

Under the Banner of Religion: Terrorism and Guerrilla Warfare Today
Part 2 of How to Begin to Understand Violent Political Movements

In the first essay in this series, I discussed one result of the great transformation we call the Industrial Revolution in the northern hemisphere – the increasing scale of the European commercial, political and military domination of societies and states scattered from Morocco to Indonesia and from Central Asia deep into Africa. For convenience, because of their location, their relative weakness and their Islamic orientation, I called these Afro-Asian societies “the South.”^{*}

In this second essay, I begin where Muslim thinkers and political activists began with their perception of the disparity in power, wealth and knowledge between the North and South. At various times from the late Eighteenth century, throughout much of Asia and Africa, some individuals set forth their analyses of the challenges they perceived and what they thought they needed to do to meet them. At first, the most important of these movements were religious.

Then, in the early years of the Twentieth century, nationalism replaced religion as the dominant theme of political thought. At first nationalism was regionally or linguistically divided; then increasingly commentators broadened the scale of their thought ethnically and linguistically. Europeans led the way. First Turks, then Arabs and later other peoples followed. Nationalism reached its high point in mid century when it incorporated social, educational and economic programs. Toward the end of the century, when socially active nationalism failed to produce the reality of power or the sense of dignity that were its goals, disillusionment set in. There were many reasons for failure – insincerity, rivalry or corruption of leaders, imbalance of military and civic components of society, the magnitude of the tasks to be performed with insufficient means and, above all, foreign military threat and intervention – but a growing number of politically active people concluded that, regardless of the causes of failure, failure itself was starkly evident.

In the third and final essay, I will bring this account up to the present. With nationalism and socialism no longer judged to provide a “roadmap,” in the early years of the Twenty-first century opinion makers particularly in the Arab lands returned to -- but dramatically altered and implemented -- the dominant theme of the Nineteenth Century politics -- the quest for power and dignity through religion. In the essay to come I analyze the philosophy and strategy of some of the vast array of current movements. Finally, I briefly discuss what the United States, Russia, China and the several Middle Eastern governments are doing in their counterinsurgency programs.

Overall, I aim to show how the reactions of “the South” incorporated common themes despite the enormous social, cultural and geographical diversity of the peoples. Only if we take into account the scale of the events can we hope to understand them and move toward “affordable world security.”

^{*} Because of the scale of the issues and peoples I am considering, I cannot hope to deal with all aspects of my subject, or indeed with any part of it in satisfactory detail, but I will endeavor to provide enough to give the reader a basis to get an overview of the growth of thought in “the South.”

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Salafiyah is the Arabic name given to Islamic revivalist movements. As I have written elsewhere, the word masks a complex concept.¹ At first sight the concept appears to outside observers as wholly exotic or even incomprehensible. But there have been historical and are contemporary movements in Christian societies that are comparable. Thus, a first step in understanding *Salafiyah* is to observe what Muslim movements and thinkers had in common with Christian movements and thinkers.

The counterpart to Islamic *Salafiyah* in Christianity is the Protestant movement we associate with Martin Luther and John Calvin. Their thought was adopted, modified and spread by the English and Welsh Puritans during their exile in Holland and their mission in Massachusetts where they founded a fundamentalist theocratic state. The quest for “purity” or “fundamentalism” is today represented by dozens of Protestant sects, whose members include the 40 or so million Americans who call themselves “Born Again” Christians.

Clearly, the word *Salafiyah* makes the Muslim movement sound more exotic than it really is. If we go to the essentials it should be comprehensible to us. So what is it really all about? What was it trying to deal with? What were its main ideas? Why were people attracted to it? Answers to these questions must be sought because they matter today. To move toward answers, I begin with a short look at history.

In the Quran and in the sayings of Islam’s Prophet Muhammad, Islam was described as the religion common to Jews, Christians and Arabs. As the Quran put it, it is “the Religion of Abraham,” but unlike Judaism and Christianity, Islam was delivered in the Arabic language so that the Arabs could understand it. (Quran 39/27-28). Muslims believe that Islam was religion as God meant it to be. That is, they believe, that the Quran *corrected* innovations and perversions Jews and Christians made to the original message.² This original message was the religion Muhammad proclaimed in Madinah.

The Islam spelled out in the Quran and acted out in Madinah is a worldly religion, focused on what the individual should do in this life. It provides a detailed system of law, social organization and deportment. It has few ambiguities, is authoritative but many of its followers have found it to be austere. It is not filled with solace for misery and presumes security, dominance and social homogeneity.

Then, as Islam spread afield from the area around Madinah in the Seventh century, Muslims encountered peoples of vastly different cultures. Within a few centuries, millions of the inhabitants of large areas of Europe, Asia and Africa had come to think of themselves as Muslims. But, while having adopted the core features of Islam, most of the converts retained elements of their previous faiths and ways of life. In this also, Islam resembled Christianity. In, for example, Mexico Catholicism incorporated the ancient gods, renaming them saints, and converted their temples into churches. Islam similarly found ways to incorporate many of the ideas and practices of the converts.

The formal, textual and original elements of Islam often sat lightly on the shoulders of the converts:

Bedouin tribesmen continued to deal with one another, as they had done in pre-Islamic times (the time of “ignorance,” *jahaliyah*), in accord with their custom. Afghan Pushtuns similarly followed their own pre-Islamic code, the *Pushtunwali*, and their legal system, the *Ravaj*, so that, for example, their women did not inherit property even from their husbands as they should according to the *Shariah*, and vengeance (Pashtu: *badal*) was mandatory even against fellow Muslims although it is specifically forbidden in the Quran (4/92-93). Mongol converts to Islam continued to be guided by the *Yassa*. In India and Sumatra, Hindu practices were brought into Islam by converts, with Muslims even making pilgrimages to Hindu shrines (*durgahs*), while in Africa animistic customs similarly continued to be practiced in the name of Islam. Other customs were introduced as a result of changing circumstances. A prime example is the veiling of women. Veiling of women was probably not practiced in the time of Muhammad and is nowhere specifically ordered in the Quran.³ It is not practiced in a number of Muslim societies, including the Kazaks, Tajiks and Kirghiz of Central Asia, the Malays and Javanese of Southeast Asia and the Kurds and Iranians of the Middle East and the Berbers of North Africa. It was common, however, in Christian Byzantium at the time of the Arab invasion, and was adopted presumably from them by free-born, upper-class Arab women.⁴

Thus, both geographically and temporally, Islam was modified. An austere religion, it was everywhere “invaded” by manifestations of popular desire for emotional contact with the Divinity. The cult of saints spread and to visit them and urge their blessings Muslims made pilgrimages that rivaled the obligatory Hajj. Particularly in times of distress, as in the wake of the devastating Thirteenth-century Mongol invasions, mysticism offered an escape from misery and fear.

When the traditions of Islamic law grew weak in the middle ages, moves were commonly made to reestablish contact with the cultural and legal core of the community.⁵ Aware of contradictions of text and practice, a few Muslim theologians, like the Christian Puritans, sought to return to the earliest manifestations of their faith to find theologically solid bases (*usul*)⁶ upon which they could rebuild. Both the Muslim Fundamentalists and the Puritans regarded deviations from textual ordinances as sins.

The first major Muslim thinker to preach fundamentalism was Muhammad bin Hanbal (Ibn Hanbal) who was born in Baghdad 780 AD. His life work was the gathering of *hadiths*, the tales passed down generation after generation from contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad. What he was seeking, and what his followers sought, was a means of evaluating and purging the contemporary manifestation of Islam by recourse to what the Prophet had actually done or said during his lifetime. That was, of course, a dangerous challenge to the ruling establishment. Rulers, warlords and judges had formed their own system of belief and had built into it their own privileges and status. So they reacted to Ibn Hanbal’s challenge by subjecting him to the Islamic version of the Inquisition (*Mihna*) which condemned him, throwing him into prison and even torturing him. Unbowed, he died in Baghdad in 855 after having gathered about 28,000 hadiths which next only to the Quran form the “fundamentals” of the Islamic religion.

