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Political Thought toward Islamic Unity after the Fall of the Ottoman Caliphate in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamic current of Islamic reformism in the Muslim world, its emergence as a response to modernity and colonial domination, and the role of its leading pioneers, including Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida. Islamic reformism, aiming to return to the authentic principles of Islam while adapting them to new historical conditions, emphasized rationality, *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), the struggle against superstition, and the realization of justice and Islamic unity. The article further explores the rise of Islamic nationalism as an ideology that integrates Islamic values with nationalist concepts. The historical and social contexts underlying this phenomenon—such as colonial expansion, the collapse of the Ottoman order, identity crises, the failure of secular nationalisms, and the Arab–Israeli conflict—are analyzed. The research addresses the factors contributing to the emergence of Islamic nationalism following the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, including collective feelings of humiliation, crises of identity, and the intellectual influence of Muslim thinkers. The complex and multidimensional relationship between nationalism and Islamism, encompassing both convergences and tensions as well as their historical interactions, is critically examined. The impact of the abolition of the Caliphate on the rise of Arab and Turkish nationalisms is clarified through illustrative examples. In addition, the article investigates various currents of Islamic nationalism across different countries and highlights the role of political leaders and intellectual figures associated with these movements. In the final section, the study defines Islamic movements and identifies their shared characteristics, the historical conditions that facilitated their emergence after the abolition of the Caliphate, and the principal factors shaping their development in the contemporary period. Among the most significant factors discussed are identity crises, the shortcomings of secular nationalist projects, colonial experiences, socio-economic challenges, the influence of Muslim intellectual traditions, and the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979.

Keywords: *Ottoman Empire; Nationalism; Islamism; Colonialism; Islamic Movements; Pan-Islamism; Reformist Thought*

Introduction

The Ottoman Caliphate, which for centuries had functioned as a symbolic institution representing the unity of the Islamic ummah, faced numerous internal and external challenges in the early twentieth century and was ultimately abolished by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey. This event created a profound political and ideological vacuum in the Muslim world and led to the emergence of new political ideas and movements. This study examines diverse political currents in the Islamic world that sought to restore unity and cohesion among



Muslims following this historical rupture. Pan-Islamism, as a prominent ideological framework, emphasized the unity of all Muslims under a single leadership and regarded the Caliphate as a legitimate institution for realizing this objective. However, the abolition of the Caliphate confronted Pan-Islamism with serious challenges and intensified debates concerning the practical realization of Islamic unity (1, 2).

Alongside Pan-Islamism, reformist intellectual currents also emerged during this period, aiming to modernize Islamic societies and overcome civilizational decline through political, social, and religious reform. After the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, Muslim thinkers and political leaders across different regions sought alternative frameworks capable of preserving Islamic solidarity. These efforts generated diverse political theories and movements, each proposing a distinct response to the collapse of the Caliphate and the quest for renewed Islamic unity. Among the most significant currents examined in this research are Pan-Islamism, Islamic reformism, Islamic nationalism, and modern Islamic movements. Collectively, political thought oriented toward Islamic unity after the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate encompassed a wide spectrum of perspectives that profoundly influenced the political and social transformations of the modern Muslim world (3, 4).

Pan-Islamism

Pan-Islamism, as a politico-religious ideology, emphasizes the unity of Muslims worldwide regardless of national, ethnic, or territorial boundaries. Often referred to as Islamic unity, this concept prioritizes supranational religious bonds over ethnic or national affiliations. The term was initially employed by European Orientalists to describe the expansionist policies associated with the Ottoman Empire and its efforts to mobilize Muslim solidarity (5). The principal objective of Pan-Islamism was the formation of a unified Islamic community and the revival of Islamic civilization's political and cultural power.

The intellectual roots of Pan-Islamism date back to the nineteenth century, emerging largely as a reaction to the expansion of European colonialism across Muslim lands. Muslim intellectuals and reformist leaders sought strategies to resist external domination and restore Islamic civilizational vitality. Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani is widely regarded as one of the foremost pioneers of Pan-Islamism; through extensive travels across the Islamic world, he promoted the idea of Muslim unity and collective resistance against colonial powers (1, 6). His thought combined political activism with intellectual reform, emphasizing internal renewal alongside resistance to foreign influence.

