Jabalpur,⁶¹⁹ writing articles, delivering speeches, and organizing political activities. As was the case with Azad, the pragmatics of the Khilāfat Movement also compelled a theopolitical transition in Maududi, however, in a completely different direction than Azad. The Movement's collapse shook Maududi's composite nationalist convictions as he criticized Gandhi's decision to call off the Noncooperation Movement.⁶²⁰ In addition, Maududi was disturbed by the Arab nationalist hostility toward the Ottomans, and the role of Turkish nationalism in the abolishment of the Caliphate. He thus saw (secular) nationalism "as a surreptitious form of Western domination and the foremost threat to the realization of the *umma*."⁶²¹ Hartung considers the years right after the Khilāfat Movement as "the formative period of Maududi's religio-political thought proper."⁶²² Maududi himself speaks of the overall situation of Indian Muslims following the Khilāfat Movement as defined by a widespread confusion (*intishār*),⁶²³ a lack of national (*qaumī*) policy, dearth of competent leadership, and a paucity of sociopolitical organization among Muslims.⁶²⁴ In the midst of this confusion, Maududi's thinking took a decisive turn. Nasr calls this Maududi's revivalist turn, and it coincides with the second phase of his development, that of Islamic nationalism.

⁶¹⁹ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 16-17.

⁶²⁰ Charles J. Adams, "The Ideology of Mawlana Mawdudi," in *South Asian Politics and Religion*, ed. Eugene Donald Smith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 373.

⁶²¹ Mohamed Carimo, "Islam" as the National Identity for the Formation of Pakistan: The Political Thought of Muhammad Iqbal and Abu'l 'Ala Mawdudi," *História* 33, no. 1 (2014), <https://www.scielo.br/j/his/a/pCLmLLGcCRSsv7bw66gzNHd/?lang=en>.

⁶²² Hartung, *A System of Life*, 19-20.

⁶²³ Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind aur Musalmān*, ed. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 2005), 1:33-34.

⁶²⁴ Maududi, 1:48. In 1925, before his turn to political theology, Maududi had identified ignorance (*jahālat*), poverty, and Hindu and Christian missionary work as imminent threats to Indian Muslims. Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, *Sarchashmah-yi Quvvat*, 22-24.

Continuing his association with composite nationalism, Maududi moved to Delhi in 1921 to take over the editorship of the JUH's newspaper *Muslim*, a post he kept until 1923.⁶²⁵ The association with the JUH brought him in contact with the who's who of India's Muslim scholarship, and at their behest he resumed his religious education in traditional Islamic sciences, obtaining official certification as a Deobandi *'ālim*.⁶²⁶ After the *Muslim* discontinued, Maududi took over the editorship of another one of JUH's newspaper *Al-Jam'iyat* in 1925, which he left in 1928. In 1932, Maududi bought the journal *Tarjumānul Qur'ān* (The Qur'anic interpreter), published from Hyderabad, Deccan, and assumed its editorship. Maududi edited the journal until his death in 1979. The journal's reach remained limited, at most no more than 600 subscriptions in the pre-Partition period, but it gave Maududi a platform for disseminating his ideas.⁶²⁷

When in March 1940 the first public declaration for Pakistan was made, Maududi rejected it because it failed on two counts. First, Maududi argued, as did the JUH, that the leaders of such a movement must be of strictly Islamic character, whereas the leaders of the ML were motivated by secular sentiments and betrayed any genuine knowledge of Islam.⁶²⁸ In addition, Maududi saw the ML as driven by anti-Hindu sentiments instead of

⁶²⁵ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 17.

⁶²⁶ Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi*, 27-30.

⁶²⁷ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 30.

⁶²⁸ Sayyid Abul A'ālā Mawdudi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind aur Musalmān*, ed. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 2005), 2:14-15. Maududi went so far as to state that "No trace of Islam can be found in the ideas and politics of Muslim League...[Jinnah] reveals no knowledge of the views of the Qur'an, nor does he care to research them...yet whatever he does is seen as the way of the Qur'an...All his knowledge comes from western laws and sources...His followers cannot be but *jama'at-i jahiliyah* [party of pagan]." It is better to translate the last expression as 'party of ignorance.' Maududi quoted in Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi*, 64.

love of and concern for Islam.⁶²⁹ Maududi thus disavowed Indian nationalism, composite nationalism, and Muslim separatism. Jackson also discerns practical (universalist) reasons behind Maududi's rejection of Pakistan, among them—as was the case with the JUH—the preference for proselytizing Hindus to Islam, instead of surrendering a large swath of India to them.⁶³⁰

Maududi's political response to the Pakistan movement was to found his own revolutionary party in 1941 by the name of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī* (Islamic Party) with a view to organizing a vanguard to carry out his revivalist agenda.⁶³¹ With the founding of this party, political theology assumes the task of a systematic political program. Before this, Azad had dreamt of a revolutionary party *Ḥizbullāh* (the Party of God), which never came to fruition.⁶³² In Nasr's view, Maududi was deeply influenced by Azad, and in fact continued on from where Azad exited the stage of Islamic nationalism.⁶³³

After the Partition of 1947, Maududi opted to move to Pakistan. In Pakistan, the discourse on *quam* and *qaumiyyat* disappear in Maududi's writings, and the problem attendant upon a nascent Islamic republic took center stage,⁶³⁴ that is, he moved from the

⁶²⁹ Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 2:257.

⁶³⁰ Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi*, 59.

⁶³¹ At its founding, the Islamic Party began with seventy members which included some prominent religious scholars like Manzūr Nu'mānī and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī. In four years, the Party's membership reached 800 in 1945. Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi*, 65-68. Moten, quoting S. V. R. Nasr, reports seventy five members at the Party's founding, and 224 *'ulamā* joining in by 1945. Abdul Rashid Moten, "Mawdūdī and the Transformation of *Jamā'at-i-Islāmī* in Paksitan," *The Muslim World* 93, no. 3 and 4 (2003): 392. In 1947, the Islamic Party had a mere 999 members. Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of *Jamaat-i Islami** (Princeton: Princeton University, 2009), 11. The Party remains active today in different ways in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

⁶³² See for example, *Al-Hilāl* 3, no. 1-2.

⁶³³ Nasr, *Islamic Revivalism*, 134.

⁶³⁴ For Maududi's career in Pakistan, see Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The *Jama'at-i Islami* of Pakistan* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

problem of emancipation under colonialism to the post-colonial problem of nation-building (mostly in constitutional and structural terms) on Islamic foundations. After a very tumultuous political career in Pakistan, Maududi died in 1979 in Buffalo, New York, following kidney operations. He was buried in Lahore.

Islam, Jāhiliyyat, and Nationalism

The revivalist historiography as formulated by Iqbal, Azad, and the JUH cast it in a narrower lens of the caliphate as a political idea. Maududi broadened the scope of this historiography by reimagining it as a perennial battle between Islam and anti-Islam. All forms of anti-Islam are seen as symbolic of *jāhiliyyat*, and this idea informs Maududi's critical theory.

The Arabic root *j-h-l* denotes 'ignorance' and 'foolishness,' thus carries negative valuation in relation to personal character. Retaining the original meaning (e.g., Qur'an 2:67), the Qur'an also applied it to its condemnation of four kinds of corruption in the pre-Islamic pagan, Arabian culture, namely, conjecture (*ẓann al-jāhiliyyah*), misguided judgment (*ḥukm al-jāhiliyyah*), indecent fashion (*tabarruj al-jāhiliyyah*), and group prejudice or partisanship (*ḥamiyyah al-jāhiliyyah*).⁶³⁵ As an idiomatic Islamic term, the noun *jāhiliyyah* came to denote an "epochal term" for the "period of ignorance, heathendom and polytheism (shirk) before man came to know about the conclusive revelation of God's fundamental oneness and His commandments, the concept of

⁶³⁵ In the Qur'an, conjecture (*ẓann al-jāhiliyyah*, Qur'an 3:154), judgement (*ḥukm al-jāhiliyyah*, Qur'an 5:50), fashion (*tabarruj al-jāhiliyyah al-ūlā*, Qur'an 33:33), and group prejudice (*ḥamiyyah al-jāhiliyyah*, Qur'an 48:26).

‘jāhiliyya’ was understood as the antonym of ‘Islam’ already in the earlier periods of Islamic history.”⁶³⁶ It

relates to attributes which were seen as diametrically opposed to the ethical concepts of Islam, namely those that put an emphasis on tribal belonging and, resulting from it, tribal pride which, in turn, was seen as responsible for tribal feuding and blood vengeance, but also the worship of tribal deities.⁶³⁷

Maududi’s contribution was to interpret *jāhiliyyah* as an anthropological, moral, and political idea. Anthropologically and morally, Tarik Jan explains, human nature for Maududi has a dual structure: baser instincts of the animal self and the higher ideals of the more proper human self. He understood that whereas Islam calls upon the human being to cultivate higher ideals, *jāhiliyyat* clings to baser, instinctual, carnal, animal self. “Consequently, Maududi says, the whole history of humanity is a reflection of this conflict between the human self and his counterpart animal self.”⁶³⁸ As an anthropological theory, Maududi’s conception of *jāhiliyyat* contrasts with the Islamic conception of essential spiritual and moral goodness of human nature (*fiṭrat*) bestowed upon every newborn, liable to be corrupted by cultural influences.

Philosophically, Maududi classifies all modes of living (*dastūr-i zindagī*) as emerging out of four kinds of metaphysical theories (*mā ba ‘daṭ ṭabī‘ī nazariyye*), three of which he categorizes as forms of *jāhiliyyat*, with the fourth one being Islam, understood in the sense of the perennial monotheism of all Prophets from Adam to Muhammad. The three historically recurring manifestations of *jāhiliyyat* are identified as materialism

⁶³⁶ Hartung, 63.

⁶³⁷ Hartung, 64. For Hartung’s illuminating discussion of *jāhiliyyah* in early Islam and Maududi’s interpretation, refer to 62-84.

⁶³⁸ Tarik Jan, “Mawdūdī’s Critique of the Secular Mind,” *The Muslim World* 93, no. 3–4 (July 2003): 511.

(*māddah parastānah*), which he also calls “sheer” (*khālīṣāh*) *jāhiliyyat*; polytheism, paganism, and idolatry (*mushrikānah*); and monasticism (*rāhibānah*), described as seeking escape from the world, and represented in Muslim history by Sufism.⁶³⁹

Maududi’s reinterpretation of *jāhiliyyat* is better thought of as an imagination corrupted by ignorance, immorality, or wrongful ideas, and for that reason, liable to misjudge religion’s true scope and purpose.

Maududi observes that the scope of religion (*mazhab*) before Prophet Muhammad’s advent was no more than an appendix (*zamimah*) of life that addressed only one’s personal relationship with one’s deity (*ma’būd*). “This was a conception of *jāhiliyyat*, and no culture (*tahzīb*) or civilization (*tamaddun*) can be founded [solely] upon such a [limited] conception. For culture and civilization encompass the whole of human life, and that which is a mere appendix (*damimah*) of life cannot become the foundation for a whole edifice of life.”⁶⁴⁰ Owing to this inadequacy of religion, *jāhiliyyat* has constructed culture and civilization upon non-religious (*ghair mazhabī*) and immoral (*ghair akhlāqī*) foundations. In contrast, the purpose of Prophet Muhammad’s mission was to eradicate the *jāhili* conception of religion, found culture and civilization on the basis of a rational (*‘aqālī o fikrī*) conception, and construct a complete social order (*aik mukammal nizām*) on its foundation. For this reason, Maududi deems it inappropriate to call Islam a religion in the *jāhili* sense of a private relation between God and an

⁶³⁹ Maududi, *Tajdīd o Iḥyā-yi Dīn* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 2004), 14-23. The English translation is entitled *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*.

⁶⁴⁰ Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 1:109-110.

individual.⁶⁴¹ Accordingly, he classifies any conception of private religiosity as “perennial *jāhiliyyat*” (*qadīm jāhilī taṣavvur*). For Maududi, Islam and *jāhiliyyat* are, therefore, binaries as “there is no middle ground between Islam and *jāhiliyyat*.”⁶⁴² The implication of Maududi’s equation of all private conceptions of religion as *jāhiliyyat* is undeniable: it makes all secular conceptions of life forms of *perennial jāhiliyyat*, hence, antithetical to Islam.

Tracing the historical origins of perennial *jāhiliyyat*, and the birth of *qaums* and *qaumiyyat* in the process, Maududi acknowledges that the contemporary usage of *qaum* and *qaumiyyat* carry specific meanings. Maududi finds the basis on which the contemporary understanding of *qaumiyyat* is founded to be of perennial (*qadīm*) origins, as old as *tamaddun* (society, urbanization, civilization).⁶⁴³ Maududi observes that the transition from animal life to civilization (*madaniyyat*) required social cooperation. In the course of history, as social cooperation advanced, *qaumiyyat* formed upon the various bases of race, homeland, language, color, common economic interests, and shared frameworks of governance (*nizām-i ḥukmat kā ishtirāk*), all of which were pervaded with different intensities and grades of partisanship (*‘aṣabiyyat* and *ḥamiyyat*), and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. The necessary outcome of partisanship has been unhealthy competition and antagonism (*musābaqat*, *muzāḥamat*, and *munāfasat*), enmity (*mukhālafat*), and hatred (*nafrat*) among *qaums*.⁶⁴⁴ Political *qaumiyyat* is just another

⁶⁴¹ Maududi, 1:111-112.

⁶⁴² *Taḥrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 2:51.

⁶⁴³ Maududi, *Mas’alah-yi Qaumiyyat* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1997), 7.

⁶⁴⁴ Maududi, 7-11.

form of “*jāhili* partisanship” (*‘aṣabiyyat-i jāhiliyyat*). All such partisanships rest on tangible and materialistic (*hissī* and *māddī*) elements.⁶⁴⁵ Any such worldview or ideology founded upon materialistic imagination Maududi labels “sheer *jāhiliyyat*” (*khālīṣ jāhiliyyat*).⁶⁴⁶ A materialistic imagination for Maududi carries necessary political consequences as it looks to humans as autonomous, hence, unaccountable to any supra-human authority. In politics, a society beset with individuals with such an imagination (*zāhniyyat*) gives rise to the idea of human sovereignty that leads to nationalism, imperialism, war and violence, conquest, and suppression.⁶⁴⁷ Maududi’s theo-logic against “sheer *jāhiliyyat*” is that the real force that keeps humans moral is the subjective conviction of an inevitable accountability before an omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient supra-human authority from whose court none may escape. When such a subjective conviction is absent, the temptation to engage in immoral behavior is too great. As materialism places the sense of accountability in an external and finite authority, which can punish evil only if it first discovers evil, it emboldens many to perpetrate it by circumventing finite authority.

Turning to “European nationalism,” Maududi argues that the germs of nationalism were present in the various historical regional partisanships of racial or tribal formations in Europe. Those germs were kept from ripening by Christianity until the Protestant Reformation paved the road to the rise of modern nationalism. As a result,

⁶⁴⁵ Maududi, 18-19.

⁶⁴⁶ Maududi, *Islamī Niẓām-i Zindagī aur Uske Bunyādī Tasavvurāt* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1999), 84-87.

⁶⁴⁷ Sayyid Abul A‘lā Maududi, *Islamī Niẓām-i Zindagī aur Uske Bunyādī Tasavvurāt* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1999), 85-90.

national interests led to national competition, which repeatedly devolved into violence.⁶⁴⁸ Developed in the state of ceaseless conflicts and wars, European nationalism came to be defined by four common traits: national hubris (*qaumī iftikhār*), national partisanship (*qaumī ḥamiyyat*), national interest (*qaumī taḥaffuẓ*), and conquest and dominance (*istilā o istikbar*).⁶⁴⁹ These traits led nations to value their cultures and peoples as superior to others, to realize national interest at the expense of other nations, and to oppress other nations with impunity. It then goes to show that “the madness of nationalism is the world’s greatest curse, [and] the greatest danger for humanity.”⁶⁵⁰ Maududi thinks it madness that nationalism’s zeal can take on religious characteristics. As an example, he quotes a patriotic poem written by an Indian Muslim addressing the nation thus: “We shall turn you into the ka’bah with our prostrations.”⁶⁵¹ Maududi concludes that “nationalism is itself a religion in conflict with divine teachings (*sharā’ī’ ilāhiyyah kā mukhālif*).”⁶⁵²

While political theology in the formative period is about Muslim emancipation, the symbols of emancipation change with different political theologians depending on the terms in which Muslim subjugation is imagined. For composite nationalists, Muslim subjugation was to a foreign, colonial power so their language of emancipation is replete with anti-British *résentiment* and Indian independence. Iqbal imagines Muslim emancipation in respect of spiritual emancipation of the individual and the community

⁶⁴⁸ *Taḥrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 1:342-343.

⁶⁴⁹ The English gloss is Maududi’s.

⁶⁵⁰ Maududi, 1:344-345.

⁶⁵¹ Maududi, 1:360. The sacred structure housed in the Sacred Mosque in Mecca that Muslims face in prayer.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*

from materiality. In his turn, Maududi imagines Muslim emancipation in terms of Muslims' subjugation to different forms of *jāhiliyyat*. Having laid out his critical theory of *jāhiliyyat* and a historiography based on it, Maududi turns to evaluate the Indian Muslim predicament under colonialism.

Corruption of Muslim Culture under Colonialism

Maududi evaluates the Muslim predicament under British rule as beset with *inqilāb* (revolution),⁶⁵³ which connotes crisis, a great upheaval, or a decisive change. He speaks of three kinds of *inqilāb*.⁶⁵⁴ First, the gradual corruption of the Muslim culture and politics in India, mostly the fault of the corrupt Muslim leadership, which results in a weak moral and political character of the Muslim community and its leadership. Second, Muslims' general economic impoverishment and political servitude orchestrated by colonial rule, which only exacerbated the religiocultural decline. Third, "the approaching crisis" (*āne vālā inqilāb*) of two intertwined developments: (a) cultural Westernization, and (b) the prospect of "modern Indian nationalism" (*jadīd hindī qaumiyyat*) in post-colonial India. Maududi was alarmed by the rapidity with which he perceived Muslims adopting Western ways, which he saw not only as a political challenge, but a more deeper and graver threat of foreign, Western acculturation. The most regrettable aspect of Western acculturation was that even the religious leaders succumbed to it—the allusion is to the composite nationalists' espousal of secular nationalism. For Maududi saw, as did Iqbal before him, Westernization as an integral complex in which the cultural and the

⁶⁵³ Maududi, 1:39-40.