The man who took what Ibn Hanbal gathered and formed it into the interpretation of Islam adopted in our times by the austere sect of the Saudi Wahhabis, the Egyptian

Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Caliphate was Taqi al-Din ibn Taimiya. Ibn Taimiya was born in 1263, almost 500 years after Ibn Hanbal, at Harran (on what is today the Syrian-Turkish frontier). As a small child he fled from the terrible Mongol invasions to Damascus where he studied and later taught the rite or legal school (*madhhab*) of Ibn Hanbal.

Like Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taimiya argued that returning to Islam (as the Prophet and his immediate circle had practiced it) was crucial, but it was the clear and present danger posed by the foreign invader that captured much of his thought and action. In his time, it was the Mongols who were destroying Islamic societies and killing Muslims. Resisting them was a vital interest for his community. He was rewarded when they received one of their rare defeats at a battle near Damascus. With their threat removed, he turned his efforts against the off-shoots of Islam -- Ismailis, Nusairis, and others, whom he regarded as heretics and so, "domestic invaders." In this he set a theme that has echoed down to our time.

Throughout his life Ibn Taimiya was a dedicated "striver for the faith," a *jihadi*, but his zeal led him, as it had Ibn Hanbal and would lead many of his followers, into conflict with the Establishment in his own community. He was several times imprisoned, rehabilitated and again imprisoned. During one period of imprisonment, he wrote a commentary on the Quran, thereby setting a style that would be copied by later prisoners of conscience.⁷ Like his long-dead mentor Ibn Hanbal, he spent his life inveighing against such innovations as the cult of saints and the then highly popular Sufi mystical movement. To try to silence him, the rulers clapped him into prison and, when that did not keep him from reaching out to the public, they took away his paper and ink. Unable to communicate, he soon died. But the rulers were too late. So popular was he in Damascus that reportedly virtually the entire city, some 200,000 men and 15,000 women, attended his interment which was held, ironically, in the Sufi cemetery.

While Ibn Hanbal had seen the danger to Islam to be its own worldly success, Ibn Taimiya saw the deadly threat to be both internal laxness and foreign invasion. Their messages were heard but made relatively little impact for the next 500 years: rulers governed, scholars wrote learned commentaries and the public went about its business. Then what has been called the "impact of the West" began and their messages took on a new urgency. As Ibn Hanbal had told them, they found their societies to be weak and their faith corrupt, and as Ibn Taimiya learned in his fight against the Mongols, foreign invasion threatened to destroy the community itself.

What to do? What was needed, a few Muslim thinkers began to assert was both to purge corrupt practice and to make the original, "pure," texts available beyond the closed, sophistic, ossified circles of the religious scholars. Only if their societies were internally strong, the reformers argued, could Muslims cope with the foreigner.

The first prominent figure in the long parade to follow to propose this answer was the Indian theologian Imam Quṭb al-Dīn Aḥmad Walī Allāh,⁸ who was regarded by Muslim contemporaries as their greatest scholar. His scholarship impressed millions of Muslims, but perhaps more important were his efforts to popularize the basic religious text, the Quran. He translated the Quran into the then lingua franca of South Asia, *Farsi* (Persian), so that it could be read, discussed and understood by the whole society.⁹ Today, he is often thought of as the spiritual father of Pakistan.

Following the time of Qutb al-Din, increasing numbers of foreigners arrived and foreign activities penetrated Islamic societies more deeply. Consider these events:

In Eighteenth century India, Englishmen paid a sort of homage to local customs. They dressed in Bengal style, smoked hookahs and even kept harems (*zenanas*). Then, province by province they took over and finally in 1857, after the revolt of the Muslim Sepoy army, they destroyed the Mughal Empire and came to despise and segregate the Indians; in the Crimea the Russians invaded, impoverished or drove away much of the previously thriving population; in the Crimea, Russians also fought the destructive war that Tolstoy recounts in two of his novels; in Java, the Dutch clamped a colonial regime on the natives and, when they tried to reassert their independence, killed about 300,000 “rebels” between 1835 and 1840; they also fought Sumatra “rebels” between 1873 and 1914; in Algeria, after the bitter 15-year-long war that began in 1830, the French stole the lands and imposed an apartheid regime on the survivors; in Egypt, less violently but pervasively, the English looted the country.¹⁰ Everywhere, by the middle of the Nineteenth century, all foreigners enjoyed more privileges than do modern diplomats: foreigners charged with crimes could appeal their cases to courts in Europe and even if their crimes were against natives, the local government had no jurisdiction over them.

The speed of the transformation astonished the natives. It is illustrated by two events in the Levant: Whereas in 1830, a British consul had not been allowed to enter the city of Damascus, ten years later in 1840, another British consul actually chose the governor of Lebanon. As the evidence of their weakness, sometimes demonstrated on the battlefield but also in the market place, came to seem more shameful, the Muslim search for guidance – in the Quranic phrase the *sirat al-mustaqim* (the road of those who would be virtuous) -- became urgent. When they didn't find him, an activist came looking for them.

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By far the most influential Muslim thinker of the Nineteenth century was a much more worldly figure than the Indian Muslim Qutub al-Din. He was inevitably more controversial. Controversy, indeed, began with the attachment (*laqab*) to his name that usually designates where a person comes from. (In this style, I would be called William Polk Texan.) Jamal al-Din's *laqab* was “al-Afghani” although he was probably born in Iran. Why did he switch his birthplace? The usual explanation,¹¹ which I believe to be correct, is that he wanted to be thought of as a Sunni or Orthodox Muslim (as the ruling ethnic group of Afghanistan was) rather than a Shii or minority-group Muslim (as most Iranians were). That is, he wanted to put himself into the mainstream of Islam. Putting himself in the mainstream of contemporary affairs, he certainly did in a career that took him over much of the Muslim world from Afghanistan to Egypt and from Istanbul to India.

In contrast to what appear to have been frustrating and unsuccessful encounters with the sultans, shahs and pashas, Afghani exercised a profound influence on Muslim intellectuals and theologians in Afghanistan, Iran, India, Turkistan, Ottoman Turkey and Egypt. His message to them was in essence simple: Muslims must get back to the origins of their religion if they hoped to free their lands from imperialism. And they must do it themselves since no foreigner would help them.

During his years teaching in Egypt, Afghani made common cause with the Egyptian cleric Muhammad Abduh.¹² Although, in later years, Abduh would become eminently “respectable” as the rector of Azhar University, which was the heart of Islamic scholarship, and the chief judge (*Mufti Am*) of the Egyptian Islamic court system, he and Afghani then were just tolerated outsiders. They oscillated between audiences at court and exile. Then, just before the 1879-1882 nationalist uprising led by the Egyptian officer Ahmad Arabi against British rule, Afghani was sent out of Egypt and Abduh was sent into internal exile in his village. When the British suppressed the uprising, Afghani and Abduh moved to Paris where they founded the short-lived but immensely influential journal, *Al-Urwa Al-Wuthqa*.¹³ Its message was that *both* European domination and Oriental despotism must be ended and that the way to do it was to reinvigorate Islam and establish it as the ruling doctrine.

At roughly the same time as Afghani and Abduh were holding forth, a sequence of Tatar or Turkish intellectuals¹⁴ in and around Bukhara began a similar mission. The most significant of these men was Ismail Bey Gaspirali who, like Jamal al-Din and Muhammad Abduh, founded a journal, *Tarjuman* (Turco-Arabic: “translator”),¹⁵ which was read throughout the Ottoman Empire, Russia and India. It broadcast a running critique of what many Turkic peoples had come to see as the source of their weakness, an ossified Muslim clergy which was unable to halt, and actually abetted, the advance of Russian imperialists.

