

CLASH OF THOUGHTS  
WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY ARAB DISCOURSE

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Clash of Civilization thesis by Samuel Huntington and the claims of other scholars such as Bernard Lewis reinforced the impression in the West that the Arab world is a homogeneous and rigid entity ready to clash with other civilizations. In fact, some in the West argue that world civilizations have religious characteristics, for that reason the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will be primarily cultural and religious. However, other scholars argue that there is no single Islamic culture but rather multiple types of political Islam and different perception of it. Therefore, the monolithic aspect of Islam is no longer a credible argument. Furthermore, they assert that there are many examples of harmonious relations between countries that came from different civilization than those of the same civilization.

The Purpose of my thesis is to investigate whether there is actually a diversity and plurality of thoughts within the contemporary Arab discourse. Research was conducted through a qualitative that was made possible during a careful exploration of the biography and the scholarly work of many scholars with diverse cultural tone and beliefs; mainly through Arabic primary sources that were translated by the author. The principal finding was that all tendencies were and are present within the political culture of the Islamic and Arab world, from the extreme left to the extreme right. Yet, the political scene looks chaotic, tense and leaving many important questions unanswered.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Suddenly the decades long confrontation between the Western nations and the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union ended in 1990, during which we witnessed an unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union which was at the time in direct conflict with Western Nations led by the United States. This astonishing change left the door open to many questions about the future of international relations in this new world order. For instance, many questions related to wars and conflicts in the world were raised seeing that the two old super powers were no longer in conflict with each other. In addition, did this new development mean that we could see international relations on its way toward full harmony and cooperation? To this end, scholars such as Samuel Huntington saw to address these challenging questions by presenting his thesis of Clash of Civilization and the remaking of World order.<sup>1</sup>

For instance Mr. Huntington argued that world politics were entering a new era in which the principal conflicts in the world will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations not between nations and states. Huntington's thesis was in clear contrast to Fukuyama's optimistic vision of the future. In fact, Fukuyama's thesis concluded that liberal democracy has finally prevailed over other ideologies that were rejected. To him that was a signal that the history of confrontation between ideologies has come to an end. He also claimed that liberal democracy as a product of Western civilization was now a universally accepted concept<sup>2</sup>. However, Huntington's thesis

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<sup>1</sup>Huntington, Samuel. "The Clash of Civilization?" *Foreign Affairs* 72.3 (1993): 22-28.

<sup>2</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press: 1992.

emerged again as the Western World was looking for answers in the aftermath of the tragic events of 9/11. Thus these tragic events constituted a turning point in the relations between the West and the Islamic world, and the predicament of the clash of civilization raised a decade ago has suddenly gained momentum and interest from prominent journalists and scholars who contended that it is actually a consistent argument that should be seriously looked into.

In fact, the concept of the “clash of civilization” was first introduced in 1990 by Bernard Lewis, a well known historian and scholar, who considers Islam as an ancient rival to the Judeo-Christian heritage, the secularism of the West, and its expansionism worldwide<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the author dedicated a lot of his writings to the Islamic World, for example in his book “The Multiple Identity of the Middle East”<sup>4</sup> he emphasized the historical, political, and economic roots of the contemporary events in this part of the world as well as the struggle for the state building and self determination across the region. He explored the domestic, regional, and international factors shaping the foreign policies of the Middle Eastern states and the making and remaking of the regional order in the time of cold war; in addition to the influence of new ideologies such as nationalism, socialism, and communism alongside the rise of the oil wealth. He stresses that the Middle East has been a critical region for world politics since ancient times, and its early civilizations have played a crucial role in the later development of the Western civilization. Furthermore, the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage: Why So Many Muslim deeply Resent the West, and Western Bitterness Will not be Easily Mollified,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol.266, No.3, 1990:47-60

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Lewis, “The Multiple Identities of the Middle East,” New York, Schocken Books: 1999, pp.09-142.



Islam were born in this region and are very important global factors<sup>5</sup>. Bernard Lewis was consistent in his effort to emphasize the violent aspect of the Islamic religion and to point to the deep differences accumulated between Christianity and Judaism on one side and Islam on the other<sup>6</sup>. As a matter of fact, Bernard Lewis is credited of being the first scholar to offer this new paradigm of world politics and open a debate that lasted through the 90s. He contends that the Arab World's essential crisis is its failure to achieve modernity, due to its lack of curiosity about the West and its reluctance to have contact with non-Muslims and the so called infidels<sup>7</sup>.