⁶⁵⁴ Maududi, 1:40-52.

political were organically linked together so that importing Western politics necessarily meant also importing cultural values, which was bound to influence the role of religion in India.

In different forms, then, political theology equated Westernization—variously understood by different Muslims—with ongoing colonization, hence, its rejection or resistance against it as decolonization. Explaining the common framework of Maududi and the Egyptian Hasan al-Banna (the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood), Carimo remarks that “they distinguished their method from that of Islamic modernism [e.g., the Aligarh school], which they equated with the ‘Westernization of Islam.’...Both shared a common anti-imperialist view of the West, which they believed was not only a political and economic but also a cultural threat to Muslim societies.”⁶⁵⁵ Maududi’s remedy to the Muslim predicament was to reject any accommodation or adjustment with both kinds of “approaching crisis,” and instead seek to change the whole context in its totality to Muslim advantage.⁶⁵⁶ Accordingly, for Maududi, “the first order of business was to close off the Muslim community to the Congress Party [INC], articulating an Islamist ideology from that point on in order to preclude the possibility of a ‘composite nationalism.’”⁶⁵⁷ In assailing composite nationalism, Maududi’s one obvious target was Ḥusain Aḥmad Madani.

⁶⁵⁵ Carimo, “Political Thought of Iqbal and Mawdudi”.

⁶⁵⁶ Maududi, *Taḥrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 1:161-162.

⁶⁵⁷ Carimo, “Political Thought of Iqbal and Mawdudi.”

Critique of Composite Nationalism

Maududi's critique of Madani both buttressed and further advanced Iqbal's line of argument. Overlooked by Iqbal, Maududi points out Madani's anti-British *r ssemblance* and the instrumental appropriation of nationalism. He notes that Madani's recurring theme that Muslims should adopt nationalism because it was detrimental to British interests amounted to making opposition to the British the criterion of truth. Maududi dismissed Madani's anti-British obsession as a Muslim version of *j hiliyyat*-based partisanship (*'a abiyyat-i j hiliyyah*).⁶⁵⁸ Turning to Madani's exegetical analysis, Maududi repeats Iqbal's point that the Qur'anic semantics were irrelevant to making sense of nationalism.⁶⁵⁹ Maududi applies the same argument to Madani's claim that the Treaty of Medina anticipated nationalism. For the Treaty did not establish anything remotely resembling nationalism. No joint state of the Muslims and the Jews was instituted, nor did the two communities set up any common institutions of shared governance such as a court system, legislative assembly, or an educational system. The Treaty was, rather, a military alliance (*fauj  itti h d*) for the joint defense of Medina against foreign attacks. Accordingly, when the terms of the Treaty were violated by the Jews, Muslims declared war on them, killing some and exiling others—his point being that such acts were not carried out against the members of a single *qaum*, but by one *qaum* against another.⁶⁶⁰ Maududi is also not impressed by Madani's peculiar and narrow definition of nationalism as the joint Hindu-Muslim struggle to oust British, for that

⁶⁵⁸ Maududi, *Ta r k-e  z d -yi Hind*, 1:315.

⁶⁵⁹ Maududi, 1: *Ta r k-e  z d -yi Hind*, 1:319-321.

⁶⁶⁰ Maududi, 1:321-325.

definition was not shared by the nationalists in the INC. If, however, Madani's interpretation were taken seriously, it would mean that the INC operated according to the Prophetic model, which to Maududi was patently not the case.⁶⁶¹

Following his explicit attack on Madani, Maududi continued to indirectly assail composite nationalism.⁶⁶² Maududi notes that the Urdu word *qaum* and the English 'nation' were both being applied to Muslims, however, both were terms of *jāhiliyyat*. The people of *jāhiliyyat* have never attempted to establish *qaumiyyat* on a purely "cultural basis" (*khālīṣ tahzībī bunyād*)—i.e., on a moral or religious basis—instead preferring race (*nasal*) and historical customs (*tārīkhī rivāyāt*) for that purpose.⁶⁶³ As for the Qur'anic choice of terms in referencing the Muslims' collective formation, Maududi states that it does not employ *qaum* and other synonymous terms (*qabīlah*/tribe, *sha'ab*/large tribe, *rahṭ*/band, etc.) for this purpose. Rather, the Qur'an employs such terms as *ḥizb*, *ummat*, and *jamā'at* in referring to Muslims, all of which revolve around the meaning of "party." The difference between these terms and the concept of nation is that while nation was founded on the basis of race (*nasl*) and lineage (*nasb*), party is founded upon the basis of principles (*uṣūl*) and creed (*maslak*). In this sense, the Qur'an saw only two parties in the world: "the party of God" (*ḥizbullāh*) and "the party of Satan" (*ḥizbush shaiṭān*) (Qur'an 58:19 and 58:44).⁶⁶⁴ *Ummat* in turn referenced all such groupings as were brought together due to a common factor (*amr jāmi'*). The common factor that makes Muslims an

⁶⁶¹ Maududi, 1:323.

⁶⁶² Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 1:379-398.

⁶⁶³ Maududi, 1:379-380.

⁶⁶⁴ Maududi, 1:379-381.

ummah is their life mission (*zindagī kā mishan*) and their party's principles and creed. In reference to the Qur'anic verse that labels Muslims "*ummah wasat*,"⁶⁶⁵ which he renders "the middle *ummat*" (*bīc kī ummat*), Maududi argues that given that the Muslim *ummat* was made up of (potentially) all nations, it could not be considered a nation like other nations. Rather, it was an "international party" (*baynal aqvāmī jamā'at*) collected together as a composite of all other nations. Whosoever enters this party from other nations, loses its association with its prior nationality. The mission statement of the Muslim *ummat* is to make the Muhammadan way of life dominate over all others.⁶⁶⁶ Maududi equates the third term *jamā'at* (literally, collection of people) with the same meaning as that of *hizb* (party).⁶⁶⁷ The distinct or exceptional nature of the Islamic nation (*jamā'at*), Maududi explains, is that it is a "world idea"⁶⁶⁸ (*kullī nazariyyah aur jahānī taṣavvur*) that wishes to cast worldview, creed, beliefs, ideas, morals, and individual and collective life in a single mold. As such, Islam makes for a rational (*'aqalī*) *qaumiyyat*, expanding (*nāmī*) *qaumiyyat*, and world (*jahānī*) *qaumiyyat* that wishes to bring in its fold the whole world.⁶⁶⁹ In sum, like others before him, Maududi too approaches nationalism as problematic with reference to the universalism of Islamic ultimacy.

⁶⁶⁵ The verse reads, "Thus, have We made of you an *ummat wasat*, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves...." (Qur'an 2;143). The expression has been variously translated as "community of the middle way," "a moderate Ummah (nation)," "an Ummah justly balanced," "an upright community," and "a middle nation." "Surah 2. Al-Baqara, Ayah 143," Alim, access October 01, 2021, <https://www.alim.org/quran/compare/surah/2/143>.

⁶⁶⁶ Maududi, 1:383-384.

⁶⁶⁷ Maududi, 1:384-385.

⁶⁶⁸ The gloss is Maududi's.

⁶⁶⁹ Maududi, 1:392-393. In another place, Maududi declares Islam a "world theory" (*jahānī nazariyyah*) and "an universal idea" (*'ālamī taṣavvur*). Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 2:57-59. Elsewhere, he elaborates that "our goal is not the supremacy of one nation over another, but to order

Having argued against the semantics of composite nationalism advanced by the composite nationalists, Maududi buttressed his critical analysis by offering a critique of the nationalist imagination of the INC, and nationalism's omnipresent scope and omnipotent power.

The Bleak Prospects of Islam in Post-colonial India

In evaluating the “approaching revolution” of “modern Indian nationalism,” Maududi intends to demonstrate its ideological commitments, and its implications for Islam's future in India. For this purpose, he singles out the two most influential leaders of the Indian nationalist movement, namely, the communist Jawaharlal Nehru—who became the first prime minister of India—and the proto-perennialist Gandhi.

Scrutinizing Jawaharlal Nehru's autobiography, Maududi identifies Nehru's nationalism as situated upon the principles of Indian nationhood and Marxism. According to the first principle, observes Maududi, Nehru takes it for granted that owing to the fact of the common homeland, all communities in India were mere fragments (*firqe*) of a single nation, and not autonomous nations in their own right. In this sense, any claim to cultural autonomy by a minority was pejoratively attacked as communalism (*firqah parasti*), hence, antithetical to nationalism. According to Nehru's second principle, the only differences that mattered in the national struggle were class differences. Religious concerns were at best a nuisance in this view, and at worst a bane for national progress.⁶⁷⁰ Maududi sees the two principles as the premises influencing Nehru's views on religion.

the social system (*niḡām-i tamaddun*) as is proper according to our conscience and faith (*īmān*).” Maududi, 2:21.

⁶⁷⁰ Maududi, 1:199-201.

Maududi quotes Nehru's account of being horrorstruck upon observing India's religious landscape, acknowledging his committed stance against it, and the wish to eradicate it altogether.⁶⁷¹ Maududi tells us that in Nehru's reading, religious conflicts in India were an outcome of British conspiracy, neither inherent nor necessary in themselves. Nehru's solution to the imperialist conspiracy was a communist revolution first in India and then throughout the world. To achieve this revolution, Nehru considers the use of violence almost necessary, for the interests vested in the current system of power—whether in colonial or post-colonial India—were not expected to willingly hand power over to the poor. Moreover, to Maududi's horror, Nehru considered coercion and violence viable instruments of political management even in a democracy. In Nehru's words, quotes Maududi, "the meaning of a democratic government is for the majority to control the minority through fear and harassment (*darā kar aur dhamkā kar*)."⁶⁷² Needless to say, Maududi's intention in communicating all this to his Muslim audience is to alert them to what Nehru and the INC has in store for them should they resist integration in post-colonial socialist India.

Maududi next attends to Nehru's evaluation of Muslim *qaumiyyat*. Nehru remarks that Muslim *qaumiyyat* is a meaningless concept politically, and altogether untenable economically. In a dismissive and a mocking tone, Nehru wonders at the meaning of "Muslim culture"—on the basis of which many Muslims claimed nationhood. He concludes that the term could not reference anything beyond certain forms of outward

⁶⁷¹ Maududi, 1:203.

⁶⁷² Nehru quoted in Maududi, 1:208-209.

appearance (dress, beards, etc.), and even these trivial differences disappear as one travels from the Indian urban centers toward the countryside. In the final analysis, Maududi highlights Nehru's conclusion that not only minor cultures, but also national cultures were approaching an end as the world was fast moving toward a communist revolution. Nehru points out that even as various Muslim nations across the world were themselves riding the winds of nationalism, "religion was everywhere being thrown overboard."⁶⁷³ As for the Indian Muslim culture, Nehru opines, it could survive only by British support, and wither away otherwise. Nehru thus equated the Muslim concern to preserve their religious culture with perpetuating India's enslavement and a callous disregard for its freedom.⁶⁷⁴ In light of Nehru's revelations on religion, Maududi concluded that Muslim participation in the Indian nationalist movement was a grave threat to Islam itself.

As mentioned before, the INC under Nehru decided to bypass the mediation of Muslim leadership in a bid to appeal to the Muslim masses directly. Maududi deemed this an effort at political and economic conversion (*shuddhī*), hence, a masked campaign of promoting the abandonment of Islam in favor of socialist culture (*ishtirākī tahzīb*).⁶⁷⁵ Maududi is careful to point out that communism was not the INC's official policy given that the communists were a minority in its organization, and that Hindu nationalists of various stripes held greater sway instead. However, he maintained, when it came to addressing the Muslim masses, the INC on the whole was pushing a socialist agenda.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷³ Nehru quoted in Maududi, 1:214-215.

⁶⁷⁴ Maududi, 1:214 (n. 1).

⁶⁷⁵ Maududi, 1:217-219. *Shuddhī* was a Hindu movement that claimed Indian Muslims to be descendants of Hindu ancestors, wrongfully converted to Islam, and thus sought to reconvert them to Hinduism. Maududi offers a similar argument in Maududi, 1:85-87.

⁶⁷⁶ Maududi, 1:243-245.

This was apparent in the appointment of communist Muslims to address the Muslim public. As proof, Maududi quotes one Manzar Rizvi, a Muslim in charge of promoting the INC among fellow Muslims: “The poor, indigent, and slaves have neither a religion, nor a civilization; their greatest religion is a piece of bread; their greatest civilization is a torn, old piece of clothing; their greatest faith is liberation from the existing poverty and indignity.”⁶⁷⁷ In short, Maududi’s exposition of Nehru’s nationalist imagination was intended to impress upon the Muslims the most extreme possibilities of oppression and suppression imaginable under Indian nationalism. Maududi intended to demonstrate to his readers the contemptible attitude in which nationalism, especially under communist inspiration, held religion. After treating Nehru’s secular nationalism, Maududi takes up Gandhi’s religious nationalism.

Maududi presents Gandhi as a promoter of Hinduized nationalism. He explains that Gandhi’s religious philosophy was based on the idea of Truth as one and singular, and all religious traditions as its equally valid and relatively true versions. No one religion was superior, better, or truer than any other—the ideas evoke Azad’s perennialism. In Gandhi’s view, this point of religious relativism had to be promoted widely, and drilled into the minds of all Indians. “Indian culture can only survive if first Hindu and Muslim cultures were erased,” Gandhi announced.⁶⁷⁸ Much like the composite nationalists, Maududi too railed against Gandhi’s Wardha educational scheme, to be mandatory for ages seven to fourteen, as plans to impose Hinduism on Muslim

⁶⁷⁷ Maududi, 1:240.

⁶⁷⁸ Gandhi quoted in Maududi, 1:266.

children.⁶⁷⁹ To begin with, Maududi finds the Wardha plan an attempt to promote Gandhi's own person. In addition, among other things, he reckons the curriculum too pluralistic, eclectic, and culturally relativistic to mold Muslim children according to their religio-cultural values and train their character along purely Islamic lines.⁶⁸⁰ Maududi thus concludes that the projected Indian nation-state was quite an enigma. In Gandhi's imagination, it led to a religious state, whereas in the other (secular communist) perspective, it led to "religionless" (*lā dīnī*)⁶⁸¹ and even an anti-religious (*mukhālif-i dīn*) state.⁶⁸²

In the background of a nationalism defined by the two poles of Nehru's communism and Gandhi's religious relativism, Maududi projects three necessary outcomes of Muslim participation in the national movement: class warfare among Muslims, the eventual loss of Muslim religiosity, and Muslims' final assimilation into an anti-Islamic nationalism.⁶⁸³

Bringing his argument to a close, Maududi sheds further light on the omnipresent scope and religionesque predisposition of nationalism. In addressing the composite nationalist argument that constitutional stipulations will ensure sufficient safeguards against all Muslim anxieties regarding the state's encroachment on their rights and

⁶⁷⁹ Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy*, 60.

⁶⁸⁰ Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 1:426-437.

⁶⁸¹ Carimo, "Political Thought of Iqbal and Mawdudi."

⁶⁸² Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 1:267. To be exact, Gandhi's political vision was that of a stateless society. "Swaraj, or 'self-rule', usually refers to Gandhi's effort to establish an independent, stateless society. In this sense, it was not intended to be 'nationalist' in character at all...self-government actually meant being independent of government control in which everyone is their own master." Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi*, 31.

⁶⁸³ Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 1:248-252.

culture, Maududi responds by noting that the organic theory of statecraft begins to erase the differences between the private-religious and public-secular spheres by envisioning an organic unity between the state, society, and individual. In a communist vision, that unity is brought to its logical conclusion by making the state's sphere of influence virtually unlimited as it addresses urban life (*tamaddun*), social relations (*mu'āsharat*), economy, welfare, industrialization, trade, education, marriage laws, and much more. The scope of individual freedom, and by extension minority rights, are placed at the mercy of the state and its majority culture.⁶⁸⁴ On another occasion, Maududi states, “[n]ow the state's arena has almost become as all-encompassing as that of religion....So, the state has not left even the most peripheral issues of life independent of its ultimate right to intervene;” and that “the state is beginning to acquire the same status God has in religion.”⁶⁸⁵ Constitutional safeguards—so touted by Madani—were in fact hollow guarantees for Islam's survival in Maududi's assessment. The problem for him lay not in a legal regime, but in the differences inherent in the basic frameworks of nationalism and Islam. Hartung is right in observing that Maududi understood, as did Iqbal before him, that nationalism was “deeply rooted in modern Western ethical concepts.”⁶⁸⁶ It was not possible to institute nationalism in its structural aspect and remain unaffected by its ethical aspects. For this reason, Maududi's critique of nationalism is partly intended to explicate the axiological and religionesque implications of nationalism threatening to Islam.

⁶⁸⁴ Maududi, 1:292-293.

⁶⁸⁵ Maududi quoted in Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy*, 64.

⁶⁸⁶ Hartung, *System of Life*, 118.

In sum, Maududi saw Islam and nationalism as incommensurate rivals contending in a zero sum competition. Maududi's critique of nationalism demonstrates how its omnipresence and omnipotence carried the potential to overwhelm the private-religious sphere. To understand Maududi's rationale for why he finds Islam to be incommensurate with nationalism, we must now turn to his reconstruction of Muslim political theology.

Culture, Sovereignty, Khilāfat, and Qaumiyyat

One reason why nationalism and Islam clash is that both influence identity, and do so on diametrically opposed bases, one secular, the other religious. In Nasr's reading, one of Maududi's central problems was to redefine Muslim identity for the modern world, and did so by broadening its scope to include, inter alia, a political outlook. "Mawdudi redefined being a Muslim to mean more than just following Islam; a Muslim was a modern creature with modern social links, political aspirations, and, ultimately, cultural outlook."⁶⁸⁷ The challenge, however, was to modernize Muslims without affecting their essential Islamic identity. The formula was, Nasr tell us, modernization without Westernization.⁶⁸⁸ This section on Maududi's theory of culture will demonstrate how Maududi's theory of culture integrated politics within the purview of Muslim identity.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the political theologians coming after him imagine, despite their diverse approaches, Muslim culture, power, and identity as tied together. For Khan, power presupposed reformation of culture (*tahzīb*), largely a process of personal

⁶⁸⁷ Nasr, *Islamic Revivalism*, 51.