It wasn't only the Russian Tsars who were imperialists in Central Asia. At roughly the same time as Catherine the Great was pushing into Western Muslim lands, the Qing (Manchu) emperors of China were moving into the shaikhdoms and principalities of Turkistan. There they virtually wiped out the Buddhist Dzungar people and installed Muslim Turks (Uighurs) as puppet rulers. In 1864, the Uighurs revolted and set up an independent Turkish kingdom. When their state was recognized by Britain, the Ottoman Empire and Russia, the infuriated Chinese overthrew the kingdom and put the population into what amounted to a “reservation” (*Hui Jiang*). Under oppressive Chinese rule, the Uighurs were not able to produce either significant Islamic scholars or national leaders and still today are trying to assert their national existence both by resisting the Chinese and by participating in the armed struggles of other Muslims. We will see them again in the Islamic Caliphate.

Overall, these Turks, Arabs, Persians and Indians restricted themselves to sermons, slogans and scholasticism, but others began to try to implement similar thoughts in direct action. I now turn to them.

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The first of the militant revival groups did not aim at the Europeans because, except for a few intrepid travelers, there were no Europeans in Arabia. Called into action by the theologian Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1787), the *Wahaibyah* or as they called themselves “Unitarians” (*Muwahhidun*), were, and are today, Sunni Muslim followers of the teachings of Ibn Hanbal as interpreted by Ibn Taimiyah. They think of themselves as essentially a continuation of the mission of the Prophet Muhammad. They like to point out, that just as he found a haven in Madinah when he was driven out of Mecca, so Abd al-Wahhab was given refuge in the town of Dariyah.

It was in Dariyah (now a suburb of Riyadh). That Abd al-Wahhab acquired the ally who assured his worldly power. The marriage of Ibn Saud's son to a daughter of Abd al-Wahhab was the beginning of a partnership that has lasted to this day. Muhammad ibn Saud, himself a townsman, was recognized by the nearby Arab tribes as a natural leader and Abd al-Wahhab addressed their religious needs. Like the tribesmen the Prophet had organized in the Seventh century for the wars of the Conquest, they were wild and warlike. Managing them required a clear and acceptable code, astute diplomacy and the deflection of their hostilities abroad. The result, as the great Arab historian Ibn Khaldun wrote of Islam, was to "turn their faces in the same direction."

The direction the faces of the recently united tribesmen turned to in 1802 was the Shia city of Karbala, which in Bedouin style they sacked and in Hanbali style, since the inhabitants were heretics, they massacred. Heretics were not their only targets. In the next few years, the Wahhabi-led tribesmen conquered Jiddah, Mecca and Madinah. In each place, they destroyed the tombs of saints. Everything that was not specifically authorized by the Quran was considered an illegal innovation (*Bida*); Religious fervor (*jihad*) was combined with the Bedouin tradition of raiding (*ghaza*). It was a fearsome combination and, as it did in the days of the Prophet Muhammad, it swept all before it. By 1811, the Wahhabi-Saudi-tribal empire extended from Aleppo to the Indian Ocean.

Possibly the nonchalant Ottoman government would not have reacted to this attack on its Arab provinces, but the Wahhabi conquest of Mecca could not be tolerated because the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph was also the guardian of Islam's Holy places. So in 1812, he authorized his nominal vassal, the already powerful Albanian ruler of Egypt, Mehmet Ali Pasha, to dislodge the Wahhabis. That action began a long series of wars from which the Wahhabi-Saudi-tribal combination survived to the present.

A generation later, in 1837, another Islamic revival movement was founded by a Berber who had been born in what is now Algeria about 1790. Muhammad bin Ali al-Sanusi was a scholar who spent much of his early life studying in the libraries of Fez, Cairo and Mecca. Strongly influenced by Islamic mysticism, Sufism, he tried to push aside worldly concerns to devote himself to prayer. But, in the North Africa of his time, he could not. The French invasion of Algeria in 1830 blocked his return from pilgrimage to his homeland and forced him to create a different sort of "homeland" in Libya. What he created was the *Sanusiyah*.

Realizing that a revivalist movement, as he planned for the Sanusiyah to become, could not exist without popular support, Muhammad bin Ali also realized that a people ignorant of Islam could never be relied upon to protect it. His solution was similar to what the Prophet had done: it was to graft onto the tribesmen who merely "submitted to Islam" (the *Muslimun*) a brotherhood of true believers (*Muminun*) who would be their religious guides (*imams*). He set about creating this brotherhood in the university he founded in a Libyan oasis. As the brotherhood grew, its missionaries founded scores of "lodges" (*zawiyahs*)¹⁶ throughout the deserts and steppes of North Africa through Egypt and all the way into the Arabian Hijaz. They covered an area larger than Europe.

Virtually all of the people reached by the Sanusi “brothers” in this vast area were nomadic tribesmen on whom the requirements of Islam rested lightly.¹⁷ What made the unlikely combination of religious scholars and nomads work was that the Bedouin got two things they wanted – an overarching but not oppressive unity (or at least occasional intertribal truce) and the codification of religion in easy to understand terms that did not violate such popular religion as they already practiced. Muhammad bin Ali, unlike the more theoretical reformers, chose not to challenge the innovations (*bida*) that had become their way of life but sought only to refine them. Probably, that would be nearly all one would have to say of the *Sanusiya* had it been left alone in the vast Sahara. But that was not to be.

After the conquest of Algeria which they completed about 1860, the French moved deeper into Africa. Theirs was an unrewarding advance – there were no rich prizes like Algeria in the vast interior -- but their advance was inexorable. Finally, at the village of Fashoda on the White Nile, they collided with the British who also were moving south and west into the African interior from Egypt. The two Powers divided Africa between them in the 1898-1899 Anglo-French Partition Agreement. The Agreement legitimated, at least in European law, the French advance into “their” area. There, the French ran into the *Sanusiya*, and in 1902 they destroyed the first of the Order’s lodges. As they advanced, the French destroyed each lodge that they encountered. Much worse was to come.

While the French were advancing from the south, a newly “awakened” Italy had discovered nationalism and began to think of itself as Rome Reborn. Contemporary Italians knew that their ancient ancestors had farmed the coastal plain of Cyrenaica and thought they could meet the needs of their growing population by colonizing it. So, like the French in Algeria, they moved in to seize the land. Driven by nationalist fervor, they also wanted to win status among the European Powers by acquiring an African empire. In 1911, they landed their first troops. The Sanusi leadership did not want to fight,¹⁸ but organized by the Sanusi creed, the Bedouin resisted. Italian invasion began a war that lasted nearly 30 years.

As carried out by the Italians, the 30 years’ war soon became genocide. The Bedouin, calling themselves “protectors” (*muhafizat*) and called by the Italians “rebels” (*rebelli*), fought as guerrillas while the Italians used counterinsurgency tactics to try to create “furrows of blood” (*solci di sangria*) among the tribes, hoping to incite them to fight one another. What the Italians called *politico-militari* tactics -- a phrase Americans translated and tactics they largely copied -- did not work because as the Italian military commander wrote, “the entire population took part directly or indirectly in the rebellion.”¹⁹ As counterinsurgency failed, the Italians turned to genocide. Within a few years, they killed nearly two thirds of the population of Cyrenaica. Among the casualties were virtually all of the Sanusis. But, as the Englishman who knew them best, Evans-Pritchard, has written,²⁰

With the [Italian] destruction of the Sanusiya...the war continued to be fought in the name of the religious order... It then became simply a war of Muslims to defend their faith against a Christian Power. Deep love of home and deep love of God nourished each other...Without due appreciation of the religious feeling involved in the resistance it would be, I think, be impossible to understand how it went on for so long against such overwhelming odds.

In place of the Sanusi family, who abandoned the Bedouin to their fate, a remarkable figure who combined the best of the Bedouin and Sanusi attributes came to the fore. Umar al-Mukhtar, known as “the Lion of the Desert,”²¹ became a hero to his people in his resistance to the Italians. He carried on the tradition begun by Sharif Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi (“the Algerian”) ²² in the Algerian struggle against the French and as Amir Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi²³ would lead the Berbers of the Rif in their war against the French and Spanish. What they held in common was their religious faith and the determination to keep their societies free and independent.