During the period of Ottoman decline, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ottoman sultans increasingly turned to Pan-Islamist ideology as a political strategy for addressing internal crises and confronting external threats. Viewing themselves as guardians of Islam, they considered Muslim unity the most effective means of resisting Western colonial expansion and overcoming domestic instability (2, 4). Islam, in this perspective, functioned as a cohesive force capable of uniting diverse ethnic and linguistic communities within the Ottoman Empire against common adversaries.

The Pan-Islamist orientation manifested itself in concrete political initiatives. Ottoman authorities dispatched envoys and representatives to various regions of the Islamic world—from India and China to Central Asia and Africa—calling for solidarity under the leadership of a powerful Caliph. Domestically, major infrastructural projects such as the Hejaz Railway symbolized efforts to reinforce religious unity by facilitating pilgrimage and strengthening transregional Islamic connections. The dissemination of Qur'anic texts and religious literature throughout Muslim territories further aimed at consolidating shared religious identity and communal solidarity (7, 8).

In the twentieth century, numerous Islamic movements emerged in different Muslim societies inspired by Pan-Islamist ideals. Although these movements pursued varied political agendas, they shared a commitment to Islamic unity and resistance against foreign domination. The Ottoman Empire's mobilization of Muslim populations during the First World War illustrates the political utilization of Pan-Islamism as a unifying instrument against Allied powers. Later initiatives, such as international Islamic cooperation institutions, represented modern attempts to institutionalize the Pan-Islamic vision. Likewise, anti-colonial independence movements frequently drew upon Pan-Islamic discourse to mobilize popular resistance against imperial rule (9, 10).

Despite its unifying aspirations, Pan-Islamism has been interpreted in divergent ways. Some scholars regard it as a constructive framework for strengthening Muslim solidarity, whereas others consider it a potentially divisive ideology due to political rivalries and competing national interests. Consequently, Pan-Islamism remains a complex and contested concept within modern Islamic political thought, continually reinterpreted in response to changing historical conditions (11, 12).

The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 dealt a severe blow to the Pan-Islamic movement and triggered major transformations within it. The disappearance of the Caliphate represented a symbolic collapse for Pan-Islamism, depriving the movement of its principal institutional supporter. Many Muslims had regarded the Caliphate as a legitimate and necessary authority for safeguarding the interests of the Islamic world, and its abolition contributed to fragmentation and division among Muslim societies (1, 3). Simultaneously, the rise of nationalism across Muslim countries strengthened territorial and ethnic identities, reducing the influence of supranational Pan-Islamic ideals.

Western colonial powers perceived Islamic unity—referred to in European discourse as Pan-Islamism—as a significant threat to their political and economic interests. In the late nineteenth century, renewed calls for Muslim unity inspired by figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Ottoman leadership fostered solidarity between Turks and Arabs, limiting Western penetration into the strategically vital Middle East. In response, colonial powers encouraged nationalist sentiments and promoted nationalist ideologies among Arabs and Turks, thereby weakening transnational Islamic solidarity and accelerating the rise of competing national movements (9, 12). As a result, emerging nationalisms within Muslim societies increasingly positioned themselves in opposition to the supranational vision embodied by Pan-Islamism.

Islamic Reformism

Islamic reformism represents a dynamic and multidimensional intellectual current within the Muslim world that emerged in response to the complex challenges posed by modernity and colonial domination. In its Islamic conceptualization, reform signifies the removal of structures of oppression and servitude to other than God and the establishment of genuine justice based on authentic human rights grounded in divine revelation and human reason (13). This movement sought to return to the authentic foundations of Islam while adapting religious thought and social organization to new historical circumstances, thereby proposing a path toward the revival of Islamic civilization and the resolution of contemporary Muslim societal problems.

Muslim reformers emphasized a renewed engagement with the Qur'an and the Sunnah, regarding rationality and *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) as essential tools for understanding religion and aligning it with evolving social realities. They opposed superstition and religious innovations that had become entrenched within Muslim societies and advocated social and political reforms aimed at achieving justice, equality, and collective progress. Islamic unity

occupied a central place in reformist thought, as reformers believed that Muslim solidarity constituted the most effective response to shared civilizational challenges and external pressures (1, 8).

Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani is widely recognized as one of the foremost pioneers of the modern Islamic reform movement (14). He diagnosed the crises of Muslim societies through several interrelated factors, including political despotism, widespread ignorance among Muslim populations, intellectual stagnation, the penetration of superstitious beliefs, internal divisions among Muslims under sectarian and ideological labels, and the expanding influence of Western colonial domination. Reformist discourse therefore emerged at the intersection of colonial confrontation, encounters with modernity, and the intellectual awakening initiated by reformist scholars seeking civilizational renewal (7, 9).

Islamic reformism developed into multiple strands—including traditional, modernist, and more radical approaches—each proposing distinct strategies for achieving reform while sharing a common objective: the revitalization of Islamic societies. Despite facing obstacles such as divergent interpretations of Islam, resistance to social transformation, and foreign political intervention, Islamic reformism has continued to function as a living and evolving intellectual movement striving to provide innovative solutions to the challenges confronting Muslim communities (3, 15).

The historical grandeur of Islamic civilization during the formative centuries of Islam demonstrates the capacity of Islamic teachings to generate a vast and influential global civilization. However, distancing from the foundational principles of revelation and the emergence of internal conflicts contributed to the decline of Muslim societies. Reformist thinkers argued that the revival of Islamic identity and the renewal of Islamic civilization required intellectual and scientific advancement within the Muslim world. Without independent intellectual production and scientific achievement, Muslim societies could not reclaim civilizational leadership. Scientific progress, in turn, depended upon collective will, institutional cooperation, and unity among Muslim scholars and intellectual centers. From this foundational perspective, reformists emphasized that Islamic schools of thought share extensive theological, jurisprudential, and ethical commonalities; therefore, by focusing on shared principles and avoiding sectarian division, religious scholars could guide the Islamic ummah toward civilizational renewal and unity (8, 16).

The pioneers of Islamic reformism sought to reconcile fidelity to authentic Islamic principles with responsiveness to contemporary realities. Among the most influential reformist figures were Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida, whose intellectual and political efforts shaped modern Islamic political thought.

Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897)

Al-Afghani stands as one of the most prominent pioneers of Islamic reformism. Through extensive travels across Muslim lands, he promoted Islamic unity and resistance against colonial domination. He was among the earliest Muslim intellectuals to recognize the expanding influence of Western power and to warn of the political and cultural consequences of Western domination over Islamic societies (6). Al-Afghani emphasized rational inquiry and *ijtihad*, arguing that Muslims must employ reason and scientific knowledge to address contemporary problems. For this reason, he is frequently regarded as a central representative of Islamic rationalism within modern reformist thought (3). He also actively opposed superstitions and religious distortions that, in his view, obstructed intellectual development and social progress within Muslim societies.

Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905)

Muhammad Abduh, a close disciple of al-Afghani, played a decisive role in disseminating reformist ideas and institutionalizing Islamic reform discourse (17). Abduh emphasized the reform of educational and judicial systems as essential foundations for Muslim advancement. He attributed Europe's progress largely to the strength of its educational institutions and scientific development, arguing that Muslims must embrace modern sciences while remaining faithful to authentic Islamic principles (18). Abduh opposed rigid and erroneous interpretations of Islam and presented Islam as a rational religion compatible with scientific advancement and social progress.

Rashid Rida (1865–1935)

Rashid Rida, one of Muhammad Abduh's most distinguished students and intellectual collaborators, played a major role in expanding reformist thought into the twentieth century (19). Rida stressed the necessity of establishing an Islamic government grounded in Sharia principles as a means of reviving Islamic civilization. On the eve of the Ottoman Caliphate's collapse, he authored a major treatise on the Caliphate proposing a structured plan for its restoration. Recognizing the practical obstacles to reviving a universal Islamic Caliphate, Rida suggested the establishment of a provisional caliphate to preserve Muslim solidarity. Essential components of such a system included consultative governance (shura), qualified leadership, and continued *ijtihad* to ensure adaptability of Islamic law while safeguarding the collective authority of the Muslim community (3). Like other reformists, he also opposed Western colonial penetration into Muslim societies.

The pioneers of Islamic reformism played a crucial role in awakening Muslim societies and confronting the challenges of modernity and colonial domination. By promoting intellectual renewal and advocating a return to authentic Islamic principles, they laid the groundwork for civilizational revival. Their major contributions included the dissemination of reformist ideas, resistance against colonial influence, reform of educational and judicial institutions, opposition to superstition and religious distortion, efforts toward establishing governance grounded in Islamic principles, and social and political activism aimed at achieving justice and equality.