⁶⁸⁸ The articulation of the formula is ascribed to Maududi's protégé Khurshid Ahmad. Nasr, *Islamic Revivalism*, 52.

ethical-moral and intellectual reformation. For Iqbal, Islam was a religious culture whose broader quest was for the individual and the community to harness and transcend the power of material forces toward their mutual journey to God. For Maududi, on the other hand, culture (*tahzīb*) more closely resembles a given structure of (political) power relations that autonomously produce ideas, religion, morals, and personalities. In defining Muslim culture in relation to power, Maududi begins to integrate and Islamize elements of modern political theory, most importantly, sovereignty and democracy. As Nasr puts it, “Mawdudi’s central concern was the restitution of power in Muslim society, so power was what related the ideal of the past to the reality of the modern West and made easier the infusion of the values of the West into the definition of Islam.”⁶⁸⁹

Maududi’s most important work on cultural theory is *Islāmi Tahzīb ke Uṣūl o Mabādī* (*Islamic Civilization: Its Foundational Beliefs and Principles*). Maududi begins the work by articulating the foundation of the Islamic culture as the spiritual-moral essence of humankind. He explains that God has endows man with a lofty dignity (‘*izzat*) by breathing into him His Spirit. On this spiritual basis, God has appointed man His *khalīfah* (vicegerent), at once a position of subordination to God, and a position of power and authority over the rest of creation.⁶⁹⁰ The spirituality of *khilāfat* makes man morally responsible for his conduct before God, forbids him from claiming sovereignty for himself, and demands obedience to God.⁶⁹¹ The same spiritual essence also establishes

⁶⁸⁹ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 51.

⁶⁹⁰ Maududi, *Islāmī Tahzīb aur us ke Uṣūl o Mabādī* (Delhi: Markazī Maktabah-yi Islāmī, 1987), 30-31.

⁶⁹¹ Maududi, 20-51. Similar exegetical discourse is found in Sayyid Abul A‘lā Maududi, *Islāmī Riyāsat: Falsafah, Niẓām-i kār, aur Uṣūl-i Ḥukmarānī*, ed. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 2000), 156-171. Also, see *Islāmī Riyāsat*, 206-217.

the equality of all humans. It then follows that the ultimate objective (*naṣabul ‘ain*), motivation (*quvvat-i jāzibah*), and purpose (*maqṣad*) for God’s *khalīfah* should be to secure God’s approval and serve Him as His servant and subordinate. Both Iqbal and Maududi identify *khilāfat* as essentially spiritual and moral, and an authentic Islamic political order as the ideal manifestation and context of its operation.

Note that the symbolism of God animating Adam with “His spirit” is a central insight of Muslim mysticism, which develops the insight in a direction away from politics. Maududi’s interpretation is, therefore, a most novel one in finding an organic connection between spirituality and political power, both at once symbolized in God’s bestowing *khalīfah/khilāfat* on humankind. It is as if in breathing in man “His spirit,” God animated man simultaneously with spirituality and political power, in essence, equating the two. Hartung explains the gist of Maududi’s reasoning thus: “For Mawdūdī, the prime function of the Creator, after calling the universe into being, was to issue rules and regulations for its functioning so that sovereignty thus became largely identical with legislative force, which is why Mawdūdī spoke of God’s sovereignty as ‘legal sovereignty’ (qānūnī ḥākimiyya).”⁶⁹² Meaning to say that *khilāfat* is also a political concept which implies the confinement of the *khilāfat* within the legal framework of the sacred law. Vahdat conveys the same dynamic through the broader concept of power: Maududi understood that power was necessary for social administration; however, “the human power that he was advocating is not direct, and it emanates from the power of

⁶⁹² Hartung, *A System of Life*, 103.

God.”⁶⁹³ Hence, Maududi’s interpretation of *khilāfat* includes the idea of “human empowerment or agency”⁶⁹⁴ bestowed by God. Sovereignty (*ḥākimiyyat*) and *khilāfat* are therefore a complementary pair, both involve power, agency, and law-based governance, with the difference that divine sovereignty is infinite, perfect, and just; while *khilāfat* is finite, imperfect, and liable to abuse, oppression, and exploitation. Maududi’s solution was for the *khalīfah* to willfully conform his exercise of *khilāfat* to God’s Will disclosed in the form of the sacred law.

Throughout his discourse on culture, Maududi repeatedly returns to what he considers to be Islam’s ultimate objective, or ideal (*naṣabul ‘ain*). He notes that the cultural function of an ultimate objective is to serve as a gravitational center that brings into its orbit all of one’s experiences. Islam’s ultimate objective is to elevate God’s Word above all (Qur’an 2:193, 8:39), and it is this that defines Islamic nationality.⁶⁹⁵ The Muslim *qaum* with Maududi is defined by the adherence to the Qur’an and the Prophetic model.⁶⁹⁶ Maududi thus declares Islamic culture incommensurate with other cultures because, one, its ultimate objective rejects the distinctions of race, color, language, and geography as bases for social organization. Two, it serves to construct a worldwide nationality (*‘ālamgīr qaumiyyat*) and an international human collectivity (*baynal aqvāmī jam ‘iyyat*).⁶⁹⁷ Those who accept and willingly enter the Islamic culture all belong to one

⁶⁹³ Vahdat, *Islamic Ethos and the Specter of Modernity*, 57.

⁶⁹⁴ Vahdat, 60.

⁶⁹⁵ Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 1:95-103.

⁶⁹⁶ Maududi, 1:100-106.

⁶⁹⁷ Maududi, *Islāmī Tahzīb*, 90-91. The second half of *Islāmī Tahzīb* outlines Islam’s fundamental religious tenets and their role in the formation of Islamic culture.

qaum, and those who reject it together belong to a different *qaum*.⁶⁹⁸ In this view of Islamic culture, Maududi explains, secular *qaumiyyat* holds lesser spiritual value than the modern secular framework accords it. As an illustration, he recounts Prophet Muhammad's decision to decline the offer of tribal leadership over his tribe in exchange for desisting from his religious mission. Had nationhood and tribal power any value for him, Maududi points out, the Prophet would have accepted the leadership over his tribe.

Dīn as State, Khilāfat as Theo-Democracy

While Maududi's political theology is a grand topic in itself, my present interest lies only to the extent it further helps clarify his views on nationalism. In expounding his political theology in a 1941 article, Maududi begins by clarifying the extent of Islam's scope. This time he references one of revivalist Islam's favorite Qur'anic verses: "He [God] has sent His messenger [Muhammad] with *al-hudá* [the guidance] and *dīn al-ḥaqq* [the true religion] so that He may make it dominant over all *dīn* [religion] no matter how much the *mushrikūn* [polytheists] dislike it" (Qur'an 9:33). Conventionally, *al-hudá* is rendered 'the guidance,' *dīn* 'religion' or 'faith,' and *ḥaqq* 'true' or 'truth.' When it comes to the question of how much of life is subject to the jurisdiction of *dīn*, the traditional understanding extended at most to "the social dimensions of Islam's teachings," but not to politics.⁶⁹⁹ However, as with *jāhiliyyat*, Maududi extends the meanings of both terms. He interprets *al-hudá* as the right way of living in the world (*dunyā main zindagī basar karne kā saḥīḥ ṭarīqah*) that includes personal conduct, family

⁶⁹⁸ *Islām aur Mas'alah-yi Qaumiyyat*, 32-33.

⁶⁹⁹ Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 64.

system, social organization, economics, political organization, political policy, and international relations. As for *dīn*, Maududi disapproves of the conventional meaning of ‘religion’ (*mazhab, maslak*), and instead defines it with the “obedience to a system of thought and practice” (*khayāl o ‘amal ke aik sistam kī īṭā‘at*).⁷⁰⁰ He claims that *dīn* carries the same meaning as that of *state* because state means “to obey a higher authority” (*bālā tar iqtidār ko taslīm kar ke*). In the *dīn* of Islam, “sovereignty and authority (*iqtidār-i a ‘lā*) rest solely with God.”⁷⁰¹ As for the expression *dīn al-ḥaqq* (‘the true dīn’) in the verse, Maududi equates it with the *dīn* brought by Prophet Muhammad. To be sure, Maududi’s equation of *dīn* with state is a highly modern reinterpretation. Cognizant of his novel reading, Maududi readily admits that this particular interpretation of *dīn* is not found in any prior Muslim traditional interpretation. However, Maududi remarks, his interpretation cannot be fully appreciated unless one approaches it in view of the modern “Theory of state.”⁷⁰² In his recapitulation,

*the modern state encompasses the whole of human life as religion used to do. Whether it be communist, fascist, or democratic, at the root of each (such state) there persists a particular metaphysical theory, cosmology, anthropology, moral philosophy, and social philosophy. Each state then determines its higher authority (*muqtadir-i a ‘lā*) in accordance with its philosophy (for example, nation, citizens, or community) whose representation (*niyābat o khilāfat*) becomes the responsibility of some dictator, parliament, or party. Thereafter, all persons living within the boundaries of the state are called on to pledge submission before and unconditional obedience to it.*⁷⁰³

⁷⁰⁰ Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 2:122-123.

⁷⁰¹ Maududi, 2:122-123. The same analysis of *dīn* also appears in one of Maududi’s more famous works, *Cār Bunyādī Iṣṭilāḥain*, which offers a semantic analysis of what he considers the theologically most significant terms, namely, *ilāh* (deity), *ibādah* (worship), *rabb* (lord, master), and *dīn* (religion). For a more detailed exposition of the role of obedience to God in Maududi’s thought, see Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 57-63.

⁷⁰² Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 2:123.

⁷⁰³ *Maududi*, 2:123 (n. 1). As far as the central axiology of the modern state goes, Maududi’s political

Maududi goes on to add, no dimension of the individual lives or of society at large remains outside the state's grip, including education, cultivation of character, social morality, laws, right and wrong, and career paths. This scope of jurisdiction or influence only befitted *dīn* in pre-modern times, and now that it comes to be mirrored in the state, state is an apt rendering of *dīn*.⁷⁰⁴ We see here the modernizing side of Maududi's interpretation as his reasoning begins with acknowledging the given fact of the state power and the inevitability of the nation-state order in which religion has to operate, he resolves to appropriate the state as an instrument of religion. The instrumentalist appropriation of the state is not limited to Maududi, however, for Euben and Zaman note that all "Islamists seek to implement Islamic law through the agency of the state."⁷⁰⁵

Finally, Maududi turns to the phrase in the quoted verse, "dominate it over all *dīn*." Whereas *dīn* in the verse is singular, the qualifier "all" has led to two variations in translation: "dominate it over all religion" and "dominate it over all religions."⁷⁰⁶ Here too Maududi adds his own nuance by translating the expression as "dominate it over the whole class (*jins*) *Dīn*." He explains that the Qur'anic use of the singular construction signifies *dīn* as a class or genus, with any particular form of obedience (to parents, husband, lord, superintendent, etc.) as its token. The quoted verse, therefore, mandates the Prophet to make dominant (or, replace) the Islamic obedience and code of life over all

theology is in complete harmony with it. Anthony Marx, for example, describes nationalism as "the modern ideal of popular loyalty and obedience coinciding with the boundaries of political power." Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2003), 6.

⁷⁰⁴ Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 2:123 (n. 1).

⁷⁰⁵ Euben and Zaman, *Readings in Islamic Thought*, 11.

⁷⁰⁶ "Surah 61. As-Saff, Ayah 9," access October 01, 2021, Alim, <https://www.alim.org/quran/compare/surah/61/9>.

other forms of obedience and codes of life.⁷⁰⁷ In Maududi's logic, the Ultimate Sovereign demands and deserves ultimate obedience in all aspects of life. The necessity of Islam's domination over all aspects of life necessarily follows from Islam's nationalesque interpretation of the appointment of Adam as God's *khalīfah*. Who then are the *mushrikūn* in the verse who "dislike" the Prophet's mandate? Literally, *mushrikūn* are "those who associate partners with God," hence, the usual translations are polytheists, pagans, and idolaters. For Maududi, however, *mushrikīn* are all those individuals and collectives who choose to accept and obey anyone other than God as the highest authority.⁷⁰⁸ By implication, secular nationalism and the secular nation-states are rendered idolatrous.

Maududi's insistence on divine sovereignty is in part an attempt to argue for Islam and Muslims' exceptional cultural and political status necessitating Muslims' political autonomy over their own affairs. However, the insistence on divine sovereignty certainly raises questions in relation to statecraft, among them, the political role of human agency and freedom in relation to divine sovereignty? If the ultimate principle of Maududi's political theology is that sovereignty (*hākimiyyat*) and legislation are solely God's prerogatives,⁷⁰⁹ then needless to say such a state is theocratic. However, Maududi's theocracy is an unconventional one in that, he explains, it does not insist on a government by religious officials. Maududi's state is, rather, an integration of theocracy

⁷⁰⁷ Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 2:123-125.

⁷⁰⁸ Maududi, 2:125-126.

⁷⁰⁹ Maududi, *Islāmī Riyāsat*, 137-138. My references in this section are from Part II of the work consisting of Maududi's speech delivered in 1939.

and democracy that he variously labels “theo-democracy” (*ilāhī ḥukūmat*), “limited popular democracy” (*maḥdūd ‘umūmī ḥākimiyyat*), and “popular vicegerency” (*‘umūmī khilāfat*).⁷¹⁰ It is a theocracy in as much as it asserts divine sovereignty and limits legislation within the bounds of the *sharī‘at*. It is a democracy in as much as governance is a prerogative of the whole Muslim community—as a collective *khalīfah*.⁷¹¹ According to Maududi, the salient features of this theo-democracy include freedom of speech, a careful balance between individual rights and social demands, a rejection of race, class, social status, nepotism, and dictatorship.⁷¹²

Clarifying the political relationship between God and humanity, Maududi states that as God alone is the Sovereign, the human status relative to divine sovereignty is that of a *khilāfah*, and so the Muslim state constitutes a *khilāfat* of *all* Muslims as a body. Individually, each *khalīfah* is equal to another, and remains morally accountable before God in one’s personal capacity: “This is the real basis of democracy (*jumhūriyyat*) in Islam.”⁷¹³ In this theo-democracy, Maududi claims, a just balance has been created between individual freedom and needs of the collective. It neither allows for the individual to be absorbed in the collective, nor permit the individual license to harm the collective, and both are subject to mutual rights and responsibilities so that both may

⁷¹⁰ The English glosses are Maududi’s. Nasr notes that Maududi gradually came to the idea of democracy, having rejected it outright in colonial India as an unsuitable model for India. And, even then democracy was for him “merely an adjective used to define the otherwise undefinable virtues of the Islamic state. The state was defined as democratic because it was an ideal state.” Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 84-85. Maududi reserves “sovereignty” (*ḥākimiyyah*) for God alone, and never uses the term in reference to human agents, for whom he reserves the complementary term “caliph” (*khalīfah*, *khulafā’*, *khilāfat*). Hartung, *System of Life*, 105-106.

⁷¹¹ Maududi, *Islāmī Riyāsat*, 139-140, and 151.

⁷¹² Maududi 151-155, and 179-198.

⁷¹³ Maududi, 150-151.

thrive together in harmony.⁷¹⁴ That harmony is in part guaranteed by the common goal of the individual *khalīfah* and the *khilāfat*-state, that is, by “the implementation of the divine law (*qānūn-i ilāhī*) and the attainment of divine approval (*raḏā-yi ilāhī*).”⁷¹⁵

Maududi has been excoriated for undermining individual freedom, and greatly restricting the work of politics in giving undue primacy to the collective and the political.⁷¹⁶ However, Adams cautions that

Mawdudi has always been interested in the cultivation of individual virtues and, though this fact is often obscured by his concern with argument on public issues, in fostering a depth of personal faith in his followers as well. Nevertheless, he cannot be satisfied with the rectification of the lives of individuals; his ultimate objective must be transformation of the social order. The overarching social concern is the clear implication of his notion of divine sovereignty.⁷¹⁷

As we have seen with the composite nationalists and Iqbal, the kind of individual freedom that the liberal theory demands requires a secular basis, whereas the very idea of prescribing sacred law as the defining legal framework of a Muslim polity precludes liberal freedom of constructing one’s identity and charting one’s own path to personal fulfillment.

Just as the composite nationalists and Iqbal realized that their respective vision of Muslim nationalism required territorial sovereignty of some kind in order to ensure religiocultural emancipation, Maududi too had to explain his vision for the possibilities of

⁷¹⁴ For example, it is the rights of the citizens that their life, property, and dignity be protected. An example of state’s right is that it be obeyed and command allegiance of its citizens. Maududi, 378 and 382.

⁷¹⁵ Maududi, 155.

⁷¹⁶ See, for example, Faisal Devji, “Political Theology and Islamic Studies Symposium: Islamism as Anti-Politics,” Political Theology Network, accessed April 7, 2021, <http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/political-theology-and-islamic-studies-symposium-islamism-as-anti-politics/>.

⁷¹⁷ Adams, “Ideology of Mawdudi,” 388.

Muslim presence in post-colonial India. The way forward for Maududi was neither to align with Indian nationalism of the INC, nor with the separatism of the ML, but for the Muslims to set their sights on either an independent state without India, or an autonomous state within the Indian federation. For the latter option he coined the neologism “minor realm of Islam” (*shibh dūrul islām*), an arrangement within the Indian federation that will grant Muslims the power to organize their society, culture, and policies along purely Islamic lines.⁷¹⁸ This scheme resembles the composite nationalists’ Indian Emirate scheme for religio-cultural autonomy. In later years, Maududi put forward three possible options for a post-colonial India. One, to organize India as an inter-national federation with guarantees of cultural autonomy within their local states. Two, to demarcate new geographical territories along cultural lines, and allow for population exchange so that different cultures may attain majorities and sovereign statuses within their own jurisdiction while remaining in the larger framework of a federation. Three, to establish a confederacy of independent states.⁷¹⁹ This last option accommodates the Pakistan demand. However, as mentioned earlier, Maududi rejected it on grounds of lack of authentic religiosity on the part of the ML leadership.

Maududi has been duly taken to task for his novel interpretation and integration of Islam and modern political ideology. Two of his own one-time close associates criticized him. Nadvī, for instance, chastises Maududi for exaggerating God’s sovereignty while undermining divine love, worship, service to God, purification (of one’s heart and mind)

⁷¹⁸ Maududi, *Tahrīk-e Āzādī-yi Hind*, 1:67-69.