These were not the only struggles fought in the name of Islam against imperialism: when the Muslims of Java tried to win independence, the Dutch killed about 300,000 of them between 1825 and 1830 and they suppressed the people of Sumatra in a similarly brutal war from 1873 to 1914. But the one struggle that stands out, particularly in English memory, is the *Mahdiyyah* war in the Sudan.

From the beginning of the Sixteenth century, the northern Sudanese Funj sultanate converted to Islam and began to use the Arabic language. Then in 1820, Mehmet Ali Pasha, the ruler of Egypt, decided to monopolize the hunt for African slaves and invaded the country. Having limited resources, Mehmet Ali’s grandson and successor hired Europeans to administer the Sudan. One of them, General Charles Gordon, was a vociferous exponent of Christianity who looked upon the native Muslims as pagans and was determined to stamp out their customs. Sudanese anger built against him and the Egyptians.

Finally in 1881, another of those figures we have seen all over the Islamic world came to the fore. Muhammad Ahmed reached back into Muslim legend and proclaimed himself the *Mahdi*, a man sent by God to rectify injustice (*zhulm*) and return the people to the true path (*sunnah*). He organized his followers into armed zealots called the *Ansar*.²⁴ But, while he acted in the name of Islam he proclaimed himself to be virtually the equal of the Prophet Muhammad. Despising his claim and underestimating his power, the Egyptian government allowed itself to be defeated in small encounters by the Mahdi’s followers. They, in turn, took their victories as proof of God’s favor. So, by the time the British, who were effectively running Egypt, decided to suppress the *Mahdiyyah*, it had become a national movement. Fortunately for the British, the Mahdi died of typhus, but the *Mahdiyyah* lingered on. Finally, in the spring and summer of 1898, the British attacked, destroyed the Sudanese army and absorbed the Sudan into their growing empire.²⁵

Muslims in the Philippines were never able to organize a mass resistance to the Sixteenth century Spanish invasion nor to the Nineteenth century American invasion. Under the Spaniards, the population of most of the northern islands was converted to Catholicism while the Muslims retreated to the south. To try to stop the American troops, the Muslims fought as guerrillas. Not having modern arms, they often fought with agricultural tools in suicide attacks that became a feature of modern guerrilla warfare.²⁶

While Britain and Russia were often on the brink of hostilities, and in the Crimean War actually fought one another, they shared a determination not to allow the peoples they conquered to move toward freedom. Their common opponent was the “Pan-Islamic” movement.

Fear of Pan-Islam played a role in shaping British and Russian policies toward much of Asia and French policy toward Africa.²⁷ But it was largely a figment of their imagination. Muslims did not even conceive of such a movement as Pan-Islam. A few like Afghani and Ismail Bey Gaspirali reached out beyond their immediate neighborhoods, but most reformers were strictly local. And very few did more than write or talk. Armed rebellions in the name of Islam were rare. Indeed, all over the Muslim world, reformers and militants were admitting at least to themselves that, regardless of aims, tactics and dedication, religion-based nationalism had failed to stop foreign intrusion. So, in a ragged pattern, disillusioned Muslims from Central Asia to the Sudan and from Java to Morocco began to search for new ways to defend their societies, cultures and religion. To a growing number and finally to most, the answer seemed to be found not in their own background but in the West. To be “modern” and strong, they were coming to believe, required adoption of the mainly secular ideology of the West. To what Asians and Africans made of western style nationalism I now turn.

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I begin with the word. Arabic did not have a word for “nation.” Had you asked a Nineteenth century Egyptian what was his “nation,” he would have given you the name of his village. The Bedouin would not even have understood the question. In Persian, Turkish, Berber as in other African and Asian languages, no word fit the new need. The word that the Arabs first pressed into this service was *watan*, but *watan*, like the French word *pays* meant village. It took not only a linguistic but also a mental leap to change village to nation.²⁸ In North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, it was the Ottoman Empire that started the transformation.

The Ottoman Empire had few trained men, little industry, a weak army and almost no financial resources, but it was able to govern a vast, heterogeneous empire – a feat beyond the capacities of its richer successors. Its strategy was to tolerate other loyalties. Religious or ethnic communities (*millets*) governed themselves, apportioned and collected the taxes that were due the Empire and judged themselves according to their own customs. Each was, in effect, a miniature nation-state. The aims of the imperial government were limited to collecting sufficient taxes in an economical way and to protecting its frontiers. It even tolerated successful rebellion. Its administration was loose: its provinces had none of the restrictions of nation-states, as European Powers recast them into Syria, Iraq or Palestine at the end of the First World War. The “Syrian,” “Iraqi” or “Palestinian” moved as easily between Baghdad, Damascus, Mecca, Jerusalem, Istanbul or Cairo as the American would from Dallas to Los Angeles.

Watan-defined or separate state nationalism (*wataniyah*) was dedicated to breaking up this polyglot, multinational, religiously tolerant empire. It did this first in the Ottoman Balkans in the Nineteenth century: Greeks broke loose from 1821; Serbians, 1868; Montenegrins, 1878; Romanians, 1878; and Bulgarians, 1879. It was the challenge of these movements and of the Armenians, who fought a guerrilla war and engaged in urban terrorism to try to create their own nation-state, that stimulated the Ottoman Turks to develop what came to be called Turkism (*Turkjuluk*).

Turks, who had not thought of themselves as a national group (*millet*) like the various minorities in their empire could not distinguish themselves from Arabs or Kurds by identifying themselves as Muslims. They shared that designation. Their only unique feature was language. As Turkism's ideologue, Mehmet Zia Gök Alp wrote,²⁹ language is a bond "superior to race, populism, geography, politics and desire...While still in the cradle, with the lullabies he hears, [the child] is under the influence of the mother tongue...All our religious, ethical, artistic feelings, which give existence to our soul, are taken by means of this language...Our way living is totally an echo of this."

Not only among the Turks, but also among the Arabs language is fundamental to national identity. Even illiterate Bedouin relish classical poetry as not even the most erudite Western audience could be said to relish Shakespeare's sonnets. Politically more important, shared language overcame separate religion. *Arabiyah* seemed to Christian Arabic-speakers the road toward participation in the dominant community.³⁰

Thus, linguistic and by extension cultural preservation came to be equated with preservation of the nation. It is difficult for English speakers to evaluate the importance of this statement because secure in the imperialism or even colonialism of English – which has conquered and settled whole vocabularies of German, French, Latin and even Arabic – most of us scorn what appear to be just pedantic linguistics. However, not only the embattled natives but also their foreign rulers grasped well the political importance of linguistics. Look first at the French:

A key element in the *mission civilisatrice*, the politically correct French term for imperialism, was the suppression of Arabic and its replacement with French. In Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria, street signs were posted in French; laws were promulgated in French; transactions in government offices and law courts also were in French. And bright young students were encouraged to study in France so that they would think in French. If one wanted to get ahead, the path was signed in French.

The same policy was practiced by the Russians in Central Asia. Russian was the language that led to good jobs in commerce and was necessary for postings in government. That was the pattern already set under the Tsars, but, to the Soviet government, it was only the first step. The Communists rightly saw that language was a weapon as well as a tool. In 1926, they implemented a policy to widen the gaps among the various Turkic peoples. By dropping the use of the old script (*Osmanlu*) and putting Azeri Turkish into the Latin alphabet, as they did in 1926, and then into Cyrillic as they did in 1936, they cut the upcoming generation off from its cultural and historical roots. Young people could no longer read what the Nineteenth century reformers had written. The second step was to divide the common written language by dialects, forming a new written language of each, so that an Uzbek could no longer read what a Tajik or an Anatolian Turk was writing.³¹

Chinese policy under Chiang Kai-shek toward the Turks in Turkistan (Xinjiang) went even further. Following revolts in 1933 by the Kazak people and in 1944 by the Turkish people of Ili who proclaimed the short-lived "East Turkish Republic," Chiang denied that there were such people as the Turks, saying that they were just part of the "greater Chinese race."³² As Chinese, the Turks should give up Turkish and learn Chinese.