Despite differences in emphasis and methodology, Islamic reformist thinkers were united by a shared objective: the revival of Islamic civilization and the resolution of the structural crises confronting Muslim societies.

Islamic Nationalism

When Western colonial states regarded the unity of the Muslim world—known in European terminology as Pan-Islamism—as a major threat to their political and economic interests, the efforts of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Sultan Abdülhamid II, and others brought renewed attention to the idea of worldwide Muslim unity. The solidarity of Turks and Arabs within the Ottoman Empire, in turn, constrained Western penetration into the strategically sensitive Middle East. Perceiving this as a danger, colonial powers adopted a new and ultimately effective tactic: stimulating national sentiments and promoting the doctrine of nationalism among Arabs and Turks (11). In this context, an Islamic form of nationalism—interwoven with Islamic values—took shape in the Middle East and produced profound transformations across multiple domains in the region's societies.

Islamic nationalism is an ideology that seeks to fuse Islamic values with nationalist concepts. From this perspective, Islam and national identity are not mutually exclusive but can function as complementary elements that strengthen social cohesion and collective progress. Key concepts in Islamic nationalism include the “Islamic

ummah” (the global community of Muslims), “Islamic identity” (Islamic values and traditions as integral components of national belonging), “Islamic sovereignty” (political orders grounded in Islamic law), “independence and self-sufficiency” (freedom from dependency on external powers), and “resistance to colonialism and despotism” (opposition to foreign domination and internal injustice). Islamic nationalism is therefore a complex and multidimensional ideology that has assumed diverse forms across different historical periods and regions of the Muslim world. While some currents emphasize Islam’s cultural and social dimensions within national life, others prioritize the establishment of explicitly Islamic political systems (1, 10).

After the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, the Muslim world faced an acute power vacuum and a widening crisis of identity. This rupture provided fertile ground for the rise and consolidation of Islamic nationalism in many Muslim-majority countries. Multiple factors contributed to this development, including colonial domination, the dissolution of imperial political structures, and the search for a defensible collective identity in the face of Western cultural influence.

European colonial rule over Muslim societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was among the central drivers of Islamic nationalism. Experiences of humiliation and resentment generated by foreign domination, coupled with efforts to protect Islamic identity against Western cultural hegemony, stimulated nationalist-Islamic mobilization. At the same time, the collapse of the Ottoman imperial order after the First World War weakened long-standing frameworks of Muslim solidarity and intensified insecurity across Muslim societies, thereby reinforcing nationalist tendencies expressed through Islamic idioms (2, 9).

The rapid spread of modernization and Western cultural models also generated identity crises in many Muslim societies. In response, a range of Muslim intellectuals and activists sought to revive Islamic identity and re-anchor social values in what they understood as Islam’s authentic moral and civilizational foundations. Moreover, in many Muslim-majority countries, secular nationalist projects failed to achieve their promises of development, dignity, and genuine independence. This failure contributed to widespread public disillusionment and facilitated a turn toward Islamic nationalism as an alternative framework for political legitimacy and social mobilization (1, 20).

Regional conflicts, including the Arab–Israeli wars—particularly the perceived shock of Arab defeat in 1967—intensified collective feelings of humiliation and anger, thereby strengthening Islamic-nationalist orientations and heightening calls for Muslim solidarity against a shared adversary. Later, the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 exerted a far-reaching influence on Islamist and Islamic-nationalist movements, demonstrating that Islam could operate as a powerful mobilizing force capable of political victory (21). In more recent decades, globalization and recurring economic crises have amplified experiences of insecurity and inequality, encouraging the appeal of Islamic nationalism as a means of defending Muslim identity and interests against both external pressures and internal dislocations (22).

The abolition of the Caliphate—long perceived as a symbol of Muslim power and unity—also produced deep feelings of humiliation and frustration, particularly among Muslim intellectuals and activists. In many settings, Islamic nationalism became an instrument for anti-colonial struggle, emphasizing independence and self-sufficiency as pathways out of Western domination. At the same time, the shortcomings of secular nationalist regimes in meeting socio-economic needs led Islamic movements to frame themselves as viable social, political, and economic alternatives (20).