⁷¹⁹ Maududi, 1:475-494.

from all forms of idolatry, and developing an emotional relationship with God.⁷²⁰

Wahiduddin Khan deconstructs Maududi's semantics by pointing out that Maududi unjustifiably reduces the meanings of central Islamic concepts such as *ilāh* (God), *rabb* (lord), *'ibādah* (worship), and *dīn* (religion) to sovereignty, absolute power, and authority. He explains that sovereignty is not etymologically a central meaning of any of these symbols, but a derivative one.⁷²¹

In more recent times, Zaman argues that "God's authority and power, as the medieval exegetes, jurists, and theologians understood them, could mean a whole range of things....[The] point is not that kings and rulers were outside the purview of this authority, but rather that God was often seen to be the source of everything and, by that token, of political power as well."⁷²² Zaman finds that the medieval understanding is also found among the scholars in India down to modern times. Zaman further points out that while the idea of divine sovereignty as a political concept has modern origins, it was in the air in South Asia during Maududi's time, and held by other Islamic thinkers as well. However, the simple elegance of Maududi's discourse made it more intelligible to the public, thus, putting his stamp on the idea. Afsaruddin also acknowledges sovereignty as a *sine qua non* of the Islamic idea of God, but she scathes Maududi for extending the purely theological idea into a political theory and the imperative of its implementation in the form of a state. The dangers of authoritarianism are all too real for Afsaruddin as

⁷²⁰ Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī, *Asr-i Ḥāzīr main Dīn kī Tafhīm o Tashrīḥ* (Karachi: Majlis Nashariyyat-i Islām, 1978), 70-81.

⁷²¹ Wahiduddin Khan, *Ta'bīr kī Ghalaṭī* (Lahore: Dārut Tazkīr, 2002).

⁷²² Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "The Sovereignty of God in Modern Islamic Thought," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 25, no. 3 (2015): 392.

Maududi looks to a small elite of righteous Muslims to whom God's Will is unproblematically transparent and literally enforceable.⁷²³ More to my point, Afsaruddin stresses—as did Madani—the appeal of Maududi's theory to the “disenfranchised” Muslims in the modern world, including the Muslims of colonial India, for which reason she likens Maududi's theory to Christian liberation theologies. And so precisely for that reason, I have suggested that political theology in the colonial period should be evaluated with respect to its task of Muslims' collective emancipation. In the latter case, the very discourse that fails in one context might prove a resounding success in another context.

In my reading, both the political theologians and their critics are guilty of conflating the two contexts of anti-colonial emancipation and post-colonial nation-building. The same idea that might prove a resounding success in one, might prove a failure in the other. In the first case, Maududi's political theology is to be appreciated as highly effective as a discourse of emancipation under colonialism. Adams's reading of Maududi's popularity in Pakistan also applies to his significance in colonial India, and the efficacy of political theology in general: “Mawdudi speaks a language that the majority of Muslims understand and offers analyses and solutions to problems by appeal to the values that have been formative in the Islamic heritage. His thinking is continuous with the Islamic past as that of the western educated leadership is not.”⁷²⁴ In semiotic terms, political theologies in the formative period succeeded in gathering Muslims under their canopies because they made Islamic ultimacy relevant to their colonial predicament

⁷²³ Asma Afsaruddin, “Maudūdī's ‘Theo-Democracy:’ How Islamic is it really?,” *Oriente Moderno* 87, no. 2 (2007): 324.

⁷²⁴ Adams, “Ideology of Mawdudi,” 380.

as were consistent with the semiosis of the Indian Muslim tradition. The semiotic consistency allowed the political theologians to integrate modern symbols of nationalism by Islamizing them. Political theology also gave the public the semiotic tools to both understand and articulate for themselves their condition, and thus induced in them the sentiments of self-sufficiency, self-confidence, and self-assertion necessary to inspire them to struggle for their emancipation. The semiotic achievement of political theology was to heighten the Muslim public's semiotic recognition of the nuances of their own semiotic ideology by making them more acutely conscious of the *qaumī* implications of Islamic ultimacy. The public in turn responded by approaching their sacred symbols as semiotic ideology, that is, they learned to interpret their predicament in theopolitical terms. Maududi could have 'cashed in' on his theology by supporting the separatist movement. However, left in the lurch as none of his preferred options for Muslim emancipation materialized, Maududi was forced to choose one un-Islamic nation-state over the other. He chose to move to Pakistan.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The political theology of Iqbal and Maududi is grounded in their anthropology of human nature as essentially a spiritual and moral creation of God, hence, beholden to Him. A Muslim's engagement with the world is thus determined by the ultimate ideal of serving, obeying, and loving God. The traditional meanings of Islamic ultimacy are reinterpreted to address the immediate context of South Asia and the modern world at large. Iqbal coins the neologism *khūdī* toward integrating the basic mystical, Sufi view of the individual with the modern dynamic view of human freedom. In its social life, *khūdī*

looks to serve the Muslim *qaum* (*beḥūdī*) for its development, even as the *qaum* facilitates the *khūdī*'s journey to God. Maududi reinterprets *khilāfat* to encompass spiritual and political roles in the case of both the individual and the collective. The individual *khalīfah* is both a spiritual-moral person entrusted by God with power and responsibility, thus, obligated to obey and serve God. At the same time, the Muslim *qaum* fulfills the same objectives in the form of the *khilāfat*-state operating within the boundaries of the *sharī'at*. Iqbal's and Maududi's anthropologies form the bases of their respective political theologies that in part articulate the terms of Muslim emancipation in colonial India.

For Maududi, if *khilāfat* symbolizes the thesis of Islam, *jāhiliyyat* symbolizes its antithesis. In its most fundamental aspect, *jāhiliyyat* speaks of a corrupt imagination that, out of ignorance, confines religion to privacy and therefore founds culture and civilization on non-religious and an immoral basis. The oldest form of *jāhiliyyat* is the pure *jāhiliyyat* of materialism, with nationalism being its more recent manifestation. One universal challenge of Muslim emancipation in the modern world is, therefore, to overcome the corrupting influences of materiality or materialistic ideas. In the colonial context beset with the inevitability of a post-colonial nation-state order in South Asia, Muslim emancipation demanded decolonization not only of the political structures, but also of the cultural conditioning of coloniality. Both Iqbal and Maududi discern that Westernization is inherently antithetical to Islam because of its secular and materialistic foundations, hence, immoral for that reason. For this reason, both reject nationalism as a continuation of structural and cultural colonialization. On the one hand, nationalism for

them is rooted in the materiality of territory, race, language, and the like. On the other hand, they see nationalism as a culture founded upon secular ideas, values, and objectives whose scope and power rival that of Islam. In this scheme, nation functions as a neo-idol and nationalism as a neo-religion of the modern age. To liken nationalism to idolatry is to warn Muslims that replacing God with the nation and divine Sovereignty with popular sovereignty engages materialistic values embedded in the symbols of nationalism, liable to corrupt Muslim souls, imagination, and communal life, and jeopardize their otherworldly salvation.

Yet the inevitability of a post-colonial nation-state ensnares the idealism and abstractions of political theology in practical contradictions. Both Iqbal and Maududi were forced to integrate the symbols, structures, and mechanisms of nationalism toward articulating the terms of Muslims emancipation. The task of semiotic integration necessitates consistency with Islamic ultimacy toward both modernizing Islam to the extent necessary in a given context, while safeguarding the essential spiritual-moral and cultural continuity and integrity of the Islamic tradition. Islamic ultimacy requires upholding the authority of God, the Qur'an, the Prophet, and the sacred law, the very things whose authority is to be confined to privacy under nationalism. Hence, as with the composite nationalists so with Iqbal and Maududi, nationalism is Islamized to mean *qaumiyyat* as defined by a shared faith in Islamic ultimacy. The purpose of the Muslim *qaum* becomes the aggrandizement of God and religion, not of the nation. The ultimate ambition of the Muslim individual is prescribed to be, not her personal interests, nor those of the nation, but of Islam and the Muslim *qaum*. Popular sovereignty is

reinterpreted as popular *khilāfat*, whose legal framework is limited within the restrictions of the sacred law. The relationship of Islamic ultimacy to nationalism, democracy, and the nation-state is, therefore, instrumental for Islamic nationalism. Just as God and religion's one-time omnipresence and omnipotence were curtailed by nationalism by secularizing (colonizing) the public sphere and confining religion to the sphere of privacy; so now political theology in the form of Islamic nationalism seeks to decolonize/desecularize Islam by restoring its lost omnipresence and omnipotence, that is, by actualizing its nationalesque potential.

Despite their political differences with composite nationalism, Iqbal and Maududi advanced the cause of political theology and only deepened the already partitioned Muslim imagination of Hindus and Muslim as two distinct nations. While Iqbal died before the launch of the Pakistan Movement, and while Maududi and the composite nationalists disavowed any support for Pakistan, a small group among the JUH scholars broke away to form the JUI, and proceeded to bring the political theology in the formative period to its logical conclusion by throwing their support behind the demand of Pakistan.

CHAPTER 6: JAM‘IYYAT ‘ULAMĀ-Ī ISLAM AND SEPARATISM

This chapter outlines the separatist political theology of *Jam‘iyyatul ‘Ulamā Islām* (the Society of the Scholars of Islam, hereon JUI) and the process of their convergence with the secular separatism of the ML. In particular, I focus on Ashraf ‘Alī Thanavī as the original inspiration behind theological separatism, and his close associate Shabbīr Aḥmad ‘Uṣmānī, who founded the JUI. The chapter intends to show both the continuity between the JUH and the JUI, and the points of difference that pushed the JUI toward separatism. Given the short span of the JUI during the formative period, its leaders produced little literature on political theology. The paucity of primary texts accounts for the paucity of academic studies on the JUI’s colonial period and their political theology. Nonetheless, what has been preserved of their reflections in primary texts and by their associates offers valuable insights for my argument. In what follows, I will outline the historical background in which the JUI emerged, and then explicate the political theologies of Thānavī and ‘Uṣmānī.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter 3 addressed Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s proto-nationalism that promoted friendship with the British, proscribed Muslim public’s direct involvement in politics, and opposed the INC. One of Khan’s grand projects was the modernization of Muslim education for which purpose he founded the Muhammadan Educational Congress (MEC) in 1886, one year after the founding of the INC. The MEC continued Khan’s project after his death (in 1898) for a few years, but could not ignore the growing influence of the INC. Accordingly, the MEC was dismantled in 1906 and replaced with the ML, with the

purpose of voicing Muslim interests before the colonial government as a counter to the INC.⁷²⁵ The ML was secular in its thinking, makeup, and goals, as it had no religious agenda except to represent elite Muslim interests. It was also pro-British, considered communally backward (*raj'at pasand*) for that reason, and for a long time remained unpopular with the masses and the *'ulamā*.⁷²⁶ In its first phase, even though the ML sought greater political representation for Muslims, it subscribed to the same national vision as that of the INC and worked closely with it.⁷²⁷ However, over time the differences between the two organizations grew wider, and by the 1930s the ML emerged as a major political rival of the INC.

During the 1930s, the ML was in disarray and its leadership remained beholden to elite circles. At the time, the religiously inclined public cast their lot with the JUH, which was firmly in the pro-INC camp. However, this began to change in the late 1930s as the imagination of consolidating Muslim territories into a single state began to gain popularity. This imagination culminated into a decisive moment in March 1940 when the ML made the first public declaration for Pakistan. The declaration caused fissures in the Muslim community.

Despite the overwhelming support within the JUH camp for composite nationalism, differences on the issue quietly simmered for some time since at least the days of the Khilāfat Movement. The Deobandi scholar Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī was among

⁷²⁵ Hafeez Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 217-228.

⁷²⁶ 'Abdurrahmān Khān, *Ta'mūr-i Pākistān aur 'Ulamā-yi Rabbānī* (Lahore: Idārah-yi Islāmiyyāt, 1992), 100.

⁷²⁷ Maḥmūd Aḥmad Zāfar, *'Ulamā Maidān-i Siyāsat Main* (Lahore: Baitul 'Ulūm, n.d.), 494.

those few prominent Muslims who did not participate in the *Khilāfat* activities, criticizing certain aspects of the movement on religious grounds. Moreover, Thānavī never agreed with the basic premises of composite nationalism and deeply distrusted the Hindus and the INC. Thānavī's views were passed on to some of his students and close confidants in the Deobandi circles. As the separatist imagination began to spread among the Muslims, Thānavī and his inner circle began to make contacts with the ML leadership with the hopes of Islamizing them. The head of this circle was Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uṣmānī, another scholar from Deoband, who founded the JUI in 1945 with the express purpose of supporting the Pakistan demand. The JUI's support for the cause proved critical for the ML's acceptability among the Muslim public. As more 'ulamā joined their ranks, the JUI began to openly challenge the JUH's composite nationalism, and in a short time succeeded in breaking the JUH's monopoly over Indian Muslims' theo-politics. In 1947, the convergence of the secular separatism of the ML and theological separatism of the JUI delivered Pakistan.

ASHRAF 'ALĪ THĀNAVĪ (1863-1943) AND THE PROTO-SEPARATIST

IMAGINATION

Like many leaders of the JUH, Thānavī studied at the Deoband Seminary.⁷²⁸ Until his entry into politics, Thānavī spent his life in the typical academic and spiritual pursuits of Deobandi students and graduates. Education at one of the Deoband school's branches (devoted to the traditionalist subjects such as Arabic, Persian, exegesis, jurisprudence,

⁷²⁸ Thānavī's most notable teacher and spiritual guide at the seminary was Maḥmūd Ḥasan, the head of Deoband Seminary at the time and an influential revolutionary leader. Thānavī's close association with Ḥasan lends him charisma and authority with the Deobandis.

etc.), spiritual and moral cultivation in the Sufi tradition, and teaching of the same curriculum upon graduation.⁷²⁹ Thānavī went on to establish his own *khānqah* (Sufi lodge or hospice) in his hometown of Thana Bhavan for the spiritual mentorship of his disciples. This granted him wide influence among laymen. His literary output reaches more than a thousand works in the form of books, treatises, and pamphlets. The Deobandi affiliation ensured that Thānavī shared his overall religious imagination and orientation with the other Deobandis, and the wider leadership of the JUH. Thānavī's significance lies in that while remaining firmly within the bounds of Deoband's general theology and spirituality, he diverged with them on politics, and his support for the separatist movement proved decisive.

Islamization of Politics and Separation from the Deoband Seminary

As many of his peers, Thānavī's political engagement began with the First Balkan War in which the Ottomans were pitted against the Balkan League (Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia). To support the injured Turkish soldiers, the Indian Muslims established their own version of the Red Crescent (*Hilāl Aḥmar*) society, in which Thānavī participated with great enthusiasm.⁷³⁰ Another major political event to which Thānavī had to respond was the Khilāfat Movement. However, unlike so many of his colleagues in the JUH, Thānavī stands out among the few notable figures of the time—including Iqbal and Jinnah—who did not participate in the Khilāfat Movement. Thānavī

⁷²⁹ Sayyid Muḥammad Akbar Shāh Bukhārī, *Sau Barai 'Ulamā* (Lahore: Qadir Sons, 2002), 16-45. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi: Islam in Modern South Asia* (Oneworld Publications, 2008), 17-18.

⁷³⁰ The Indian society was modeled after the Red Crescent in Turkey, itself modeled after the Red Cross society. Muḥammad Anvārul Ḥasan Sherkoṭī, *Kamālāt-i 'Usmānī al-Ma'rūf bihi Tajalliyyāt-i 'Usmānī* (Multan, Pakistan: Tālīfāt-i Ashrafiyyah, 2006), 586.

certainly agreed with the Movement's aims, but disagreed with the methods employed.⁷³¹ His reasoning was undergirded by the political ethics between the ruler and the ruled as articulated in the traditional Islamic legal literature. Within this framework, maintaining peace and stability hold primacy over upheaval and revolution that do not come with a high probability of transition to a more just and peaceful situation. Accordingly, peaceful relations between the ruler and the ruled was an ideal that could only be disturbed in exceptional circumstances, most egregious of which was the ruler's open violation of Islamic norms. Adhering to such an ethic had immediate implications for politics under colonialism. "By advising Indian Muslims to comply with British rule," Mian and Potter note, "he inadvertently closed off any possible space of political resistance to imperial subjugation. British rulers were to be obeyed and respected even under oppression—unless the rules went against divine law."⁷³² Thānavī's reasoning reveals a narrower understanding of peaceful relations and religious freedom under colonialism in comparison to his contemporaries. The composite nationalists and Maududi would certainly disagree with Thānavī that India under colonial rule was peaceful and where the *sharī'at* remained unviolated. Madani's autobiography, for example, is full of examples of how the British had deliberately oppressed Muslims, disturbed peace, corrupted their way of life, and interfered with the functioning of the *sharī'at*. Most importantly, Thānavī's quietist ethics also implied that the nationalist imperative of India's

⁷³¹ Aḥmad Sa'īd, *Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanavī aur Tahrik-i Āzādī* (Lahore: Majlis Siyānatul Muslimīn, 1984), 25-26.

⁷³² Ali Altaf Mian and Nancy Nyquist Potter, "Invoking Islamic Rights In British India: Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi's Ḥuqūq al-Islam," *The Muslim World (Hartford)* 99, no. 2 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2009.01271.x>.

independence held a lower priority than the imperatives of the *sharī'at*. Thānavī shared with the JUH the disapproval of the violations of the *sharī'at* committed by the Muslim participants in the Khilāfat Movement (e.g., participating in Hindu festivals for show of solidarity, or inviting Hindus to mosques for lectures). Moreover, he found certain elements of Gandhi's method of noncooperation rash and practically problematic (e.g., poor people resigning from government employment without financial recourse).⁷³³ He also disapproved the JUH's uncritical acceptance of Gandhi's leadership due to his general distrust of Hindus.⁷³⁴

While Thānavī held both the British and the Hindus in contempt, he reserved stronger resentment against Hindus, whom he considered “the foremost enemies of the Muslims.”⁷³⁵ Thānavī's reasoning was based on his Islamic exceptionalism that Islam was the Truth (*ḥaqq*) whereas the Hindus were people of falsehood (*ahl-i bāṭil*), and Truth should not accommodate falsehood.⁷³⁶ Sa'īd speaks of Thānavī's list of grievances of the wrongs Hindus had committed against the Muslims over time. For example, Thānavī alleges that the Hindus sold out Muslims in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising as they turned into informants against the Muslims during the government's crackdown. Moreover, Thānavī points to various attempts at converting Muslims to Hinduism (*shuddhī*), harming Muslims in different ways for beef consumption, and the recurring

⁷³³ Sa'īd, *Ashraf 'Alī*, 43-46.