Malay nationalists were gripped by something like Chiang's ethnic policy. For the British, Malaya was a vast rubber plantation and to work it the British imported cheap, indeed almost slave, labor from India and China. To keep the peace with the politically more active members of these groups, they hit on the idea of amalgamating them into the feeble Malay nationalist movement. That provoked a reaction. Fearing the loss of their nation (Malay: *melayu* from the Turkish *millet*) the tiny nationalist party, led by Ibrahim Yaacob sought to ally itself with Indonesia. Neither the British nor the Dutch would tolerate such a program and he was forced out of public life. For the moment Malay nationalism went down without even a whimper, but the idea of some sort of southeast Asian entity would resurface and is alive today.

Malaya would not have gained much strength from an association with Indonesia. Indeed, until about 1920, there was no conception of an "Indonesia;" it was only then that the dissident native elite began to try to overcome their divisions into Java, Bali, Sumatra and the other islands. Before that time, what passed as nationalism was a polite, Dutch tolerated, move to better educate the population. What was remarkable about it was that one of its early advocates and publicists was a Muslim woman, Raden Kartini who lived from 1879 to 1904 and who was also a pioneer of women's liberation. The Dutch were in favor of the educational programs she encouraged because, like colonists elsewhere, they were trying to build an inexpensive native bureaucracy. But nationalism had no part in this effort and the Dutch vigorously opposed it. They not only fought uprisings but successfully kept the various small societies apart from one another. It was only in 1927 that Achumed Sukarno founded the secular Indonesian National Party (*Partai Nasional Indonesia*). The Dutch promptly put him in prison. He was released by the Japanese a decade later when they invaded the islands. Then, when the Japanese surrendered, the Dutch returned and, with British support, tried to reestablish their rule. For five years, they fought vicious battles against Indonesian guerrillas before giving up and recognizing Indonesian independence in 1950.³³

* * *

In India, the struggle against British imperialism lasted much longer than the Indonesian struggle against the Dutch. In India, there was an empire to be reckoned with. Like the Ottoman Empire the Mughal empire was decrepit, but Britain treated them differently. Whereas the British saw the Ottoman empire as useful in blocking a Russian break out into the Mediterranean, the Mughal empire had few if any redeeming features in British eyes. Piece by piece they dismantled it using its own subjects as their helpers. Finally, the helpers turned against them in the 1857 Sepoy "Rebellion."³⁴ When the British with their Indian allies put it down, they both destroyed the Mughal empire and set aside the Muslims as disloyal natives. That was the beginning of the major shift to a Hindu India. Having lost the status they had previously enjoyed, Indian Muslims, then about 40 million in number, transferred their loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph as the actual spiritual and potential political leader of the Muslim world So when, in the First World War, Britain attacked the Ottoman Iraqi provinces, the Sultan responded with just what Britain most feared, call for a holy war, *jihad*. To the surprise of the British, however, the Indian Muslim response was muted. Meanwhile, the relationship of Muslims to Britain and to Hindu society was undergoing both cosmetic and profound changes.

Perhaps the most profound change in Muslim-Hindu- British relationships was that lower caste and untouchable Indians who were condemned to perpetual slavery in Hinduism continued converting by the millions to Islam. While far less numerous than the Hindus, Muslims had become a major political force which both the Hindu nationalist movement and the British sought to use for their own ends.

Cosmetically, but also politically, important were the links established by the Muslim elite directly with England over the heads of the British rulers in India. Two leading figures demonstrate this trend. The first was the Aga Khan who was the immensely rich leader of the Ismaili community. When the middle class Englishmen who made up the membership of the British clubs in India did not welcome him, he shrewdly found a way into the top crust of English society. He saw that the royal family and the aristocracy were addicted to horseracing so he used his money, connections and skills to become an outstanding breeder and racer of horses. He was everywhere sought after in England and could take his political arguments direct to decision makers.

The second Indian Muslim was a product of the best of English education. Like the Kashmiri Hindu, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,³⁵ Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) read law at the Inns of Court in London. The British found him a formidable adversary precisely because he was so powerfully “English.” He treated the British civil servants, the members of the Indian Political Service, as though in a debate at the Oxford Union and parlayed his forensic skills, his Muslim identity and his popularity into a major role even in the Hindu-dominated Indian National Congress. At the same time, Jinnah created an independent power base as the leader of the All-India Muslim League. Originally, he sought to work with the Hindus against the British and toward a united India, but, by 1940, he had come to believe that Muslims and Hindus would never be able to work and live together in a single state. Thus, he espoused the idea of a separate Muslim state. He would become the “father” (*Babu-i Qawm*) of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, among the Arabs, a major nationalist revolt broke out in Egypt in April 1919. Egypt then had a wealthy, educated small elite that had become accustomed over a generation to working with the British authorities. During that period, the British had reluctantly and slowly allowed the children of the elite to attend Cairo’s sprawling university. There, they turned away from the ideas that were permeating Turkish and Arab societies. Many of their leading figures like Taha Husain, the blind religious scholar and novelist, had begun to argue to the applause of many Egyptians that Egypt was not an Arab land, or indeed even apart of the Middle East, but rather it was a participant in Mediterranean and therefore European culture.

It was in this context – a growing sense of capacity and a growing sense of being part of what I have called “the North,” that Egyptians heard the Allied, and above all, President Wilson’s, proclamations of a new era of peace and independence. Riding this wave of hope, a sober and theretofore British-approved member of the elite, Saad Zaghlul, led a delegation (*wafd*) to respectfully request permission to attend the Paris Peace Conference and present its case for independence. The British were not amused. They turned him down and warned him that he was breaking martial law. Given that he was a former minister in their puppet regime, the British were astonished when Zaghlul began to organize resistance among the university students.

The British, who had a low opinion of Egyptian will and courage, cracked down, arresting and exiling Zaghlul. The students responded with terrorism. Push led to shove. After three years of sporadic violence, the British wisely offered a compromise: they would agree to limited independence. Limited independence under a docile monarchy and a contented aristocracy was what Egypt lived under until the end of the Second World War.

Meanwhile, in Iraq, on June 30, 1920, a minor incident set off a revolt of the tribes that then made up a large part of the population of what had been the Ottoman provinces (*pashaliks*) of Baghdad and Basra. It was a spontaneous outburst of anger and does not seem to have been motivated by any sense of nationalism although religious sentiment played a significant role. The tribesmen, with no overall leadership and no announced goals, derailed trains, killed 1,654 soldiers (at a cost to themselves of about 10,000 people). As T.E. Lawrence was quick to point out, the cost to Britain was six times as much as the British had spent stimulating the wartime "Revolt in the Desert."

The cost was too high and the benefit too low so the young Winston Churchill did something that did not seem ever to occur to an American president: he organized a meeting to plan a new policy.³⁶ That new policy resulted in the creation of quasi-independent states in Iraq, Trans-Jordan, Palestine and Egypt. The new order was sufficient to give Britain a satisfactory degree of control at minimal cost for a generation.

What the new order – which was partially copied by the French in Syria and Lebanon – allowed was a brand of national identity appropriate to separate nation-states. That was the local or state based nationalism known as *wataniyah*. *Wataniyah* was always unsatisfactory to the younger Arabs. But they were as yet unsure even who they were, Iraqis, Syrians, Lebanese, or more vaguely, Arabs.

Meeting in Brussels in December 1938, an assembly of the most gifted Middle Eastern students tried to reach agreement on the meaning of the words "Arab" and "Arab nation." An Arab, they decided, was pretty much anyone who thought he was an Arab and who spoke Arabic. What was different in this meeting was that for the first time, they used a word to replace the current term *wataniyah*. They decided that it was national sentiment (*al-shuur al-Qawmiyah*) that was the key element. So let me dig into the meaning of *qawmiyah*.

What the students were trying to emphasize is that if the Arab people were split into artificial states, as the French and British had done in the Mandate system they constructed at the Paris Peace Conference, the Arabs could never achieve independence, power or dignity. Only if they recognized a pan-Arab loyalty could they move toward those fundamental objectives. And, as always among the Arabs, the word chosen was crucial. So what was *qawmiyah*? It is the quality living by the terms appropriate to a *qawm*. To understand what that means, consider the basis of the Arab experience, the tribal or desert background.