Muslim intellectuals and activists further contributed to strengthening Islamic nationalism by insisting on Islam’s centrality to social and political life and by presenting it as a comprehensive ideology capable of addressing the

problems of the Muslim world. Within some currents—especially those shaped by Salafi orientations—appeals to the “pious predecessors” were used to advance a rigid political-religious program marked by a resistant stance toward reinterpretation and change (15, 23). In addition, mass media—particularly digital platforms—have played an increasingly significant role in disseminating Islamic movement discourses by enabling rapid communication and transnational networking among activists and supporters (20).

The relationship between nationalism and Islamism is historically complex and takes diverse forms across different contexts. In some cases, the two ideologies have been mutually reinforcing; in others, they have been sharply opposed. From certain Islamic legal perspectives, “nationality” understood as ethnic nationalism privileges the state over the nation and, in international law, appears in doctrines such as non-intervention; by contrast, in Islamic conceptualizations, “nationality” is often framed in terms of shared belief and religious affiliation rather than ethnicity or language. Accordingly, formulations such as “the Turkish nation” or “the Persian nation” are viewed as conceptually inappropriate within this framework, whereas the term “the nation of Islam” is treated as the more valid referent (24).

There are notable convergences between nationalism and Islamism. Both emphasize collective identity—nationalism prioritizes national identity, while Islamism foregrounds Islamic identity. Both can function as mobilizing ideologies in struggles against colonial domination, and both may serve as instruments for mass mobilization and the production of social solidarity. Yet significant tensions also persist. Nationalism prioritizes territorial borders and national interest, whereas Islamism emphasizes the ummah and the collective interests of Muslims globally. Nationalism can generate fragmentation among Muslims, while Islamism is commonly articulated through unity-oriented discourse. Nationalism may also facilitate secularization and the separation of religion from politics, whereas Islamism insists on Islam’s role across the full spectrum of social and political life (11, 12).

Some Muslim thinkers argued that the calamities and divisions of the Muslim world largely stemmed from nationalism, viewing it as a continuation—rather than a negation—of European colonial domination, especially insofar as modern “nation-states” were built around rigid borders, exclusive identities, and competing “national interests” that undermined transnational Islamic solidarity (10). In practice, conflicts between nationalist and Islamist camps sometimes escalated into hostility and violence. One example frequently discussed in the literature concerns tensions that emerged when Arab nationalist projects clashed with Islamist movements, producing open confrontation and, at times, attempted political violence (15).

Historically, interactions between nationalism and Islamism have therefore ranged from alliance to antagonism. In some anti-colonial contexts, nationalist and Islamist forces cooperated as joint engines of independence. In other settings, nationalist regimes confronted Islamist movements as rivals. Contemporary examples often cited include the political consolidation of Islamic discourse within national frameworks in Iran after 1979, political projects that attempt to reconcile nationalism and Islamic identity in Turkey, and the enduring contention between nationalist state structures and Islamist movements in Egypt (15, 21).

The future of the relationship between nationalism and Islamism in the Muslim world remains uncertain. Nevertheless, both continue to operate as influential forces shaping politics and society, and the evolving patterns of their interaction will significantly affect trajectories of governance, identity, and collective action across the Muslim world.

The Effects of the Abolition of the Caliphate on the Emergence of Arab and Turkish Nationalisms

The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 marked a turning point in the history of the Muslim world, particularly in the formation of Arab and Turkish nationalisms. This event, carried out by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, exerted profound effects on the region's political and social transformations (1, 2).

A power vacuum and identity crisis followed the abolition of the Caliphate. As the Ottoman Caliphate had functioned as a symbol of Muslim unity and authority, its disappearance generated widespread despair and confusion. This vacuum facilitated the rise of new ideologies, including Arab and Turkish nationalist projects (1).

The abolition of the Caliphate also contributed to the strengthening of Arab nationalism. Many Arabs—dissatisfied with Ottoman rule—interpreted the event as an opportunity to free themselves from Turkish dominance and to reassert Arab identity. Accordingly, Arab nationalist movements in countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq gained greater momentum after 1924. A substantial segment of anti-Ottoman and pro-Arab nationalist intellectuals looked to their historical past independently of Islam and celebrated it as a source of pride. As an illustrative case, the writings associated with Arab nationalist discourse emphasized ancient Egyptian heritage and criticized the Ottoman Empire and its influence in Egyptian society (25).