⁷³⁴ Sa'īd, 26-27.

⁷³⁵ Sa'īd, 31.

⁷³⁶ Ali Altaf Mian, “Surviving Modernity: Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī (1863-1943) and the Making of Muslim Orthodoxy in Colonial India” (Ph.D., Duke University, 2015), 272-273, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/1678630762/abstract/A6BC2E8EBFC84588PQ/1>.

Hindu-Muslim riots in the course of history.⁷³⁷ In Thānavī's estimation, the show of Hindu-Muslim unity during the Khilāfat Movement was superficial and only temporary.⁷³⁸ As we saw in Chapter 4, he turned out to be correct on that count. In view of the bloodshed and suffering caused during the Movement, Thānavī considered it "an unmitigated disaster" for Muslims, partly because of Muslims' failure to observe the stipulations of the *sharī'at* in resisting revolutionary activities without first ensuring the maximum conditions for their success.⁷³⁹ Thānavī thus shows greater attunement than the composite nationalists to the imperative of semiotic consistency in demanding conformity to Islamic norms not only in the purposes of politics, but also in the means employed. The imperative for semiotic consistency coupled with an anti-Hindu *résentiment* carries the germs of separatist imagination.

It took time for Thānavī's differences with the JUH to come to a head and out in the open. The fissures became public in Thānavī's row with Ḥusain Aḥmad Madani. Interestingly, both Thānavī and Madani approached the two major political parties on the principle of the lesser evil with the difference that while Madani deemed the INC the lesser evil, Thānavī reserved the same judgement for the ML.⁷⁴⁰ The reason for the row between the two had to do with Madani's political engagements, and his favoring of students' active engagement in politics.⁷⁴¹ Thānavī disapproved of Madani's involvement with the INC and any student involvement in politics. Unable to deter Madani given

⁷³⁷ Sa'īd, *Ashraf 'Alī*, 32-33.

⁷³⁸ Sa'īd, 73.

⁷³⁹ Zaman, *Thanawi*, 40-44.

⁷⁴⁰ Muḥammad Zāhid, *Tahrīk-i Pākistān ke Dīnī Asbāb o Muḥarrikāt: Ḥakīmūl Ummat Ḥazrat Thanavī aur unke Rūfāqā kī Naẓar Main* (Faisalabad, Pakistan: Maktabahtul 'Ārafī, 1999), 10-11.

⁷⁴¹ Sa'īd, *Ashraf 'Alī*, 73-74.

Madani's status and influence as principal (*ṣadar mudarris*), Thānavī resigned in 1935 from his position as a patron (*sarparast*) on the Deoband Seminary's management committee.⁷⁴²

Toward a Political Theology of Separatism

Thānavī's approach to politics is closer to the Islamic nationalism of Iqbal and Maududi than to the composite nationalists. While the composite nationalists were willing to work closely with the Hindus, though careful as not to flout the *sharī'at*, for Thānavī the very suggestion of working closely with Hindus was problematic. Speaking against composite nationalism's promotion of Hindu-Muslim alliance, Thānavī made it clear that "[a]s both the British and Hindu aqwaṃ [*qaums*] belonged to the same nation of *millat-i kufriya* [*millat* of disbelief] then a Muslim cannot be anti-British and friendly with the Hindus at the same time. [Especially when] the second nation (the Hindus) is stronger in enmity to Islam and Muslims than the first one."⁷⁴³ Note that the first premise of this argument—that Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic traditions belong to different *millats*—is shared by all political theologians under review, but they arrive at different conclusions based on how they define the relationship between *millat* and *qaum*. The critics of composite nationalism, like Thānavī, found Islamic *qaumiyyat* on the basis of *millat*, hence, obviate the possibility of composite nationalism, and wittingly or

⁷⁴² Sa'īd, 75 and 77. Muḥammad Anvārul Ḥasan Sherkoṭī, *Ḥayāt-i 'Usmanī* (Karachi: Dārul 'Ulūm, 2014), 441-447. It seems that Thānavī did not tender his official resignation in writing. Sherkoṭī has worked out the approximate date of the resignation by analyzing Thānavī's letters. Other Deobandi *'ulamā* who defected with 'Usmānī went on to form their own branch of the JUH at Kanpur. Rizwan Malik, "Muslim Nationalism in India: Ashraf Ali Thanawi, Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani and the Pakistan Movement," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* 17, no. 2 (1997), 74.

⁷⁴³ Malik, "Muslim Nationalism," 74-75. Similar language is used on another occasion. *Ibid.*, 77.

unwittingly uphold a central premise of separatism.

Beneath Thānavī's attitude of anti-Muslim disdain lies a more positive sense of Islamic exceptionalism and the accompanying sense of Islamic dignity and Muslim independence. He remarks that "it was against Muslim prestige to imitate (*ravish ikhtiyār karain*) other *qaums*, adopt their methods (*tadābīr*) for their [Muslims'] own progress, or seek help from them in any way. It was a matter of honor (*ghairat*) for Muslims to trust in Allah."⁷⁴⁴ In other words, the cooperation with or imitation of the British or Hindus surrendered the sole reliance on God. It then follows for Thānavī that if the Muslims could commit themselves in all earnest to God alone, they would dispense with the need for support of and cooperation with others.⁷⁴⁵ For Thānavī, Muslims were dignified because of their religion, and religious dignity implied that they should engage in independent political action. The latter imperative also implied for Thānavī that the Muslims should only be led by Muslim leadership. Thānavī's thinking thus implies a strong impulse toward a 'separatist' imagination.

That Thānavī was imbued with a 'separatist' imagination long before his row with the Deoband Seminary and the JUH can be discerned by what has been reported by his close acquaintances. As against the conventional wisdom that the idea of Pakistan was first dreamt up either by Iqbal or Chaudharī Raḥmat 'Alī (who coined the name 'Pakistan') in 1930,⁷⁴⁶ Thānavī's acquaintances insist that the idea approximating that of a sovereign Muslim homeland (*dāru'l islām*) for Indian Muslims was first articulated by

⁷⁴⁴ Sa'īd, *Ashraf 'Alī*, 39.

⁷⁴⁵ Sa'īd, 39.

⁷⁴⁶ Zāhid, *Taḥrīk-i Pākistān*, 490-491.

him. In an address delivered in 1928 in his hometown of Thānah Bhavan, Thānavī complained of the need for the Muslims to have their own center (*markaz*) and their own leader (*amīrul mu'minīn*)—Azad had voiced similar idea during the days of the Khilāfat Movement.⁷⁴⁷ On a similar note, ‘Abdulmājid Daryābādī,⁷⁴⁸ a prominent figure close to Thānavī, reminisced that

Thānavī was unmoved by his contemporary ‘*ulamā*’s concerns with ‘struggle for [India’s] independence,’ ‘struggle for rights,’ [Indian] nation’s freedom, etcetera. The problem before him was never political, but entirely religious. He wanted the rule of Islam only (*islām kī hukūmat*). When I met him for the first time in 1928, he articulated a scheme for a *dārul islām* [a society ruled by Muslims] in some detail. The idea of Pakistan and an Islamic government were expressed much later. It was here (in Thānavī’s circle) that such ideas were first voiced. This matter was quite clear in his discourse.⁷⁴⁹

The idea of India as *dārul islām* [literally, ‘the abode of Islam’] is nothing new in the Muslim imagination as it belongs to the earliest Islamic political framework through which the world ruled by Muslims was demarcated against that of *dārul kufr* (‘the abode of disbelief’).⁷⁵⁰ Daryābādī remarks that Thānavī was insistent that such a thing could only be accomplished through a strictly Muslim organization (*jamā‘at*), and this is what Muslims should work for.⁷⁵¹ As no details exist of precisely what Thānavī had in mind, it is a matter of speculation as to how close was his scheme to the later idea of Pakistan or

⁷⁴⁷ Sa‘īd, *Ashraf ‘Alī*, 150.

⁷⁴⁸ Daryābādī’s was initially affiliated with the INC. In later years, he moved away from the INC and drew close to Thānavī’s inner circle. Zāhid, *Tahrīk-i Pākistān*, 490.

⁷⁴⁹ Zāhid, *Tahrīk-i Pākistān*, 14. Zāhid’s quotes from ‘Abdurrahmān Khān, *Ta‘mīr-i Pākistān aur ‘Ulamā-yi Rabbānī* (Lahore: Idārah-yi Islāmiyyāt, 1992), 266. Daryābādī’s own reminiscence is found in his memoirs of Thānavī; see ‘Abdulmājid Daryābādī, *Hakīmūl Ummat: Nuqūsh o Asarāt* (Lahore: Maktabah-yi Khāvar and Muḥammad ‘Alī Akāḍamī, 1967), 33.

⁷⁵⁰ The famous 1803 *fatvā* (authoritative religious opinion) of jihad against the British by Shāh ‘Abdul ‘Azīz argued the case for the obligation to fight the British on the premise that the once *dārul islām* under the Mughals had now been transformed into *dārul kufr* under the British.

⁷⁵¹ Zāhid, *Tahrīk-i Pākistān*, 14-15. Khān, *Ta‘mīr-i Pākistān*, 47. Zafar, *Maidān-i Siyāsāt*, 490-492.

the Indian Emirate that the JUH proposed.

In any case, what is important for us is that both Khan and Thānavī were imagining a Muslim future in India in ways that were tinged with separatist tendencies, albeit their very different approaches to religion. While Khan’s discourse demonstrates that the problem of Muslim interests when approached by a more secular imagination inclines Muslims toward independent political activity away from Indian nationalism, Thānavī’s reflections show that the same problem viewed from an “entirely religious” standpoint also tends in a similar direction. In my reading, such a thing is explicable only by reference to a common Muslim imagination and its internal dynamics of semiotic consistency shared by both Khan and Thānavī. The two approaches to the problem of Muslim future in India ultimately converged in the form of full-fledged separatism. Such a convergence had its roots in the mid-1930s.

Islamizing the Muslim League

In 1935, the ML was reorganized and expanded by its president Muhammad Ali Jinnah. As a result, the ML began to gain greater popularity among the Muslim public. The ML’s growing acceptance prompted many Muslims to wonder at the religious legitimacy of supporting the ML and the INC. Given his authority and popularity, Thānavī was repeatedly approached for his opinion on the matter. His earlier views on the ML were conveyed on one occasion when he remarked to a disciple that the ML members were wont to be considered (by religious Muslims) sinners (*fāsiq aur fājir*)⁷⁵²—because the religious elements saw them as Westernized Muslims. However, as

⁷⁵² Thānavī quoted in Malik, “Muslim Nationalism,” 76.

Thānavī's differences with composite nationalism widened, he nuanced his position on the ML. In order to clear up the matter for himself, Thānavī sent detailed questionnaires to the JUH and the ML designed to gauge their political and religious positions, respectively. The JUH never responded, but the ML did, and Thānavī found their answers satisfactory to the extent of justifying his cautious support for them. While Thānavī acknowledged the paucity of religious bona fides in the ML's leadership, he saw the possibility of Islamic reforms within the ML, as opposed to any possibility of the JUH reforming the INC along Islamic lines.⁷⁵³ Like Maududi, Thānavī too spotted an additional red flag in the INC in that it was headed by a socialist. The "Congress members are in fact Bolsheviks," Thānavī cautioned, "hence, in no way supporters of religion."⁷⁵⁴

The effects of Thānavī's various endorsements against the INC or in favor of the ML produced tangible effects in the 1937 election in Jhansi, the first electoral contest between the ML and the INC. As the election approached, voters sought Thānavī's counsel on party preference. Thānavī was still skeptical about the ML's religious commitments, hence, ambivalent about explicitly endorsing a specific candidate. He was yet unsure whether the feudal lords running the ML were up to establishing an Islamic order (*islāmī nizām*). His confidant Zafar Aḥmad 'Uṣmānī, however, suggested to not endorse the ML directly, but instead explicitly discourage voting for the INC.⁷⁵⁵ Thānavī followed the advice and made a public statement to that effect. Even this indirect

⁷⁵³ Sa'īd, *Ashraf 'Alī*, 85-86, and 124.

⁷⁵⁴ Sa'īd, 89.

⁷⁵⁵ Sa'īd, 126-128.

endorsement was sufficient for the ML to use it as a campaign propaganda. The campaigners turned Thānavī's words into posters and flyers, distributing them across the district.⁷⁵⁶ When the votes were cast, the ML's candidate won the election. That Thānavī's endorsement had an impact on the election can be discerned in the ML officials' confession to Thānavī: "though we did not possess trucks [for campaigning and hauling voters to the polling places] and other (technological) equipment, your telegraph turned over the election [in our favor]."⁷⁵⁷ This is just another indication that the Muslim public opinion was more effectively persuadable through religious sanction than a discourse based on purely material concerns. It was probably the palpable effect of Thānavī's authority in influencing politics that must have convinced Jinnah to reconsider his longtime disapproval of mixing religion and politics.

Buoyed by his contacts with and positive reception by the ML's leadership, Thānavī pressed his case further with the ML in order to reform them religiously. For this purpose, he founded the Truth-Preaching Society (*Majlis Da'vatul Ḥaqq*) through which he initiated regular meetings with the president of the ML, Jinnah.⁷⁵⁸ In the first of these meetings, on the occasion of the ML's annual convention of 1938 held in Patna, Thānavī sent a delegation to impress upon Jinnah the need to integrate religion into politics. The delegation also encouraged Jinnah to institute congregational prayers among the ML's leadership. Jinnah initially disagreed with the propositions, insisting on keeping religion

⁷⁵⁶ Zafar, *Maidān-i Siyāsāt*, 496.

⁷⁵⁷ Sa'īd, *Ashraf 'Alī*, 128.

⁷⁵⁸ Khān, *Ta'mīr-i Pākistān*, 97-98. Ḥaqq is a comprehensive word that denotes truth, right, proper, just and justice, responsibility, fact, and righteousness.

and politics separate, but finally relented to some extent, promising the delegation his personal commitment to daily ritual prayers.⁷⁵⁹ The next day of the convention, Jinnah in fact offered congregational prayers with a crowd of hundred thousand attendees.⁷⁶⁰

As Thānavī himself could not attend the convention, a member of the Society's delegation read Thānavī's message before the convention. The message notes that in light of the unfolding crisis (*inqilāb*), two things were absolutely necessary for Muslims: assembly (*ijtimā'*) and organization (*tanẓīm*).⁷⁶¹ First, there was a dire need for Muslims to establish their own separate assembly (*judāgānah tanẓīm*). The nation that does not organize itself separately is liable to be absorbed into other nations. The correct path was for Muslims to assemble and unite under one flag, and to recommit themselves to the Qur'an and the Prophetic example.⁷⁶² The ML, Thānavī pointed out, had already taken the first step in assembling Muslims on a single platform. The second task was that of disciplined organization, in Thānavī's language, "to become God's army" through a four-part process: become earnest Muslims, befriend Muslims and be stern against non-Muslims, ensure Islamic embodiment in one's appearance, and commit to regular prayers.⁷⁶³ This program was necessary for Thānavī to win God's favor: for "once a Muslim submits to God, all forces in the world submit to him."⁷⁶⁴ Islam, he noted, was a comprehensive and complete (*jāmi' aur mukammal*) religion (*dīn*) so that it was necessary to keep the matters of economy, commerce, and industry in harmony with

⁷⁵⁹ Khān, 66.

⁷⁶⁰ Sa'īd, *Ashraf 'Alī*, 133-135.

⁷⁶¹ Sa'īd, 136.

⁷⁶² Sa'īd, 137-138.

⁷⁶³ Sa'īd, 138-141.

⁷⁶⁴ Sa'īd, 142.

those of worship.⁷⁶⁵ *Ijtimā'* for Thānavī seems to be the analog of *qaum*, literally the gathering of people into a group; while *tanzīm* performs the function of the efficient cause of conferring upon the *qaum* the form of an authentic Muslim community as Thānavī understands it.

After the Patna convention, the ML moved to establish its presence nationwide by setting up branches across India. This was a time when the ML was still aloof from the masses, and needed support in its quest to claim the mantle of the only true representative of the Indian Muslim *qaum*.⁷⁶⁶ Thānavī again took a significant step in helping the ML's cause by issuing a *fatvā* in 1939 in the ML's favor. Articulating his opinion in the form of a *fatvā* gave the ML the strongest religious authorization possible. That it came from a prominent scholar like Thānavī only added weight to the ML's credibility. The decree is also significant in its wording, and reveals Thānavī's careful calculation as regards the '*ulamā*'s role in the ML's politics. He impresses upon the political leadership that it was their task to guard against the Muslims' erasure *as a qaum (min ḥaisul qaum)*, while it was the task for the '*ulamā* to guard against Muslims' religious decline.⁷⁶⁷ I consider this division of labor a deliberate calculation on Thānavī's part. For, on the one hand, to the extent that the ML began to shout religious slogans and pepper their talk with religious expressions from its platform, Thānavī seems to have succeeded to some extent in Islamizing the ML's politics into theopolitics. To be sure, religious sloganeering was just

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Khān, *Ta'mīr-i Pākistān*, 99.

⁷⁶⁷ Khān, 101. On another occasion, Thānavī had once remarked to his nephew that he was interesting in running a state, but his was an attempt to ensure that the Muslim state being promised should fall in the hands of the righteous and that God's religion reign supreme there. Malik, "Muslim Nationalism," 76.

that for the ML leadership, an instrumental deployment of religious expressions to attract the religious masses to its cause.⁷⁶⁸ However, I suggest that this sloganeering was effective because it tapped into an imagination prepared by political theology which made it easier to impose separatist meanings onto vague slogans. On the other hand, by maintaining a division of labor within the separatist movement, Thānavī seemed to be signaling to the politicians not to fear a takeover of the ML by the *‘ulamā*, and hence accept their involvement and recommendations in good faith.