In desert conditions, survival is a group activity. A lone individual cannot survive. But pasture for animals and water for humans, which are always meager, depend upon irregular rainfall. So the group cannot be large. It ranged in size from about 50 to a hundred or so people, usually descendants of a single man.

Among the Arabs, this group was not the tribe (*Qabila*), which might number hundreds or even thousands, and so could rarely assemble, but the clan (*qawm*). To the *qawm* the individual owed total loyalty and from his membership in it derived social identity, legal standing and protection. He was absolutely honor bound to protect fellow members and to avenge any wrong to any member. These were the sentiments the young Arab nationalists wanted the members of their movement to exemplify. To them, the granting of quasi-independence, mandate by mandate, under the League of Nations to become separate nation-states was not a step forward but a reinforcement of foreign control administered by local puppets among an artificially divided people.

As they grew older, the nationalists would see proof in the weakness, cowardice and disunity manifested in the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli war. In their petty jealousies and conflicting aims, the Arab governments allowed almost the entire Arab population of Palestine to lose what the Arab League had proclaimed to be an integral part of the Arab World. The defeat was a humiliation of unprecedented proportions. The most memorable critique of the – separate or *wataniyah* -- Arab leadership was by the Syrian Christian diplomat and educator, Constantine Zurayq,³⁷ and his words would echo down the years and still sound loudly today.

One of the men who watched the war under fire was the Egyptian officer Gamal Abd al-Nasir (aka Nasser). He came out of the battle gripped by two ideas: the first was that the only hope for the Arabs was an overarching sense of *qawmiyah* or pan-Arab unity. The second was that the existing “old regimes,” starting with King Faruq (aka Farouk) of Egypt must go. Except in Egypt where exiling Faruq was easy, he failed to accomplish his first objective – the old regimes were deeply enmeshed in systems of privilege, custom and corruption and remained in power in most of the Arab states. Seeing this, he slowly realized that that change must be profound to be effective. Indeed, it required a social, economic and intellectual revolution. To achieve his goals or even to survive, he thought that he had to create what I have called “new men.”³⁸ They were not a separate class but existed in each social class. Usually, they were “graduates” of the army, acquired a sort of uniform, were encouraged by special privileges and were able to earn several times the income of traditional workers. Unfortunately for his regime, his social revolution was first deflected and then stopped by his “Vietnam,” his involvement in the Yemen revolution of 1962, and the ensuing 1967 war with Israel. But, during his short life (he died in 1970), he personified the Arab quest for *Qawmiyah*.

Very different was the experience of the men who led the Algerian struggle for independence. The evolution of their sense of nationalism was slow compared to Egypt's. Like the Egyptians they thought of themselves belonging to Mediterranean culture; so prominent Algerians first sought to “evolve” into Europeans. Algerian *évolués* put aside Arabic and sought to be admitted on equal terms into France. Their best known leader, Farhat Abbas even denied that there was an Algerian nation.

Other Algerians concluded that becoming “sort-of French” was not an option. As some of the Vietnamese Communist leaders experienced, from working and living in France, they knew that the French would not accept them on any terms. The leading Algerian in this group was Messali Hadj.

Messali Hadj was not a member of the French tolerated Algerian elite. He was a working man and his target was the Algerian worker population of France, the laborers who actually wielded the shovels and did much of the hard work on French roads and in French factories. His first move was to form a club for them. For that crime the French put him into prison. When he got out in 1937, he organized the first real political party, calling itself the *Parti Progressiste Algérien*. Only the name was French; its policy was Algerian. It demanded independence and the redistribution of lands taken by the settlers. Those were major crimes. During the Second World War, he was condemned to 16 years of hard labor and the party was outlawed. Bullets would soon replace bars.

Reacting to the euphoria that swept the colonial world at the end of the Second World War³⁹ – as the Egyptians had reacted to similar pronouncements at the end of the First World War – the Algerians organized for freedom. Indeed, some thought they had already become free. Among those who gathered to celebrate were the people of the little Algerian town of Sétif. Their originally peaceful manifestation was broken up by private Frenchmen, the French police and the French army. And some forty villages in the area were bombed by the French air force. Estimates of Algerian casualties range from 10,000 to 45,000. That tragedy may be taken as the seedbed of modern Algerian nationalism.

Messali Hadj reemerged to reform his party which won the municipal elections of 1947 but was overwhelmed by fraud and intimidation in the next round of elections. He was again arrested and deported. This action was an early case of what today is called “decapitation,” removing a leader, and the result has been repeated: a new generation of more radical Algerians, many of whom had served in the French army during the Second World War, came to the fore. They concluded that they could gain nothing with ballots and began to think of bullets. Among them was Ahmad ben Bella.

Ahmad ben Bella (1916-2012) was a highly decorated soldier of the French Army. He understood violent action. The spark that ignited it was the French defeat in IndoChina. Concluding that France could be defeated, he and colleagues formed the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) on November 1, 1954. That date was the effective beginning of the Algerian war. The French accepted the challenge. In the first major engagement, French soldiers were ordered to kill every Arab they met. They did. French soldiers massacred about 12,000 Algerians.

It wasn't only the French who did the killing. In the first three years of the war, the *militants* killed more than 7,000 “turncoat” (*Harki*) Algerians. Some of these killings were used as an indoctrination ritual that, like the Mau Mau “oathings,” were meant to force an untested recruit to commit an act from which he could not turn back. Like other terrorists and guerrillas, the FLN feared disunity. As I will point out in the next essay, the Islamic Caliphate is apparently using the same tactics.

The FLN war of national liberation was fought on three “fronts.” One was a propaganda campaign in Europe and America to get the United Nations and the United States to press the French to give Algeria independence; a second was in Cairo, Tunis and Rabat where Ben Bella and his colleagues mobilized men into an “external” army that never fought but was prepared for the conditions of independence. The third was in Algerian “outbacks” (*wilayas*) where small bands actually fought the French army.

The principal guerrilla leader, Ramdane Abane (1920-1957),⁴⁰ decided on a bold and nearly suicidal campaign: the Battle of Algiers.⁴¹ It began with the general strike of January 28, 1957. To put it down, the French army used all the tactics of counterinsurgency. Militarily the army won, but politically its campaign was a disaster. Special Forces (“the *Paras*”) use of torture and murder revolted the French. But it was not French opinion that caused de Gaulle to give up: it was the French army’s threat to overthrow the French government itself.⁴² Having survived an attempted coup, he was so infuriated that he sent 20,000 French soldiers with tanks, artillery and aircraft into the European suburb of Algiers where they killed a large number of French citizens. With them beaten down, the French government was able to bring the war to a close in the Evian Accords of March 17, 1962.⁴³

Very different was the struggle of the Palestinians at the other end of the Mediterranean. About 800 thousand Palestinians had been driven out of their land before and during the 1948-1949 war. While, for years, Israelis denied their involvement, Israeli government documents prove that the forced exodus was deliberate, well planned and brutal.⁴⁴ It left scars which have shaped Arab nationalism and today shape Arab guerrilla warfare and terrorism. More narrowly, it ironically created the first “international” movement of the Arabs.

Internationalization of the Arabs happened in two interrelated ways. On the one hand, the international community decided that the Palestinian refugees could not be left to die. So in the summer of 1950 a new United National organization (UNRWA) was created to care for them.⁴⁵ While the most employable, the best educated and the lucky found temporary or permanent homes in Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya and even further afield, the vast majority were assembled in about 50 of what were assumed to be temporary camps in Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. They were to be supported – given food, shelter, medical care, schooling and clothing -- at a per capita subsidy of \$27 yearly. The size of the support made obvious the international lack of concern.