In Turkey, the abolition of the Caliphate reinforced Turkish nationalism. During these turbulent years, Turkish nationalism (or Turkism) was shaped in theoretical terms by Ziya Gökalp, who sought to combine this nationalist ideal with a broad program of Westernization and a thoroughly reformed Islam (2). Subsequently, Atatürk emphasized Turkish national identity and the separation of religion from politics in pursuit of constructing a modern secular state, arguing that the institution of the Caliphate obstructed Turkey's progress. From the outset, the movement bore new nationalist characteristics: it appealed to Ottoman Muslims to unite around principles such as religion, ethnicity, and collective purpose, yet addressed them not as a community with a universal mission but as a nation called to defend its own territory. Concepts such as "national will" and "national sovereignty," commonly used by nationalists, became central to this political vocabulary (2).

The abolition of the Caliphate also intensified the tension between Arab and Turkish nationalisms. Arabs increasingly pursued the revival of Arab identity after long-standing dissatisfaction with Ottoman dominance, while Turks sought to consolidate a distinct Turkish national identity. These competing projects amplified political conflict and regional rivalries (1, 11).

The event additionally exerted a significant impact on Islamic movements. Many Muslims interpreted the abolition as an affront to Islam and demanded the restoration of a caliphal institution. The establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928 is frequently cited as an example of an Islamic movement that emerged in a context shaped by debates over Islamic unity and governance after the Caliphate's abolition (1, 10).

In the long term, the abolition of the Caliphate contributed to the consolidation of Arab and Turkish nationalisms, deepened the antagonism between these competing national projects, and helped generate conditions conducive to the rise of Islamic movements. These transformations have continued to shape relationships between Arab states and Turkey into the present (1, 2).

Examining Different Currents of Islamic Nationalism in Various Countries

Islamic nationalism is a dynamic and diverse current that has taken different forms across Muslim-majority societies, shaped by each country's particular historical, social, and political conditions. In some contexts, Islamic

nationalism emphasizes national identity in conjunction with Islamic values, seeking to build a modern and independent state. In other contexts, it prioritizes the sovereignty of Sharia and anti-colonial struggle, aiming to establish an explicitly Islamic political order. In still other settings, it foregrounds resistance politics or presents itself as a moderate alternative opposed to extremism, offering an interpretation of Islam aligned with pluralism and democratic participation.

Overall, Islamic nationalism is best understood as a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon, advancing various Islamic responses to political, social, and economic challenges according to local circumstances (1, 3).

The Role of Leaders and Thinkers of Islamic Nationalism in the Formation of Movements

Leaders and intellectuals associated with Islamic nationalism have played a central role in shaping, disseminating, and guiding this current across the Muslim world. Through the articulation of new interpretations of Islam, the mobilization of Muslim publics, and the leadership of political movements, they have decisively influenced political and social developments.

Among such figures, Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani promoted the idea of Islamic unity and sought to build a united front against Western colonial domination (6). Other movement leaders emphasized the revival of Islamic values and resistance to despotism, thereby reinforcing Islamic nationalist orientations in parts of the Arab world. The Iranian Revolution of 1979, as a landmark episode, advanced a model of Islamic governance and significantly affected Islamist and Islamic-nationalist movements beyond Iran (21). Accounts produced within scholarly discussions of extremist and takfiri currents also underscore the significance attributed to such leadership and ideological framing in the modern period (23).

Thinkers associated with Islamic nationalism also sought to respond to modern challenges by proposing new conceptualizations of Islamic society, governance, and civilization. Within certain intellectual currents, Islam has been framed as compatible with democratic organization and political participation, and some thinkers have argued for institutional development and political reform as means of strengthening Muslim societies (26). More broadly, Islamic-nationalist leaders and intellectuals used speeches, publications, and media to disseminate their ideas, stressing Islamic identity, resistance to colonialism and despotism, and the restoration of Islamic values as key mobilizing themes.

The influence of these leaders and thinkers has varied across countries. In some cases, they succeeded in building powerful political movements and attaining state power; in others, they acted primarily as opposition forces seeking to reform existing political systems. Despite these differences, they generally converged on a shared objective: reaffirming Islam's role in Muslim social and political life and presenting Islam as a comprehensive ideological resource for addressing the crises of the Muslim world (27).