In relation to the JUH, Thānavī’s rethinking on Islamic nationalism was decisive. Before Thānavī charted his own political course, the JUH and its composite nationalism had a monopoly on the Sunni theopolitical imagination. The religiously inclined masses looked to them for guidance. While both Iqbal and Maududi attacked composite nationalism, their arguments did not sway the masses in large numbers away from the JUH and toward the ML. Analyzing Thānavī’s impact on separatism, Zaman notes that both the *‘ulamā* and the ML suspected each other, but the ML needed the *‘ulamā*’s support to win public opinion, especially as the INC had leading *‘ulamā* in its camp.

⁷⁶⁸ During the Khilāfat Movement, Jinnah strongly disapproved of mixing religion and politics. Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997), 63. Even up until 1938, Jinnah seemed to be averse to mixing religion and politics. “Jinnah congratulated himself on counteracting the influence of the *‘ulama* in 1938. By 1939, however, he stated that religion and politics were intrinsically connected, demonstrating beliefs aligned with Ashraf Ali Thanawi in the process. This shift on the part of Jinnah was a reflection of a consistent concern with unity, and a pragmatic approach to which causes would protect the Muslim community most effectively.” Megan Easton Robb, “Advising the Army of Allah: Ashraf Ali Thanawi’s Critique of the Muslim League,” in *Muslims Against the Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan*, eds. Ali Usman Qasmi and Megan Eaton Robb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 145. However, by 1941, Jinnah had changed his tone completely. When asked on one occasion to clarify what was meant by “Islamic rule (*ḥukūmat*),” he explained that “the distinct of an Islamic rule is that the authority (*marja*’) is God, and its [the Islamic rule’s] implementation centers on the Qur’anic injunctions and principles.” Khān, *Ta’mīr-i Pākistān*, 47.

Zaman finds it plausible that the ML would have succeeded in attracting the *'ulamā* even without Thānavī's backing, but such a support would have been "considerably impoverished without him."⁷⁶⁹

Thānavī's importance lies precisely in that he was a religious authority himself, and thus challenged the JUH's monopoly from within. His stature as a great Deobandi scholar carried enough authority to incline the public toward the ML. Moreover, Thānavī's carefully calculated strategy of silently making headway with the ML's leadership and convincing them to communicate their politics through familiar religious symbols was a decisive victory in his favor and for the separatist sentiment. Whereas the post-independence events demonstrated that the ML's leadership was never serious about their religious rhetoric, their use of religious symbols proved an effective political strategy for their separatist cause.

Thānavī died in 1943 before the founding of the JUI. Before his death, he passed the baton of his pro-ML advocacy to his inner circle, among whom the most important was Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uṣmānī, who had been heading the delegations of the Truth-Preaching Society on Thānavī's behalf.

SHABBĪR AḤMAD 'USMĀNĪ (1887-1949)

Like Thānavī, 'Uṣmānī too was a graduate of the Deoband Seminary. Among his hagiographical distinctions was his close association with Thānavī and Maḥmūd Ḥasan. After graduating from the Seminary in 1908, he taught at the Seminary for a short period, and then left to teach at the Fatihpūr Seminary in Delhi. In 1911, 'Uṣmānī returned to the

⁷⁶⁹ Zaman, *Thanawi*, 55; for the larger discussion, see *Ibid.*, 48-55.

Deoband Seminary for another short teaching stint, and then returned again in 1935, this time as the vice chancellor (*ṣadar muhtamim*), a post he served until 1944.⁷⁷⁰ At Deoband, ‘Uṣmānī too faced similar challenges as those of Thānavī as regards Madani’s politics and his relationship with the seminary and its students.

Islamizing Modern Politics

Like his mentor Thānavī, ‘Uṣmānī’s political engagement began with the First Balkan War and volunteer work for the Red Crescent,⁷⁷¹ and only intensified during the Khilāfat Movement.⁷⁷² Unlike Thānavī, ‘Uṣmānī was more willing to participate in the Khilāfat Movement, but he too was keen on Islamizing Muslim political engagement, and went a step further than Thānavī in actually providing the religious rationale for adopting noncooperation as a political tool. On the occasion of the JUH’s second annual convention in 1920, ‘Uṣmānī delivered an address to an audience of five hundred ‘*ulamā*.⁷⁷³ His task was twofold. First, he needed to furnish a justification for political engagement against the colonial government. Second, ‘Uṣmānī needed to Islamize Gandhi’s method of noncooperation.

Spiritually, ‘Uṣmānī identifies goodwill (*khair khvāhī*) toward Islam, as opposed to one’s personal dignity (*‘izzat*) or temporary celebrity (*vajāhat o maqbūliyyat*), as the ultimate intention that should determine one’s political engagement. Although ‘Uṣmānī

⁷⁷⁰ For biographical details, see Sherkoṭī, *Ḥayāt-i ‘Uṣmānī*, 29-43; and Malik, “Muslim Nationalism,” 76, n. 12.

⁷⁷¹ Sherkoṭī, *Ḥayāt-i ‘Uṣmānī*, 201-202; and *Kamālāt*, 586-589.

⁷⁷² Sherkoṭī, *Kamālāt*, 573-575.

⁷⁷³ Muḥammad Anvārul Ḥasan Sherkoṭī, ed., *Khuṭbāt-i ‘Uṣmānī: Shaikhul Islām ‘Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad ‘Uṣmānī ke Millī, Siyāsī aur Naẓariyyah-yi Pākistān se Muta‘alliq ‘Ālimānah Khuṭbāt, Maktūbāt, aur Mukālamāt kā Mukammal Majmū‘ah* (Karachi: Maktabah-yi Dārul ‘Ulūm, 1972), 56.

does not state it explicitly, goodwill towards Islam implied acting without regard for material interests—just what concerned Sayyid Ahmad Khan the most—which included the interests of family, country, and nation. ‘Uṣmānī notes that Islam intended to erase all human fraternal distinctions of *jahālat* (or, *jāhiliyyat*) in favor of a distinctly spiritual fraternity (*khāṣ rūhānī birādarī*). It was thus incumbent on all Muslims to come to the aid of Muslims anywhere in the world—in this case, the reference is to the Ottomans.⁷⁷⁴

The primacy of Islam for ‘Uṣmānī also translates into the diagnosis that the cause of the Muslim predicament lay within Muslims themselves, that is, the root of the problem was first of all spiritual. Accordingly, ‘Uṣmānī recommends that each Muslim should strengthen his faith (*īmān*) by submitting himself to God’s judgment, instead of looking to non-Muslim forces for support.⁷⁷⁵ Were the Muslims to recommit themselves to their faith in earnest, they will discover that all answers to life’s problems were already disclosed in the Qur’an. Hence, in ‘Uṣmānī’s reading, on the matter of the criteria for success and defeat (*fath o nuṣrat aur hazīmat o maghlūbiyyat*), the Qur’an makes it amply clear that no *qaum* is humiliated until it humiliates itself, and that God does not wrong a people except that they wrong themselves.⁷⁷⁶ Meaning to say, the Muslim individuals had to first of all reform themselves spiritually before they could attend to other matters.⁷⁷⁷ ‘Uṣmānī’s focus on personal spiritual reform is, on the one hand, the essential aim of the Deoband school’s espousal of Sufism. On the other hand, it parallels Sayyid Ahmad

⁷⁷⁴ Sherkoṭī, 62.

⁷⁷⁵ Sherkoṭī, 63-64.

⁷⁷⁶ Sherkoṭī, 66.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

Khan's promotion of cultural self-cultivation. In light of his initial reflections on spirituality, 'Uṣmānī takes up the question of noncooperation.

Linking spirituality to noncooperation, 'Uṣmānī proceeds to identify two means of victory and success (*fath o zafar*): material and spiritual (*māddī yā rūhānī*). When lacking material means, he recommends, one should adopt spiritual means. One such spiritual weapon (*hathyār*) was the method of noncooperation.⁷⁷⁸ 'Uṣmānī then elaborates his religious reasoning with a view to Islamize noncooperation by weaving together Qur'anic exegesis, Prophetic statements, legal-ethical principles of religious law, and pertinent events of Muslim history. The upshot of his argument is that it is permissible for Muslims to wield noncooperation as a spiritual weapon—spiritual because it requires discipline, restraint, and sacrifice—against the enemies of Islam and Muslims.⁷⁷⁹ 'Uṣmānī's reasoning was buttressed by another leader of the JUI Z̤afar Aḥmad 'Uṣmānī. While Z̤afar rejected Gandhi's idea of noncooperation as a way of life, he nonetheless found parallels with the Prophet's *modus operandi* during the Meccan period of his mission. Z̤afar explained that while the Prophet was not a pacifist, he used nonviolence as a strategy when he lacked the context and means to engage in a violent struggle.⁷⁸⁰ We see here another example of political theologians instrumentalizing modern politics for religious purposes.

During the Khilāfat Movement, the INC insisted that the Muslims lend their unconditional support to the nationalist movement as individual Indians, and not as

⁷⁷⁸ Sherkoṭī, 67.

⁷⁷⁹ Sherkoṭī, 67-77.

⁷⁸⁰ Zaman, *Thanawi*, 53-54.

members of a distinct *qaum* with its own collective interests. Recall that a similar demand had been made by the INC during Khan's time which had roused his ire against it. Naturally, this time too the debate broke out among the JUH members as regards the best course of action. The JUH decided to comply with the INC's recommendation. But, this was a concession 'Uṣmānī was unwilling to make. He openly warned the Muslims that their unconditional participation in the nationalist movement would result in the "destruction of their *qaumiyyat*."⁷⁸¹ In other words, just as Sayyid Ahmad Khan insisted that Muslims work for their interests *as a qaum* and refuse individual participation in the INC, 'Uṣmānī too impressed upon Muslims to engage in political action *as a qaum* so as to push a collective agenda, while individual participation squandered that possibility. While 'Uṣmānī continued to participate in the Khilāfat Movement until 1926,⁷⁸² his insistence on Muslim independence set him on a divergent course with the JUH and the Deoband Seminary.

From 1935 to 1945, 'Uṣmānī served as the vice chancellor (*ṣadar muhtamim*) of the Deoband Seminary. Like Thānavī, he too disapproved of faculty, staff, and student involvement in politics, and set the Seminary's policy to that effect. 'Uṣmānī noted in a letter in response to a query about the Seminary's policy that he never had been and nor will ever be a member of the INC.⁷⁸³ In his explanation, "I prefer to be called a communalist (*firqah parast*) than to be called my *qaum*'s traitor or a sellout."⁷⁸⁴ He

⁷⁸¹ Sherkoṭī, *Khuṭbāt-i 'Uṣmānī*, 92-93.

⁷⁸² Sherkoṭī, 93.

⁷⁸³ Sherkoṭī, 103-105. The letter was written to the editor of a newspaper, *Aṣr-i Jadīd*.

⁷⁸⁴ Sherkoṭī, 104. The polysemy of *mustaqil* includes 'enduring,' 'constant,' 'independent,' 'permanent,' 'continuous,' 'absolute,' and 'unchangeable.' *Mustaqil hastī* is an unconventional

further clarified that the Deoband Seminary had no affiliation with any political party, and its executive committee (*majlis-i 'āmilah*), faculty, and staff were strictly forbidden from actively participating in politics. There was one faculty member, however, who was not subject to such restrictions, and that was Madani, who had joined the seminary before 'Uṣmānī's appointment on the condition that he be allowed to carry out his political activities unconditionally. In 1942, Madani's political activism landed the Seminary into a crisis.

Separation from Deoband and the Founding of the JUI

In 1942, Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience was in full swing. During this time, Madani was invited by the Muradabad chapter of the JUH to deliver a speech in the district. On his way to the venue aboard a train, he was arrested by the British government. The news was ill-received at the Deoband Seminary. Above all, the student body was roused to protest, engaging in different forms of violence, harassment, and property damage.⁷⁸⁵ Dismayed and furious at these activities, 'Uṣmānī and the chancellor (*muhtamim*) Muḥammad Ṭayyib expelled fifty-nine students from the Seminary. The students responded by various means of pressuring the administration to reverse the decision, including goading Madani to speak out on their behalf while still in prison. The students' lobbying efforts paid off and under intense pressure, 'Uṣmānī reinstated all but one student.⁷⁸⁶ As the crises unfolded, 'Uṣmānī found himself opposed by some other

expression in the Muslim nationalist discourse, and recurs throughout 'Uṣmānī's discourse. Given the context in which he coined the expression, it carries the sense of irreducible, elemental, enduring, sovereign nationality.

⁷⁸⁵ Sherkoṭī, *Ḥayāt-i 'Uṣmānī*, 465-466.

⁷⁸⁶ Sherkoṭī, 468-469.

officials of the Seminary, whose influence led the Advisory Council (*majlis-i shūrā*) to substantially curtail ‘Uṣmānī’s powers as vice chancellor. Disheartened, ‘Uṣmānī ceased his active involvement at the Seminary, and eventually resigned from his position in August 1943.⁷⁸⁷ The resignation cleared the way for him to himself engage in politics.

To throw their support behind the ML in an organized manner and to effectively counter the JUH, Thānavī’s circle founded the JUI in 1945 under ‘Uṣmānī’s leadership.⁷⁸⁸ The JUI’s charter adopted Thānavī’s strategy of avoiding contestation for political office. “The charter made it clear that the JUI did not wish to supplant the ML as the sole representative organization of the Indian Muslims but saw its role more in terms of guiding it in matters pertaining to religion and the Shariah and ‘to work for the regeneration of the Muslim nation on Islamic lines.”⁷⁸⁹ ‘Uṣmānī’s importance for the ML can be gauged from the fact that starting in late 1945, once the ML realized his influence on the public, “Usmani was invited to all crucial meetings of the Council of the ML as well as those of the working committee.”⁷⁹⁰

The JUI’s founding convention took place in October 1945 in Calcutta, Bengal. As ‘Uṣmānī could not attend in person, he sent a delegate to deliver his message to the participants. The message opens with a proclamation that we have encountered before: the advent of Prophet Muhammad divided humanity into two *qaums*: Muslims and non-

⁷⁸⁷ Sherkoṭī, 469-474.

⁷⁸⁸ Z̄afar, *Maidān-i Siyāsāt*, 521. Other prominent members of the JUI included Z̄afar Aḥmad ‘Uṣmānī, Muḥammad Shafī‘, Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qāsmī, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Siyālkoṭī, Abū Barakāt ‘Aburrauf Vānāpurī, Āzād Subhānī, and Ghulām Murshid. Khān, *Ta‘mīr-i Pākistān*, 110.

⁷⁸⁹ Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Accessed October 3, 2021. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bu/reader.action?docID=1873478&ppg=7>, 356.

⁷⁹⁰ Dhulipala, *New Medina*, 359.

Muslims.⁷⁹¹ The Prophet downgraded all unworthy values upon which to claim nobility and respect, such as country (*mulk*), family (*khāndān*), language, and territory (*makān*).⁷⁹² Islam acknowledges the relative value of such distinctions in their own right. However, ‘Uṣmānī argues, such differences converge into the single grand ocean of Islamic *qaumiyyat*.⁷⁹³ “Based on this basic viewpoint, all non-Muslim *qaums* will be undoubtedly considered separate (*dūsrī*) *qaums*, and so there remains no longer any possibility of bringing about a composite nationality (*muttaḥidah qaumiyyat*) by intermixing (*imtizāj*) the two.”⁷⁹⁴ Countering Madani’s reading of the Treaty of Medina, ‘Uṣmānī points out that a most significant aspect of the Treaty had been ignored that all parties to the agreement accepted Prophet Muhammad’s authority and judgment as the final arbiter of all disputes between the signatories. It was, therefore, ludicrous to claim any parallels between the Treaty and composite nationalism as Muslims do not command authority over the INC.⁷⁹⁵ For ‘Uṣmānī, in fact, Muslims’ distinct nationality in India needed no proof at all, let alone twisted readings of ancient Muslim history. It was quite obvious, he observed,

that the ten million Muslims in India were an independent (*mutstaqil*) *qaum*. It was thus necessary for their unification and organization (*vaḥdat aur shīrāzah bandī*) that they have their own independent center (*mutstaqil markaz*), where their *qaumī* interests and purposes may reach fulfillment, and where they may implement God’s law with complete freedom and sovereignty over material resources (*mukammal āzādī aur māddī iqtidār*), without interference [from other nations].”⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹¹ Sherkoṭī, *Khuṭbāt-i ‘Uṣmānī*, 114.

⁷⁹² Ibid.

⁷⁹³ Sherkoṭī, 115.

⁷⁹⁴ Sherkoṭī, 116.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid.

Under no circumstances, ‘Uṣmānī warned, were the Muslims prepared to resign themselves to the double enslavement of the British and the Hindus.⁷⁹⁷ This is a most succinct statement articulating the gist of theopolitical reasonings of separatist theology as it argues for territorial sovereignty as a necessary precondition for *qaumī* emancipation from colonial enslavement and the realization of divine Will by implementing the *sharī‘at*.

The Theological Argument for Separatism

As the central legislature and provincial elections of December 1945 approached, ‘Uṣmānī made a public pitch in support of the ML through print media. Tying the axiology of independence to the necessity of territorial sovereignty, ‘Uṣmānī offered a similar rationale that Iqbal had voiced in his 1930 address: “Islam’s objective (*maqṣad*) is to form such a *qaumiyyat* that transcends homeland (*vaṭan*), race, color, profession (*paishah*), and other sociocultural distinctions introduced by other *qaums* (*aqvām*).”⁷⁹⁸ Given the large mass of the Indian Muslim community, ‘Uṣmānī found it essential that Muslims have their own autonomous and independent center (*āzād aur mustaqil markaz*). Under the current political circumstances, he argued, such a center could only come to exist in those provinces where Muslims enjoyed a majority.⁷⁹⁹ To secure their independence, ‘Uṣmānī recommended that people should vote for the ML. Should the ML fail in its endeavor for an independent Muslim country, ‘Uṣmānī warned poignantly,

⁷⁹⁷ Sherkoṭī, 117.

⁷⁹⁸ Sherkoṭī, 127.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid.

Muslims may never gain “political and *qaumī* independence” in India.⁸⁰⁰ Such an achievement represented only a single, though a necessary, step in the right direction, because, he frankly admitted, Pakistan will not emerge from start as an exemplary rule patterned upon the models of the first four Caliphs (*khilāfat-i rāshidah*), or as a consummate Islamic rule (*khāliṣ qur’ānī aur islāmī ḥukūmat*).⁸⁰¹ In other words, territorial sovereignty was a means toward achieving spiritual ends.