The material support was barely sustaining, but the emotional diet was noxious. It was a blend of exaggerated memories, unrealistic hopes, enforced idleness and real angers. Within a decade over half of the Palestinians had never lived outside the camps. They blamed their hosts, the Arab governments and peoples, for the loss of their homeland. And, in turn, their hosts felt insulted. Worse, their hosts used them as sources of cheap labor and that increased both their sense of misery and anger. To would-be leaders, they were raw material. Inevitably, the more radical turned to what I have called violent politics. Reports of the 1950s and 1960s are filled with hijackings, kidnappings, and murders.⁴⁶ Actions replaced words and thoughts. Unlike the other movements, the Palestinian resistance (*Intifada*) gave rise to no reconsiderations of nationalism. All thought of the Palestinians was directed toward the sole goal of Return. If accomplishment of that goal was elusive, what was clear was that at least in the Palestinian experience, “internationalization” was not conducive of pan-Arab unity.

Pan-Arab unity remained avidly sought. The last of the nationalist groups to espouse it was the “Resurrection” (*Baath*) Party formed by the French-educated, Greek Orthodox Christian but personally secular Syrian intellectual, Michel Aflaq (1910-1989). From 1932, he went through several major changes in political style and organization. At first, he espoused Communism, but when the Communists opportunistically

endorsed French colonialism, he broke with them and, together with Salah Bitar, a fellow Syrian who also had studied in the Sorbonne, set out to create an Arab party that was both socialist and nationalist, the *Baath*. He dissolved the party when in 1958 the Syrian army decided to merge Syria into the United Arab Republic (the UAR). When the UAR broke up in 1961, Aflaq's reputation in Syria was in decline. During the 1966 coup d'état (that led eventually to the seizure of power by Hafez al-Assad) he fled Syria and went to Iraq. There, two years later, one of the men whose thought he had influenced, Saddam Husain, seized power. Husain welcomed and publicly honored Aflaq but did not allow him scope of political influence or action. Saddam did, however, publicly proclaim his regime's support of *Baathism* as part of his rivalry with Assad. Thus, ironically, while the basic idea of *Baathism* was Arab unity, it became itself an example of the pressures that led to Arab disunion.

* * *

In summary, by the last years of the Twentieth century, it had become evident at least to the younger generation that Nationalism and "Arab Socialism" had failed in the tasks they had assumed – to protect the Arab "nation" and to create a sense of national unity and dignity. As I wrote above, there were many reasons for failure – insincerity, rivalry or corruption of leaders, imbalance of military and civic components of society, the magnitude of the tasks to be performed with insufficient means and, above all, foreign military threat and intervention – but a growing number of politically active people concluded that, regardless of the causes of failure, failure itself was starkly evident. Where regimes had become or remained independent, most not only among the Arabs but more generally were regarded by the general public as foreign puppets or selfish oligarchies. Disillusionment was everywhere evident.

What remained for dissidents to draw upon was only the heritage of religion. To its contemporary manifestations, I turn in my next and final essay.

William R. Polk
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¹ *Salafiyah*. Even native Arabic speakers usually translate it as “reactionary.” But the concept is far more complex. The word *salafi* in classical Arabic means a person who stands both in the rearguard and in the

² For example, the Quran denies that Jesus could have been the “son” or God or a god himself although he was accorded a special relationship to God and was himself regarded as a prophet senior to Muhammad.

³ The closest the Quran comes to mentioning the veiling of faces is in verse 24/31 which orders “believing women” to cover their breasts and not to flaunt or reveal their [physical or bodily] “ornaments” (*zinat*) except to their husbands or other specified close relatives or impotent men and slaves.

⁴ It is not altogether why and for whom veiling was mandatory. My hunch is that it was seen to be practiced in more advanced societies (Byzantium and Safavid Iran) by the aristocracy and also was a means to differentiate high-borne (Arab) women from native slaves.

⁵ Thus, for example, the great Fourteenth century Muslim Arab traveler Ibn Batuta was everywhere welcomed as a recognized scholar and practicing judge of the Sharia.

⁶ I will give the Arabic term in parentheses but in simplified spelling since the terms are well known and using diacritical signs will be meaningless to the non-Arabist.

⁷ In the third part of this series, will discuss one of his followers, the Egyptian cleric Sayyid Qutub who while in prison also wrote a commentary on the Quran.

⁸ The Arabic word *imam* means “one who stands in front” and is applied to the person who leads the prayer. Qutb al-Din is commonly known as Shah Waliullah (“the Devotee of God). He lived mainly in Delhi from 1703 to 1762.

⁹ Protestant missionaries in Lebanon translated the Bible into Arabic and published it in editions available free to the public despite powerful opposition from the Catholic Maronites and their French patrons.

¹⁰ As David Landes wrote, *Bankers and Pashas*, 316, the Egyptian treasury was plundered “of untold amounts... for indemnities, fraudulent and semi-fraudulent claims, exorbitant prices to purveyors and contractors, and all manner of bribes, designed to buy cheap honours or simply respite from harassment.” Of all this, the ruler of Egypt had little understanding and could, in any case, do little because of the pressure of the European powers.

¹¹ One of his best commentators is Professor Nikki R. Keddie who has written a number of works that touch on his career. One of the best deals with the controversy he was partly responsible for provoking, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran* (London: Frank Cass, 1966). Keddie uses the published catalogue of Afghani’s papers to correct the version he and his Arab followers put out on his life. As she sums up his career, “Through most of his life, he was consistent in working for the independence of Muslim states from foreign rule, but his emphasis was almost always particularly anti-British, perhaps because of early experiences in India.” 2) His tactics were based on his appearing to be an Orthodox religious figure as shown in his book *Refutation of the Materialism*.

¹² Still the best book on Abduh is Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A study of the Modern Reform Movement inaugurated by Muhammad ‘Abduh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933). It was part of his doctoral thesis at the School of Theology at the University of Chicago, presented in 1928.

¹³ The name is difficult to translate. It means something like a stirrup (which upholds one) that cannot be broken. It was one of three dissident and more or less clandestine journals of the time. Also in Paris, Aleksandr Herzen founded *Kolokol* (The Bell) that similarly influenced a generation of Russians and in the Central Asian city of Bokhara, then an intellectually lively city, the Crimean Tatar or Turkic intellectual and nationalist Ismail Bey Gaspirali published a journal known as *Tarjamun* (The Interpreter) that was particularly influential in Turkistan and the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish-Arabic word *Tarjamun* is the origin of the English word Dragoman.

¹⁴ The Bukhara movement began with Abu Nasr Kursavi (1783-1813) who was followed by Ahmad Makhdum Danish (1827-1897, and he by Ismail Bey Gaspirali (1851-1914). While they disagreed among themselves on the degree to which they could use Western skills and power to the advantage of their peoples, they all sought to “purify” their religion in order to protect their heritage. On them see Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

¹⁵ *Tarjamun* morphed into Dragoman in English usage. The Dragoman was the translator, guide and fixer for European tourists and diplomats.

¹⁶ A typical *zawiyah* was a more or less permanent encampment composed of a mosque or prayer room, a dormitory, a guest room and a school.

¹⁷ The best account of the relationship of the *Sanusiyah* and the Bedouin is E.E Evans-Pritchard’s *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949). He had been the Political Officer in Cyrenaica of the British army for two years during the Second World War and when we became friends he was Professor of

Anthropology at Oxford and a Fellow of All Souls College. His student and follower, Emrys Peters, also a close friend, carried on his studies and became Professor of Anthropology at Manchester University.

¹⁸ As Evans-Pritchard wrote, The Grand Sanusi was “anxious to avoid any action which might enable those powers [France and Italy] to accuse him of political designs. He wished only to be left alone to worship God according to the teachings of his Prophet, and when in the end he fought the French it was in defence of the religious life as he understood it. In its remarkable diffusion in North and Central Africa the Order never once resorted to force to back its missionary labours. He even refused the aid asked for by ‘Arabi Pasha in Egypt in 1882 and by the Sudanese Mahdi in 1883 against the British... But when the French invaded its Saharan territories and destroyed its religious houses, and when later the Italians, also without provocation, did the same in Cyrenaica, the Order had no choice but to resist.” 27-28.