Ultimately, the role of Islamic-nationalist leaders and intellectuals in shaping political and social change across the Muslim world cannot be overlooked. By developing new interpretive frameworks, mobilizing constituencies, and leading organized political movements, they left enduring effects on modern regional trajectories (1, 3).

Islamic Movements and an Explanation of Their Characteristics

Islamic movements constitute a broad spectrum of socio-political organizations and collective mobilizations that operate with the aim of reviving Islamic values and principles within Muslim societies and/or producing political and

social change on the basis of Islamic teachings. Depending on each region's historical, social, and political conditions, these movements pursue different goals and adopt different methods and strategies.

Shared characteristics of Islamic movements include an emphasis on Islamic teachings, the revitalization of Islamic identity, and the pursuit of socio-political transformation. Islamic movements generally stress the centrality of Islamic norms in individual and collective life. Many of them are oriented toward reaffirming Islamic identity in the face of Western cultural influence or toward challenging secular political orders. In this framing, the "Islamic" nature of such movements is evaluated not merely by formal religious labels, but through their perceived alignment with "authentic Islam," understood as an Islam committed to struggle against oppression and global arrogance; thus, movements gain legitimacy and support insofar as they embody emancipatory, independence-seeking, and justice-oriented commitments (21).

Islamic movements include reformist, revolutionary, social, and jihadi trends. Reformist movements seek to change existing political and social systems through Islamic norms and gradual reform. Revolutionary movements aim to overthrow existing political orders and establish Islamic governments. Social movements focus on promoting Islamic values in society and providing social services. Jihadi movements pursue armed struggle against what they define as the enemies of Islam.

The Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin)

The Muslim Brotherhood is a transnational Islamist movement founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, a teacher and religious activist (28). The movement began with the objective of reviving Islamic values and establishing an Islamic society based on Sharia, and it rapidly expanded within Egypt and across other Arab countries.

The Muslim Brotherhood's most prominent stated goals are the establishment of an Islamic government and the pursuit of social reform, and it has played a formative role for later Islamic social movements. At the same time, some critiques have identified weaknesses such as superficiality in religious understanding, intense ideological rigidity, insufficient attention to *ijtihad*, and inconsistency in responding to the problems of the modern age (28).

The movement's core aims are commonly presented as follows: the revival of Islam as a comprehensive system governing politics, economics, and culture; the establishment of a Sharia-based Islamic society characterized by justice, equality, and Islamic ethics; resistance to colonialism and foreign domination through advocacy of independence and self-sufficiency; the pursuit of Islamic unity and solidarity among Muslims worldwide; and broad social reforms in domains such as education, public health, and welfare.

In its historical trajectory, the Muslim Brotherhood experienced repeated cycles of expansion and repression. It initially operated as a social and religious organization but gradually entered formal political arenas. During the 1940s and 1950s it became a major political force in Egypt and confronted successive governments; it was repeatedly suppressed, with members imprisoned and executed. In 2011, following the fall of Hosni Mubarak, the Brotherhood achieved electoral victories in parliamentary and presidential contests, and Mohamed Morsi—one of its leading figures—became president. In 2013, Morsi was removed by the Egyptian military and the movement again faced repression. The Brotherhood has also developed numerous branches in different countries. Across its history, it has contained internal diversity, including both moderate and more hardline tendencies, and disagreements regarding whether change should be pursued through peaceful or revolutionary means.

As one of the most influential Islamist movements in the Arab world, the Muslim Brotherhood has significantly shaped regional political and social developments. Its religious-social activities have also been described as influential in strengthening religious awareness in non-Arab Muslim contexts, and in Iran, translations of works by some Brotherhood leaders are often cited as having inspired revolutionary mobilization against the Pahlavi regime (8).

Jamaat-e-Islami

Jamaat-e-Islami is an international Islamist movement founded in 1941 in the Indian subcontinent by Abul A'la Mawdudi. After him, leadership passed to other figures, and it later expanded across Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other parts of the region (29). The movement began with the aim of establishing an Islamic government based on Sharia and developed into a significant ideological and political actor in South Asian Muslim politics.