One persistent problem that the religious imagination faced was the personal compartments of the ML leaders. Given its elitist origins, the top leadership of the ML portrayed the cultural characteristics of what their religious detractors saw as Westernization. For this reason, the JUI leaders were repeatedly asked to justify their support in view of the suspect religiosity of the ML leaders. In response to such queries, ‘Uṣmānī readily acknowledged religious flaws in Jinnah’s character, for example. However, he explained that the way to address the flaw was to pressure the ML toward Islamizing themselves. On the other hand, approaching the matter in more realistic terms, ‘Uṣmānī stressed that no other Muslim was more attuned to the politics of the time than Jinnah. Jinnah could not be bought or pressured. ‘Uṣmānī goes on to inform his audience that the JUI decided to support the ML to safeguard their religion and true *qaumiyyat*.⁸⁰² On another occasion, ‘Uṣmānī admits of ‘*ulamā*’s incompetence at politics, and remarks that while Jinnah was not an observant Muslim (*muttaqī*), he was not religiously

⁸⁰⁰ Sherkoṭī, 128.

⁸⁰¹ Sherkoṭī, 128-129.

⁸⁰² Sherkoṭī, 118.

prejudiced either, and what is more, he was known to be an expert at politics.⁸⁰³ This dynamic alludes to the mutual instrumentalism of the JUI and the ML, each entity using the other as expedient means for its own purposes. Dhulipala has summarized the interdependence of the ML and the JUI *'ulamā*:

besides denouncing the JUI slogan of *Muttahida Qaumiyyat*, they [the scholars of the JUI] provided ML a much needed set of theological justifications for creating the Islamic state of Pakistan. The most notable feature of this collaboration was the growing symbiosis and a marked osmosis of ideas between the ML and the *ulama*. As the election campaign unfolded, the ML leadership increasingly deployed Islamic imagery to describe Pakistan while the *ulama* liberally borrowed the former's vocabulary of modern politics to make their case for a separate Pakistan. A new political vocabulary intertwining both religious and secular arguments thus emerged that was commonly used by both the *ulama* and the ML elite to rouse popular enthusiasm for Pakistan.⁸⁰⁴

While Dhulipala offers ample evidence of both religious and secular vocabularies, my focus has been on the religious side of the debate. Moreover, it should be noted that the new political vocabulary and Islamic imagery did not emerge in the 1940s, but, according to my argument, began to be articulated in the early twentieth century with the emergence of political theology. The collaboration of political theology with the secular separatism raises the question of its impact on the public imagination.

Pragmatics of Islamic Nationalism: Campaigning for Pakistan

The impact of the JUI upon the separatist movement was decisive, proven in the 1945–1946 elections and the two referendums of 1947. In 1945, Viceroy Archibald Percival Wavell announced that elections for the central legislature and provincial assemblies were going to be held in December to January of the following year. The

⁸⁰³ Sa'īd, *Ashraf 'Alī*, 123.

⁸⁰⁴ Dhulipala, *New Medina*, 353-354.

winner in these elections would go on to determine the constitutional roadmap of India. The ML had to show a strong standing, at least in the majority-Muslim areas to make the case for Pakistan. In this connection, a most important contest for the central assembly took place in the Saharanpur district between the INC candidate Muḥammad Aḥmad Kāẓimī and the ML candidate Liaqat Ali Khan, a top leader of the ML and a very close associate of Jinnah, later to become the first Prime Minister of Pakistan. Zubair Afzal ‘Uṣmānī, a member of Shabbīr ‘Uṣmānī’s circle, later recounted the details of the election.⁸⁰⁵

Saharanpur was dominated by the supporters of Madani, while Kāẓimī was a popular figure in the district. Hence, Khan was at a great disadvantage. What is more, given the significance of the contest, the INC machinery and finances were placed at Kāẓimī’s disposal. This included prominent INC leaders like Nehru and Sardar Patel campaigning for Kāẓimī. The ML, on the other hand, lacked the kind of financial power the INC commanded. A distressed Khan visited ‘Uṣmānī to seek his blessings. ‘Uṣmānī reassured Khan of heavenly support, and ordered two young men, Zubair Afzal and ‘Āmir ‘Uṣmānī, to devote all their energies on Khan’s campaign. The two men took to the streets on bullock carts, visiting town after town to rally the voters to the ML’s side. At one point, the bullock cart fell into a ditch, leaving the two men stranded. At this stage, Afzal’s recounting of his experience on the campaign trail takes on mystical and poetic tones. In a moment of distress, Afzal begins to reflect on the ML’s flag (white

⁸⁰⁵ Sherkoṭī, *Ḥayāt-i ‘Uṣmānī*, 499-503. Zubair Afzal ‘Uṣmānī’s account was reported in the newspaper *Navā-yi Vaqt* of October 11 1972.

crescent and star on a dark green background) for inspiration:

In our imagination was Pakistan's map. The green flag of the ML painted before us the scene of sublime heavens (*'arsh-i barīn*). It felt as if this crescent and star were diffusing light from lofty heavens (*afrāz-i 'arsh*). This green flag of beauty and truth (*husn o ṣadāqat*) was thrust in the bosom of evil (*tāghūt*) such that the enemy forces of Islam, due to affliction it caused (them), wailed in pain. For the sake of raising this flag high, the Muslim youth, having risked their lives, went around chanting boldly (*ba bāng-i duhal*): 'On our chests, bullets we will take, and Pakistan we will make.'⁸⁰⁶

...We were met with the enemies of the ML at every step, yet these lovers of the noose (*dār o rasan*), wearing the fetters of certainty, free from the chains of doubt, solely for the pleasure of our Lord, were advancing toward an unseen (*nādīdah*) destination....Regardless of whether Pakistan came to be or not, we were gripped with the concern that Islam's loftiness not be injured and idol-breakers (*but shikanon*) [Muslims] not be dominated by idol-makers (*but garon*) [the Hindus].⁸⁰⁷

This is a significant moment in the formative period of political theology in respect to the sentiments of Islamic nationalism, a kind of climax of the ideas that in one sense were initiated by Khan and in another sense by Iqbal. In this experience, nationalesque interpretation of Islam and the religionesque sentiments of nationalism are fused together—reminiscent of experiences participants had during the Khilāfat Movement. No explicit arguments were needed to Islamize electoral campaigning for it was now the work of God, no sermons were needed for the religious to justify working for the Westernized leaders of the ML, the nation-state was no longer an idol to be broken, but the idol had been now thoroughly Islamized having become a symbol of the idol-breakers. The flag symbolizing a nation-state became the flag of Islam.

Returning to the Saharanpur election, when the results of the election finally came

⁸⁰⁶ Sherkoṭī, 501.

⁸⁰⁷ Sherkoṭī, 501-502.

out, Khan won by 221 votes.⁸⁰⁸ He sent a letter of gratitude to the vice president of the JUI, Zafar Aḥmad ‘Uṣmānī, for the JUI’s support: “the speeches and writings of the ‘*ulamā* eradicated the effects of falsehood (*bāṭil*).”⁸⁰⁹ After the elections for the central legislature, the campaign season turned to provincial elections. The little machinery that the JUI had at its disposal went into overdrive as its members toured the country in support of the ML. Important leaders of the JUI took to the road to campaign for Pakistan. Among them were some prominent Deobandi ‘*ulamā* of the time, such as Zafar Aḥmad ‘Uṣmānī, Muḥammad Shaḥī‘, and Shabbīr ‘Uṣmānī himself. They toured the country for four months, delivering speeches, making pitches, meeting voters, and at each step challenging the INC, the JUH, and their respective brands of composite nationalism.⁸¹⁰ The messages delivered on these occasions championed the discourse of separatist Islamic nationalism, that is, as a separate *qaum* Muslims deserved a separate state.

The Religionesque Symbolization of Pakistan

It might seem strangely curious that the Muslim nationalists we have encountered tend toward intensely religionesque, bordering on the mystical, visions of nationalism in the course of their intellectual journey. However, in view of nationalism’s religionesque axiology, such sentiments are in keeping with the nature of nationalism. As we saw with Azad’s and Madani’s perennialisms, and Afzal’s account of the ML’s flag above,

⁸⁰⁸ Sherkoṭī, 503.

⁸⁰⁹ Sayyid Muḥammad Akbar Shāh Bukhārī, *Maqālāt-i Ḥakīmūl Islām: Ḥazrat Maulānā Qārī Muḥammad Ṭayyib Ṣāḥib* (Karachi: Idāratul Ma‘ārif, 2006), 52-54. Zafar, *Maidān-i Siyāsāt*, 537.

⁸¹⁰ Zafar, *Maidān-i Siyāsāt*, 534-535.

‘Uṣmānī’s nationalism too arrived at something of a mystical moment. I consider his presidential address at the JUI’s Punjab provincial convention of January 27, 1946 to be his most significant articulation of Islamic nationalism, and at the same time, the climax of the Islamic political theology in its relation to nationalism. Likening the search for Pakistan to Prophet Muhammad’s mission in the seventh century, ‘Uṣmānī recounts the hardships endured and the obstacles overcome by the Prophet and his followers.⁸¹¹ The ultimate objective (*naṣabul ‘ain*) before the Prophet in this endeavor—as also articulated by Maududi—was to establish God’s rule on the earth and implement His law.⁸¹² The Prophetic solution was to search for a free center and base (*āzād markaz o mustaqarr*) where even if a consummate Islamic order (*dārul islām*) could not exist at the outset, Muslims would nonetheless enjoy the autonomy necessary to implement God’s law.⁸¹³ That center was secured during the Prophet’s time by the Muslim migration from Mecca to Medina (when the first Muslim generation bid farewell to their homeland and their former *qaum* toward ensuring Muslim emancipation from a non-Muslim majority). In a twist of semantics, ‘Uṣmānī names the territorial and political center established by the Prophet at Medina “a kind of a Pakistan” (*aik taraḥ kā pākistān*)! The superior (*a ‘lā*) Pakistan of Medina was not born a consummate polity on day one, but reached consummation gradually in the leadership of God’s greatest vicegerent (*nā’ib*), Prophet Muhammad. The same would be the case with the Indian Pakistan (*hindī pākistān*) which will only gradually reach consummation from an imperfect to a more perfect Islamic

⁸¹¹ Sherkoṭī, *Khuṭbāt-i ‘Uṣmānī*, 257.

⁸¹² Sherkoṭī, 258.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

polity.⁸¹⁴ Perhaps, the Indian Pakistan too might, ‘Uṣmānī wished, one day develop in a way to even attract all of India to model itself after it.⁸¹⁵ The concern with monotheistic universalism is always lurking in the theopolitical imagination of Islamic nationalists even as they come to terms with the inevitability of a world fragmented into nations and states.

‘Uṣmānī proceeds to employ the metaphor of sacrifice to convey the values required to procure both the Medinan and the Indian Pakistans. He argues that the prospect of abandoning a minority of Muslims in India to secure the majority-Muslim Indian Pakistan was no different than the Prophet leaving behind some of his followers in Mecca even as the majority migrated to Medina.⁸¹⁶ In contrast, surrendering to the Hindu and the British demand to forego Pakistan was tantamount to suicide for *all* Muslims.⁸¹⁷ He apprised his audience that “our future is tied with Pakistan, and we deem it *a matter of life and death*. It is our creed that *destiny has chosen us for the preservation of Pakistan*, and this thing (responsibility) shall be transmitted to future generations as inheritance.”⁸¹⁸ On another occasion, ‘Uṣmānī proclaimed his willingness to give his life for the cause of Pakistan. For, as he saw it, the survival of the Islamic *millat* and their dignified existence (*bā‘izzat zindagi*) was conditioned upon the materialization of Pakistan.⁸¹⁹ Similarly, Zafar Aḥmad ‘Uṣmānī, another leader of the JUI, proclaimed that even if the ML were to

⁸¹⁴ Sherkoṭī, 259.

⁸¹⁵ Sherkoṭī, 266.

⁸¹⁶ Sherkoṭī, 275-276.

⁸¹⁷ Sherkoṭī, 287.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

⁸¹⁹ Khān, *Ta‘mīr-i Pākistān*, 118. The same willingness to sacrifice himself for the sake of Pakistan was voiced by another founder of the JUI, Zafar Aḥmad ‘Uṣmānī. Maḥmūd Aḥmad. Zafar, *‘Ulamā Maidān-i Siyāsat*, 540.

falter on its cause for Pakistan, it would be no big deal as now (circa 1945-1946) thousands of *‘ulamā* had joined the ML, “they would not deter from laying down their lives to attain Pakistan.”⁸²⁰

There were two more crucial electoral events in 1947 in the form of referendums that shed light on the relation between religion and nationalism, one in the North-West Frontier consisting of federally administered tribal areas inhabited mostly by people of Pakhtun (Afghan) origins, and the other in Sylhet, Bengal. Both of these regions held Muslim majorities, and were invited to hold referendums to decide their inclusion in India or Pakistan. Both regions were under the JUI’s influence.⁸²¹ It has been observed that the people of the Frontier region were very religious, and would not be swayed in favor of the ML except through religious sanction.⁸²² Jinnah had all of this in mind when he recruited Shabbīr ‘Uṣmānī and Zafar ‘Uṣmānī to influence public opinion in the two regions.⁸²³ The two scholars divided the task between themselves. Zafar ‘Uṣmānī left for his home province of Bengal to influence the Sylhet voters, while Shabbīr ‘Uṣmānī toured the Frontier region. The effect of the two theologians stumping for Pakistan paid off handsomely as both referendums were decided in Pakistan’s favor. Finally, on August 14, 1947, Pakistan became a majority-Muslim nation-state. JUI’s contributions were recognized in a small measure by the independent Pakistan’s establishment when they invited Shabbīr ‘Uṣmānī to raise the flag during independence ceremony in West

⁸²⁰ Zafar, *‘Ulamā Maidān-i Siyāsāt*, 539-540.

⁸²¹ Zafar, 545-546.

⁸²² Zāhid, *Taḥrīk-i Pākistān*, 60.

⁸²³ Zafar, *Maidān-i Siyāsāt*, 545.

Pakistan and Zafar ‘Uṣmānī to do the same in East Pakistan (today’s Bangladesh).⁸²⁴

The Impact of Political Theology on the Public Imagination

The preceding exposition raises the question of the efficacy and impact of political theology, especially that of the JUI, on the Muslim public imagination. The impact can be gauged through Dhulipala’s study. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Dhulipala challenges the conventional wisdom on the Partition that Pakistan was a nation insufficiently imagined. For analysis, he strategically selects the Muslim-minority region of the United Provinces (UP) in northern India. The UP Muslims knew that they would not become part of Pakistan in the post-colonial context. Hence, their material interests ran counter to the creation of Pakistan. Yet, the UP Muslims supported the demand for Pakistan in large numbers. Dhulipala shows that a lively debate on the question of the Partition unfolded among the UP public through different channels, including print journalism. Dhulipala exhibits both ordinary people and prominent opinion makers voicing their views, both for and against Pakistan. In exhibiting a few samples explicated by Dhulipala, my point is to highlight the language of political theology now commanded by ordinary Muslims.

The first exhibit is of one Anis Ahmad Rizvi, a little known graduate of Khan’s Aligarh University—accused by the religious of producing Westernized Muslims, the least expected to dabble in political theology—who wrote a treatise *Pakistan*. Rizvi announces that India was neither one country (*mulk*) nor Indians a single *qaum*, and thus

⁸²⁴ Khān, *Ta ‘mīr-i Pākistān*, 135-136. At another point during the campaign for Pakistan, the ML organized twenty-four ‘*ulamā* divided into five groups and spread them through the Muslim territories to campaign for the ML. Dhulipala, *New Medina*, 354.

discounted the possibility of composite nationalism. The treatise declares Islam a total way of life, and equates Pakistan with an Islamic system and a divine caliphate (*islāmī nizām ya ‘nī khilāfat-i ilāhī*). Rizvi asserts religion as the basis of Muslim *qaumiyyat*, and equates religious freedom with the power to organize Muslim life according to Islamic principles. Toward appropriating religious authorities in supporting his case, Rizvi quotes none other than Abul Kalam Azad, a staunch opponent of separatism, to argue that Islam was a comprehensive teaching which did not exclude political engagement.⁸²⁵ The later Azad might have turned away from political theology, but his readers had learned their lesson well from him, and found their way to separatism.

Another example is that of Musavvir ‘Alī Khān, also a graduate of Aligarh University and a district-level official of the ML, about whom not much is known. The context of ‘Alī Khān’s discourse was the Pakistan Day celebrations on April 19, 1940, planned as a show of strength in favor of the Pakistan demand. Rallies were held nationwide, and in some cases counted upwards of 50,000 to 100,000 attendees.⁸²⁶ In one of these small-town rallies, ‘Alī Khān delivered an address. He too presents Islam as an eternal and comprehensive worldview (*mustaqil nazariyah-yi hayāt*) that entailed the unity of religion and politics. In addition, he notes that Islam broke all connections with narrow solidarities such as territorial nationalism (*vaṭaniyyat*) in favor of a vast brotherhood. As Islam permitted only the government of God based on divine laws, according to ‘Alī Khān, Muslims would cease to be Muslims if they accepted a common

⁸²⁵ Dhulipala, *New Medina*, 195-205.

⁸²⁶ Dhulipala, 244.

Indian nationality based on territorial nationalism.⁸²⁷ He also emphasizes that Pakistan would be an Islamic state (*ḥukūmat-i ilāhī*) since Islam did not differentiate between religion and politics (*dīn aur dunyā*).⁸²⁸

These exhibits give us a glimpse of the extent to which the ideas of political theology had penetrated the Muslim public imagination. For surely, such ideas could not be derived by laypersons themselves, but, given the collective makeup of the South Asian religiosity, had to be advanced by credible religious intellectuals. If, therefore, one finds ordinary people having gained facility with such ideas, it speaks to the widespread influence of political theology on the Muslim public imagination. While Dhulipala's conclusion is correct that the "[c]onsecration of Pakistan's territory as a modern powerful Medina, taking care of both material and spiritual concerns of Muslims, effectively crushed competing narratives."⁸²⁹ More to my point, the JUI itself rode on the waves of political theology that had since long crashed upon the shores of Muslim imagination, gradually eroding the arguments built up by composite nationalism and other opponents of separatism. This is what lent the JUI's political theology more consistency and its integration of nationalism more cogency so that it was able to crush its competition.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The JUI's political theology does not show the theological innovations of Azad, Iqbal, or Maududi. There is little originality or comprehensiveness in it compared with the political theologies that preceded it. Its significance lies in interpreting the existing

⁸²⁷ Dhulipala, 245.