¹⁹ General Rodolfo Graziani, *Cirenaica Pacificata*, (Milano, 1932), 60.

²⁰ Evans-Pritchard, Op. cit., 166.

²¹ Umar al-Mukhtar emerges out of obscurity for Western viewers in the 1981 film *Lion of the Desert* where Anthony Quinn portrays him.

¹⁸ Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi (the Algerian) was the first of the religious and nationalist leaders who became legendary in Europe. Born in 1808, he was an Islamic legal scholar and a member of a Sufi mystical order. While on pilgrimage to Mecca as a young man, he met the leader of the Caucasian resistance movement, Imam Shamil, a respected scholar in Islamic law, and apparently was influenced by his account of Shamil’s guerrilla war against the Russians. When the French invaded Algeria in 1830, he was rather unwillingly thrust into the position of leader of the Algerian resistance against the French. So, to an extent, he replayed in Algeria what Shamil, the leader of the Avar people, was doing in the Caucasus.

²³ Abd al-Karim’s war in the Rif was the subject of Vincent Sheean’s reportage that subsequently became his 1926 book, *An American among the Riffis*. I got to know Abd al-Karim in Cairo, at the end of his long during his exile in 1954 and wrote a short account of his life in *Perspective of the Arab World: An Atlantic Monthly supplement*, 1955.

²⁴ The choice of the name *Ansar* is an allusion to the men who made possible Muhammad the Prophet’s flight from Mecca. So Muhammad al-Mahdi was putting himself in the position of the Prophet and his 30 or 40 thousand followers in the center of the Muslim tradition.

²⁵ I have dealt with the Sudan in more detail in my book *The Arab World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). More detailed is Peter Holt, *the Mahdist State in the Sudan 1881-1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958). The government the British imposed on the Sudan was patterned on their administration in India which was made up primarily of graduates of Cambridge who had excelled in athletics (known as “the blues”) so the contemporary joke was that the Sudanese government was “the rule of the Blacks by the Blues.”

²⁶ To stop the suicide attacks, the American government adopted the relatively heavy pistol, the .45 that became the standard officers’ weapon for the next century.

²⁷ Like their allies, the French and the Russian empires, the British had conquered and ruled over millions of Muslims, and, like the French and Russians, they were sure that the Muslims were always on the point of revolting. British security officers, like army generals, were always preparing for the last war and their text was the 1857 “Mutiny.” Their fears were echoed by the Russians who imagined a sort of “domino theory” in which its Central Asians would rise and one after another topple the imperial structure. And the French had reason to fear the same thing as a result of their brutal policies in Algeria and Morocco. All was based on rumor and much was myth but apprehension was real. The mood may now be best judged not in sober (or not so sober) diplomatic dispatches but in the then wildly popular novel, a precursor of the James Bond series, John Buchan’s *Greenmantle*, which cast sinister Turkish and German agents from whom the civilized world was saved only by intrepid British agents. Buchan gave us “007” long before Ian Fleming invented him.

²⁸ Farsi (Persian) and Turkish use a word for nation that is derived from the medieval practice of assigning minority peoples of a common faith, often called a “confession,” a separate status. In Farsi it is *mellat* and in Turkish it is *millet*. Both are derived from the Arabic word *millah* which in classical Arabic meant rite or [non-Muslim] religion. The majority community members referred to themselves not as a *millah* but as Muslims. Thus, ironically, the word for a separate, non-Muslim minority community was adopted as the word for the whole population. In Central Asia, the Uighurs and other Turkic peoples used either a religious (Muslim) or a linguistic (Turki) designation. Malays uses Malay word, *Bangsa*, while the Indonesians used a borrowing from Dutch, *nasion*.

²⁹ (Mehmet) Zia Gök Alp (1876-1924) was a leading Turkish intellectual who is best known for his book (written in the old Ottoman Turkish) *Turkuluk Asasleri* (The bases of Turkism) which was published in 1920. Himself influenced by European sociologists, particularly by Émile Durkheim, he provided the rationale and

stimulus for Kemal Atatürk's brand of secular, language-based, single state nationalism in place of pan-Islamism, pan-Turanism and Ottoman identity.

³⁰ Among those Arabs excited by the reform movement in the Ottoman empire were young Christian Arabs in Lebanon and Syria, many of whom were associated with the American Protestant schools. At first, their writings were mainly anti Turk. The first was a book in French by a Syrian Christian called *Le Réveil de la Nation Arabe*, but he had few readers. Most Arabs were still anxious to join the Turkish opposition to European invasion.

³¹ When this policy did not work fast enough or completely enough to satisfy Stalin, he followed the plan first set out by the Germans during their occupation of the Crimea to expel the natives. He arranged the shipment of 191,044 Crimeans, mainly women and children, deeper into Central Asia. Shipped by unheated and unprovisioned cattle cars, many died en route to forced labor camps. The government then razed the departing population's cultural relics including mosques and graveyards, renamed thousands of towns and villages, burned Turkic language books and erased mention of the people in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*.

³² Revolts led by Muslim theologians Hoja Niyaz and Sabit Damollah Linda Benson, *The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang* (Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 1990), 27.

³³ See M.C. Ricklefs, *A Modern History of Indonesia*, (Hampshire, England: Macmillan, 1981) and Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³⁴ Sepoy is Anglicized Persian for Sipahi (soldiers). The rebellion was a viciously fought war in which the British took few prisoners and wiped out whole villages. It effectively ended not only the Mughal empire but also the remaining British toleration of the Muslim community – Muslims were banned from the British armed forces -- and the sharp turn to relative support of the Hindus with great implications for the future.

³⁵ A trend that such outstanding Hindus as Nehru also exemplify. Nehru studied at Cambridge University and read law at the Inner Temple in London. He was at least as "at home" in English as in Hindi and was very close to the English aristocracy, even having an affair with Lady Mountbatten, the wife of the last British High Commissioner.

³⁶ Aaron S. Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970).

³⁷ *The Meaning of the Disaster (Maana al-Nakba)*, Beirut 1949. As he wrote, "Seven Arab states declare war on Zionism in Palestine, stop impotent before it and then turn on their heels...[content only to make] fiery speeches...but when action becomes necessary, the fire is still and quiet..."

³⁸ I analyzed this venture in "Analyzing Social Change" in the January 1967 issue of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

³⁹ The pronouncements were of varying quality: those of Roosevelt were "ringing;" those of Churchill were considerably less ringing and those of Charles de Gaulle were the much more guarded and vague: He forecast a French effort "...to lead each of the colonial people to a development that will permit them to administer themselves, and, later, to govern themselves."

⁴⁰ He was murdered by members of the "external" army of the FLN when he was thought to have become too popular. See Belaïd Abane, *l'Algérie en guerre. Abane Ramdane et les fusils de la rébellion*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008) and Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (London: Macmillan, '77).

⁴¹ The Battle of Algiers was masterfully portrayed in Gillo Pontecorvo's 1965 film of the same name.

⁴² De Gaulle was so frightened that he ringed the presidential palace with anti-aircraft cannon and himself actually left Paris secretly for the safety of a French army group in Germany. On the Secret Army Organization, l'Organisation de l'Armée Secrète, or OAS, and the French Government's relationship to it, see Geoffrey Bocca, *The Secret Army* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

⁴³ During this time, I was the head of the "Interdepartmental Taskforce on Algeria" in the US government. There I had access to all the materials that were collected or generated by the Department of State, the Department of Defense and the several intelligence agency. The CIA was in close contact with the FLN.

⁴⁴ The Israeli archives were first used by the Israeli journalist Benny Morris for his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and were more fully employed with corrections to Morris' account by Ilan Pappé in *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (London: Oneworld, 2006).

⁴⁵ I first visited several refugee camps in 1950 and in 1963, while a member of the Kennedy Administration, I was offered the job of Deputy Commissioner General of UNRWA, but the State Department would not release me to take it.

⁴⁶ I provide a record of these events in my book *The Arab World Today* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), Chapter 16.