Key aims and principles commonly associated with Jamaat-e-Islami include the comprehensive implementation of Islam across personal and public life; the establishment of a Sharia-based Islamic government grounded in justice, equality, and Islamic ethics; opposition to secularism and the separation of religion from politics; the pursuit of Islamic unity and Muslim solidarity; and wide-ranging social reforms, particularly in education, health, and welfare.

In its historical development, Jamaat-e-Islami also experienced fluctuations. It began as a socio-religious organization and gradually expanded into political activity. After the independence of Pakistan, it became a prominent political force participating in elections. It has likewise faced periods of repression, including arrests and executions of members. Today, it remains active in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other contexts, continuing to pursue its stated goals. The movement has also displayed internal diversity, including debates over strategy and differences between gradualist and more confrontational approaches, and it has developed multiple branches in different countries.

Islamic Liberation Movements

Islamic liberation movements refer to groups that, drawing inspiration from Islamic teachings, struggle against colonialism, despotism, or other forms of external and internal domination. These movements vary in objectives, methods, and political repertoires according to regional circumstances. In a general sociological sense, a movement can be defined as collective effort oriented toward achieving a specified goal—especially the transformation of particular social institutions. What distinguishes a social movement from other socio-political phenomena such as riots, revolutions, or political parties is that it represents a broad-based effort for transformation, carried out through conscious participation and active commitment shaped by ideological motivations, often with minimal formal organization (16).

Shared characteristics of Islamic liberation movements include an emphasis on Islamic teachings as the moral foundation of struggles for freedom and justice; opposition to oppression and despotism, whether domestic or foreign; efforts toward political and economic independence and self-sufficiency; and the reinforcement of Islamic identity in response to Western cultural influence or secular governance. These movements encompass a wide range of groups with different orientations. Some employ peaceful methods, while others adopt armed struggle. In certain cases, some movements have been designated as “terrorist” by particular states or organizations. Overall, Islamic liberation movements have played a notable role in political and social transformations across the Muslim world, frequently presenting themselves as Islamic responses to concrete regional challenges.

Islamic liberation movements have commonly operated in three broad modes:

Armed resistance movements: These movements pursue armed struggle and regard military confrontation as effective, showing little hesitation in using force against their opponents (3).

Political movements: These movements seek political and social change through organized political action and collective mobilization beyond formal institutional channels. Such movements can be defined as collective efforts to advance shared interests or establish shared goals through collective action outside the sphere of official institutions (22).

Cultural movements: These movements aim to promote Islamic values and resist Western cultural influence through education, media, and cultural production.

Examples frequently cited include Hezbollah in Lebanon, which presents itself as an Islamist movement centered on resistance against Israel; Hamas in Palestine, which combines Islamist governance claims with resistance; and various Islamic resistance movements in Afghanistan that have, across different periods, fought against foreign occupation and external intervention (18).

Conclusion

In the first half of the twentieth century, following the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate, the Muslim world witnessed the emergence and evolution of a wide spectrum of political ideas centered on Islamic unity. Pan-Islamism, which sought to establish a unified Muslim community under a single leadership, encountered a profound crisis after the abolition of the Caliphate and stimulated new debates regarding the practical realization of unity among Muslims. Alongside this current, Islamic reformism emphasized the modernization of Muslim societies grounded in authentic Islamic principles and rational thought, aiming to overcome decline and strengthen solidarity within the Islamic world.

At the same time, Islamic nationalism emerged as a response to colonial domination and the identity crisis that followed the Ottoman collapse. This ideology emphasized the importance of national identity combined with Islamic values and the political independence of Muslim societies. Islamic nationalism maintained both convergences and tensions with broader Islamist thought, producing a complex pattern of interaction that shaped political discourse throughout the Muslim world. The abolition of the Caliphate played a particularly significant role in strengthening Arab and Turkish nationalisms while simultaneously confronting Islamic movements with new challenges and opportunities.

An examination of different manifestations of Islamic nationalism across various countries demonstrates that this current developed diverse forms depending on local historical, social, and political circumstances. Leaders and intellectuals associated with Islamic nationalism contributed substantially to shaping these movements by proposing distinct interpretations, strategies, and political visions that influenced regional political and social transformations.

Ultimately, political thought oriented toward Islamic unity during this period left a complex and enduring legacy. The debates, movements, and ideological developments that emerged after the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate continue to shape political dynamics, identity formation, and intellectual discourse across the contemporary Muslim world.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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