⁸²⁸ Dhulipala, 256.

⁸²⁹ Dhulipala, 361.

theopolitical discourse toward supporting the separatist argument. Political theologies agreed that Islamic ultimacy imparted Islam and Muslims an exceptional status, and that Muslims needed emancipation from both colonialism and the unconditional interference of the post-colonial state in Muslim affairs. Islamic exceptionalism was expressed in the language of the primacy of the *sharī‘at* and Islam as a complete system of life that transcends nationalities. However, political theology furcates into different visions based on their understandings of nationalism and/or how best to implement that vision.

Whereas the JUH based nationalism on a shared Indian homeland and common interests of Hindus and Muslims, they separated *qaumiyyat* from *millat* (religion), which led them to demand religio-cultural autonomy of the Muslim *millat*, all the while leaving the macro matters of statecraft like foreign policy, monetary policy, military, etcetera, in the hands of the post-colonial state.

The JUI, on the other hand, founded *qaumiyyat* on the basis of *millat* (religion)—as did Iqbal and Maududi—which brings all national space within the jurisdiction of Islam as well, leaving no room for a secular sphere. In view of the agreed-upon principles of political theology, Thānavī and ‘Uṣmānī were, therefore, more consistent in demanding that not only the purpose for which to engage in politics, but the political means of organization and resistance be subject to *sharī‘atic* norms as well. In Thānavī’s pronouncement, Muslims should march under their own leadership instead of following the command of “people of falsehood”—the same argument that Azad mastered in *Al-Hilāl*. Similarly, the JUH’s plan of an Indian federation in which Muslims enjoyed limited autonomy amounted to the subjugation of the “people of Truth” to the “people of

falsehood,” an undignified, inferior position for the “religion of Truth” and the complete system of life. It was, therefore, easy for the JUI to convince the Muslim masses that the *millat* of Islam was synonymous with Muslim *qaumiyyat*. Hence, a separate *millat* meant separate *qaumiyyat*, which necessitated an independent state. This whole logic has two parts: the first part, that *millat* defines *qaum*, belongs to Islamic semiosis, whereas the second part, that *qaumiyyat* demands an independent state, belongs to the theory of nationalism. In the end, all political theologies converge upon a common point.

Regardless of their differences, their relationship to nationalism remains instrumental, a means to achieve greater objectives of Islamic ultimacy, namely, Muslims’ collective emancipation from subjugation to an un-Islamic order, and securing a religious, cultural, and political context that facilitates one’s path to otherworldly salvation.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the semiotic development of Islamic nationalism as a form of modern Islamic political theology in colonial India during its formative period of 1857–1947. The theoretical task of this study was to develop a semiotic framework for the joint study of religion and politics. The importance of semiotics theory for this study rests on the insight that the territorial partition of colonial India was preceded by the *imagination* of such a possibility. The study proceeds to explore the structural background and the terms in which the ‘partitioning’ of the Muslim imagination developed.

Human imagination is the repository, interpreter, signifying processor, and organizer of all distinctly human experiences in the form of symbols. A symbol is a relation of signifying elements brought together in an act of interpretation. Symbols convey meanings, carry values, incite emotions, and induce actions. As products of culture, symbols mediate relations between individual and community, past and present, tradition and innovation. As relations, symbols are organized in systems or complexes in which different complexes take operative precedence in respect to a given context of experience. Symbolic complexes are also related in a hierarchy so that complexes with the highest significance define fundamental identity, determine most important values, bestow meanings, identify life’s purposes, and set the overall orientation of individual and collective lives. The systemic nature of symbols also imparts them a level of internal *consistency* that bestows on each culture its own ‘logic.’ Cultures sensitive to semiotic consistency, especially in relation to their central symbols, are more wary of uncritical

importation of foreign symbols, and insist that the foreign and the novel be *integrated* into an existing semiosis by conforming to its internal logic. Semiotic consistency and integration are processes for culture to perpetuate itself and sustain its collective identity by maintaining continuity with existing imagination while accommodating change. One way in which a culture can suffer a crisis of identity is through a rapid influx of foreign culture(s) or symbols into its cultural imagination. If a host culture does not possess the requisite semiotic complexity to resist, respond to, and/or integrate foreign symbols, it risks losing its distinct identity and being absorbed in the foreign culture.

Religion and nationalism are two cultural frameworks that organize individual imagination and cultural life upon diametrically different bases. Religion engages ultimacy through sacred symbols signifying something infinite. Religious engagement in turn evaluates all others life experiences in relation to it. Religious symbols take on a sacred character in part when perceived as imbued with divine agency. As the engagement through sacred symbols gives experiences mediated through them the form of religion, they function as boundary conditions, for without them ultimacy cannot be symbolized and engaged, nor religious life proceed. In contrast, nationalism rests on a secular consciousness that finds thisworldly life to be meaningful in itself, without any regard to religious ultimacy. National life is oriented according to its central symbols of nation, freedom, equality, and popular sovereignty. Owing to their life-orienting significance, religion and nationalism influence fundamental identity, determine most important values, bestow meanings, identify life's purposes, and set the overall orientation of personal and communal lives. Religion and nationalism thus resemble each

other in their general structure and dynamics with the difference that nationalism carries *religionesque* qualities that can substitute for the private function of religion, whereas religion carries a potential for *nationalesque* interpretations toward its politicization and modernization. Given the parallels between religion and nationalism, there remains the potential for the two to confront each other as rivals in the following contexts: (a) when nationalism threatens religion by trespassing into its domain, (b) when nationalism holds out the prospect of replacing religious spirituality-morality with its religionesque experience, or (c) when religion enters the secular sphere to challenge the state. All three of these scenarios came to pass in colonial India.

Whereas nationalism arose in the European Christian/post-Christian world as an organic endemic development, its arrival in India was facilitated either by colonialism or by locals influenced by the West, usually because of modern education. In either case, it was a foreign importation and not an endemic Indian development. In the colony, colonialism effects anomie and an accompanying crisis of identity among elite sectors, those who stand to lose the most under colonial rule. Given the appeal and the efficacy of nationalism as a unifying force, and as a discourse and program of resistance against colonialism, the Indian elites adopted it toward resolving their identity crisis and resisting colonialism, thus giving birth to Indian nationalism. In the case of Muslims, however, nationalism's secular foundations, on the one hand, and its religionesque quality, on the other hand, made it a challenge to integrate it with Islam. Islam's imperative of semiotic consistency made it necessary to integrate the symbols of nationalism by interpreting them through Islam's sacred symbolic complex. This attempt gave birth to modern

Islamic political theology in the form of Islamic nationalism.

I have suggested that the significance of political theology in its formative period should be dissociated with the post-colonial task of nation-building. Instead, it should be evaluated according to its immediate goal of Muslims' collective emancipation from colonialism—both as a structural and a cultural project of modernization—and the possible hegemony of the post-colonial state by restoring Muslims' religiocultural autonomy and/or political sovereignty. Taking the 1947 creation of a separate majority-Muslim state as symbolizing the maximal condition of Muslim emancipation in the specific context of colonial India, and pondering the origins of Muslim nationhood on which the Pakistan demand was based, I have argued that the germs of Muslim separatism developed in the two parallel streams of secular nationalism inspired by Sayyid Ahmad Khan in the nineteenth century and political theology initiated in the early twentieth century by Muhammad Iqbal and Abul Kalam Azad.

The earliest germs of the idea of Muslims and Hindus as distinct peoples are found with the proto-nationalism of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. Given Khan's secularized approach to religion and the absence of any discourse on nationalism as such during his time, he produced neither a theory of nationalism, nor a political theology of any kind. Yet, the germs of Muslim nationhood were present in his discourse on the *qaum*, which implicitly inflected the religious difference as it was the most conspicuous difference between Muslims and Hindus. The germs of divergent politics of Hindus and Muslims were also sowed by Khan in his vehement opposition to the Indian National Congress, and in his articulation of Muslims' political interests in conflict with those of Hindus. In

Khan's formulation, *qaum* takes on a new, sacred quality as it constitutes his central symbol through which the Muslim predicament is imagined. While Khan was the greatest proponent of Muslim modernization in the nineteenth century, Khan's vision for the Muslim *qaum* was in conflict with salient aspects of nationalism. While laying the foundations of Muslim nationhood, Khan rejected democracy, meritocracy, freedom of the individual as an autonomous political agent, the equality of all Indians, and popular sovereignty necessitating India's emancipation from colonialism. Until his death, Khan supported British presence in India as a protective instrument for Muslims. Modernization was not, therefore, an end in itself for Khan, but an instrument of Muslim advancement on Muslim terms. Khan tied the advancement of the Muslim *qaum* with Islam's dignity, which served to sacralize *qaum* (Muslim nationhood), and thus its transformation into a boundary condition. Political theology arose, in part, to counter and provide an alternative to Khan's homegrown modernization/colonization.

Although political theology proper begins with Muhammad Iqbal, it was the master of Urdu prose Abul Kalam Azad who—having suffered Khan's modernization as a personal crisis of faith and having rejected its secularized religiosity and its pro-British apolitical commitment—took Muslim India by storm in the second decade of the twentieth century, and laid the foundations of composite nationalism. Composite nationalism accommodated its theology to secular nationalism by reinterpreting *qaum* as based on territorial nationality and an interfaith cooperation against colonialism. This was an attempt to create a hyphenated identity of Muslim-Indian. However, given political theology's imperative of implementing Islamic ultimacy by living according to the legal

and ethical norms of the *sharī‘at*, composite nationalists also feared the state’s encroachment upon Muslim religion and culture. Hence, they first sought to institute an Indian Emirate—a quasi-independent theocratic state within a secular Indian federation—but later settled for religiocultural autonomy in majority-Muslim provinces. These were all adjustments to the harsh realities of modern politics that made uneasy accommodations with secular nationalism, and remained at odds with the greater nationalesque ambitions of composite nationalism. For the composite nationalists were insistent from the beginning that Islam was the consummate religion which brooked no division between private religiosity and public politics, that the *‘ulamā* were its proper leaders, and that its monotheistic universalism ultimately transcended all distinctions of race, territory, language, nationality. The theological effect of this sense of Islamic exceptionalism was a shift in emphasis on the emancipation of Islam itself as a reality transcending Muslims’ mundane interests. The political effect of Islamic exceptionalism led to the composite nationalists’ willingness to engage in independent political action during the days of the Khilāfat Movement, and to restore secure Muslims’ religiocultural autonomy.

Composite nationalists also popularized a revivalist historiography that evaluated Muslim history with respect to the fate of the Caliphate. This historiography presents *khilāfat* as a sacred symbol imbued with the imperative of divine agency, thereby, turning it into a boundary condition for symbolizing God’s Will on earth. It was for the sake of Islam’s sacred symbols, the sacralized Ottoman Caliphate and the sacred sites in Arabia, that the Khilāfat Movement united Muslims as a *qaum* and drew them out in the public

sphere *en masse* for the first time in Indian history. The Khilāfat Movement thus materialized Islam's nationalesque potential by desecularizing/decolonizing Islam and the public sphere as a direct challenge to colonial rule. Yet, despite tortuous arguments and much debate over nationalism's legitimacy, in the end, nationalism was revealed to be only an instrument of composite nationalism's monotheistic universalism, the objective of Islam's proselytization of Hindus, and non-Muslims in general, into Islam. Composite nationalism thus imagined Muslim emancipation through the various symbols of *khilāfat*, *imāratul hind* (Indian Emirate), and provincial religiocultural autonomy in post-colonial India.

The critics of composite nationalism Muhammad Iqbal and Abu'l A'ālā Maududi not only advanced their own political theologies, but criticized composite nationalism for its contradictions and lack of insight into nationalism as a pseudo religion. They saw composite nationalism's accommodation to secular nationalism as a kind of conversion experience that implied the transformation of Islamic identity to a secular-national identity. The critics' alternative was to assert *millat* (religion) as the basis of Muslim *qaumiyyat*. Iqbal went farthest among all the theologians under review in habilitating the significance of individuality in Islam by presenting Islam as the quest to facilitate *khūdī*'s imperative to draw near to God. Maududi made an important contribution to the revivalist historiography by formulating a theory of Islamic culture. Maududi's cultural theory rests on a fundamental complementary relationship defined by divine sovereignty and human *khilāfat*. Approached through this relationship, Maududi interprets history as a perennial struggle between monotheistic culture and the cultures of *jāhiliyyat*. Iqbal and Maududi

both cast Muslim emancipation first in spiritual-moral terms as breaking free from all forms of subjugation to materiality (Iqbal) and *jāhiliyyat* (Maududi), which, in the second instance, also requires freedom from Muslims' subjugation to non-Islamic cultures and polities. As Islamic ultimacy entails absolute obedience to God, Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, and the *sharī'at*, it could not be realized within a secular state. Hence, Iqbal and Maududi argued for not only Muslims' cultural autonomy, but also greater political sovereignty that bordered on separatism. While Iqbal did not live long enough to witness the Pakistan Movement take off, his vision of territorial consolidation of majority-Muslim regions into a single state was closer in spirit to both the Indian Emirate scheme and the later separatist proposal. Maududi in his turn was open to separatism, however, he rejected the ML's proposal for Pakistan because he insisted that the people seeking to establish an Islamic state must command religious authority and adhere to a strict Islamic culture, both of which the ML's leadership lacked. Like the composite nationalists, the political visions of Iqbal and Maududi too underscore the Muslim polity as a boundary condition symbolizing the most suitable context for achieving nearness to God and living a life of obedience to Him. Unlike the composite nationalists, and more like Khan, Iqbal and Maududi go further in sacralizing Muslim *qaumiyyat* so that it too functions as a boundary condition.

That separatism was the logical development of the overall tenor of political theology is evident in the rise of *Jam'iyat 'Ulamā-i Islām*, which emerged at the end of the formative period to support separatism. The JUI did not innovate so much in theological terms, but weaved existing ideas together to formulate a vision of Islamic

nationalism that was more coherent and cogent than those of its opponents. Ashraf ‘Alī Thānavī’s insistence on conforming all aspects of politics to the ethical norms of the *sharī‘at*, and preferring Muslim leadership over the Indian National Congress, was in line with not only political theology’s general principle of the *sharī‘at*’s primacy and Islamic exceptionalism, but also with Khan’s imperative of Muslim *qaum*’s independence from Hindu leadership and politics. It was theologically impossible, therefore, for the JUI—as it was for Iqbal and Maududi—to fathom implementing a complete Islamic life under secular rule. Hence, Thānavī’s wish to live in an “abode of Islam” (*dāruḥ islām*) headed by the “leader of the faithful” (*amīruḥ mu‘minīn*) was in keeping with Maududi’s *khilāfat*–state and the composite nationalists’ Indian Emirate. The JUI did not produce elaborate arguments on the semantics of Muslim *qaumiyyat*. Rather, they took it as a statement of the obvious that Muslims were in fact a religious *qaum*. By this time the Muslim public had been primed by both the ML and political theology to accept their *qaumiyyat* as based on *millat*. Shabbīr Aḥmad ‘Uṣmānī’s dream of creating Pakistan as a new Medina patterned after Prophet Muhammad’s rule implied severing connections with one’s homeland and securing territorial sovereignty toward establishing the rule of God. In this light, it was all too easy to argue in favor of an independent Muslim-majority nation-state as the most suitable context for fulfilling God’s Will. In this way, Islamic nationalism made the quest for personal salvation synonymous with Muslim *qaum*’s political emancipation in the form of a majority-Muslim nation-state. Political theology thus culminated into the integration of nationalism with the symbols of *qaumiyyat* and *khilāfat*, which were sacralized due to their semiotic relations with the essential sacred

symbolic complex of God, the Prophet, the Qur'an, *sharī'at*, *millat*, etcetera. In other words, it is only when they are interpreted through the complex of sacred symbols acting as interpretants that *khilāfat* and *qaumiyyat* are sacralized. *Qaumiyyat* and *khilāfat*, interpreted as theopolitical symbols, thus become two of the most important boundary conditions without the presence of which Muslim life could not symbolize Islam in its totality and without which individual Muslims could not find the optimal context for their salvation. The equation of the two translates into Islamic nationalism with separatism being its logical political outcome.

In the background of the debates on the Partition and the Two-Nation Theory as to who was responsible for articulating separatism, what motivations influenced it, how was the vision communicated, and how to understand the role of the Muslim public, I have shown that, without discounting the role of high politics of secular leadership, like Jinnah and the ML, there was another kind of high politics, that of the political theologians who not only spoke *for* Muslims, but for *Islam itself*, and what is more, spoke *to* the Muslim masses and on a nationwide scale long before the secular leadership did so. For nearly forty years, political theology molded Muslim imagination toward modern political interpretations of Islam. In the context of colonial India, however, political theology could only make its mark on history by nationalizing Islam and turning it into a mass movement. For this reason, political theology had to be disseminated far and wide by harnessing all the power of mass media, especially print journalism. It was thus conveyed through newspapers, journals, pamphlets, books, exegeses, radio broadcasts, telegrams, protests, campaigns, and rallies. In other words, political theology was

propagated far and wide, and whatever the political and economic merits of separatism, it was copiously debated, hence, more than sufficiently imagined *in theological terms*.

What the public received, however, was not a single political theology, but a diversity of visions of Muslims' future in post-colonial India. The instrumentalist perspective that dismisses the role of the masses as mere tools in the hands of elite interests is untenable because neither was there a single vision of Muslim nationalism that was propagated by suppressing all others, nor was any vision physically enforced upon the masses. Rather, all nationalisms had to make their case before a vast audience. It must be noted that as far the religious discourse was concerned, it revolved around more or less the same symbols, institutional and textual authority, hermeneutics, and sentimental appeals. What differed from one Islamic nationalism to another was how Islamic ultimacy was integrated with nationalism, and what specific political conclusions were drawn as a result having bearing on the immediate problem of Muslims' collective emancipation. In the end, the decision lay with the public. Their overwhelming support for separatism is a good indication as to which particular argument for Islamic nationalism they found more coherent and cogent. As I have argued, the Muslim imagination had been unwittingly prepped for separatism in no small part by political theology, especially by its early popularization at the hands of the composite nationalists, who were in the end impaled by their own sword.

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