In 1996 Samuel P. Huntington reintroduced the "Clash of Civilization" doctrine in his article published in the Foreign Affairs journal where he pointed again to the concept of the inevitable "civilizational" conflict. He asserted that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the "clash of civilization will dominate global politics."<sup>8</sup> The identity will no longer be defined by passport or party membership card but by faith and history, language and customs. Moreover, he argues that ideologies will be the central issue and the next world war, if there's one, will be a war between civilizations as the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will be primarily cultural rather than ideological or economic. For Huntington, the world civilizations have religious characteristics and the main ones are: The Christian West, the Muslim world of the Middle East, India, China and its surrounding countries, Sub-Sahara Africa, and the Buddhist area as well as Japan. He further notes that all the coming conflicts are due to the deep differences in the value

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<sup>5</sup> Bernard Lewis, "The Multiple Identities of the Middle East," New York, Schocken Books: 1999, pp.09-142.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Lewis, "The Crisis of Islam, Holly War and Unholy Terror," New York, Random House: 2004, 142-151.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Lewis, "The Crisis of Islam, Holly War and Unholy Terror," New York, Random House: 2004, 04-119.

<sup>8</sup> Huntington, Samuel, "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World order," New York, Siemens Schuster: 1996

system proper to each of these civilizations. The notion of democracy and free trade has no impact on countries beyond the Western borders and that the rest of the world does not believe in globalization. Thus, he warns that the Islamic and Sino civilizations are challenging the West and that China will cooperate closely with the Islamic countries to gain political international power and built new alliances. Additionally, Huntington favors full “Americanization” and denounces multiculturalism. He calls for a limitation of the expansion of Islamic-Confucian states military, their economic power, and exploiting differences between states<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, Huntington made very important changes in December 2001 acknowledging that the conflicts are possible but not inevitable.

Despite the instant support of the Huntington thesis by the right wing Christians and others, the sharpest criticism actually came from many Western scholars who refuted the theory as unrealistic and flawed. This thesis generated a plethora of reactions from many scholars and analysts with different background and ethnicities, Westerners and Easterners were prompt to answer his argument and refute it. However, in the aftermaths of the tragic events of 9/11 Christian thinkers focused their analyses on the cultural aspect of the issue

For instance, Rene Girard, a French anthropologist from Stanford University, known for his work regarding anthropology of violence and religion, writes that these events reflect a “mimetic” (mirror image) rivalry between the West and the Islamists organizations. According to him these organizations fight the West because they start looking more and more like it. He goes further in explaining that these two are mimetic

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<sup>9</sup> Huntington, Samuel, “The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order,” New York, Siemens Schuster: 1996.

twins and both want to have a global impact and reach a global audience, use the same religious terminology such as crusades, jihad and good vs. evil. He also claims that the terrorists who perpetrated the attacks against New York and Washington were totally assimilated into Western culture<sup>10</sup>. As expected Huntington's thesis attracted scholarly attention from all over the world. Thus he has been criticized for his conception of civilizations and his ignorance of the differences within each civilization that led to unrest and domestic conflicts. Many scholars argue that he has a monolithic vision of the Islamic and Arab world and that the region is diverse, varied and complicated. Furthermore, Huntington's assumption that dialogue and cooperation are impossible between civilizations generated uproar and vehement criticisms from scholars who argue that cooperation and dialogues are possible and actually existed and still exist between nations. They pointed to Huntington's ignorance of this fact, and that the organization of several conferences and debates pointed more toward a clash of dialogue than a clash of civilizations<sup>11</sup>. In this regard, John Esposito, an anti-orientalist<sup>12</sup> and a professor of foreign and international affairs, emphasizes the mistakes that the analysts in the West make in viewing Islam as a hostile and a monolithic religion. Esposito contends that the European imperialism and the struggle for independence from colonial powers dominated the first half of the twentieth century in this part of the world. In addition, Arab nationalism grew significantly and was empowered by the struggle for independence after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. He states that Muslims consider

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<sup>10</sup> See Rene Gerard interview by Henri Tincq, translation Jim Williams. Le monde: November 2001 <http://www.theol.uibk.acat>

<sup>11</sup> Edward, Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," The Nation, October 22, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> The term orientalist refers to any Western scholar who writes about the countries within the Middle East cultural sphere and depicts the Arab and Islamic culture as exotic, backward and odd. Edward Said is credited of being the most vocal opponent of orientalism, he actually denounces it in his book called "orientalism" published in 1978 by Random House, New York.

Islam the only solution to all their problems. Therefore, their reaction towards the West is diverse and could be either: rejection, withdrawal, secularism, Westernization, or Islamic modernization. He further states that the Western's unwillingness to see connection between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, the persistence of the West to consider Islam as the other foreign non-Western religion is one of the many reasons that drive the wedge between the West and the Islamic world. In fact and according to Esposito, the Muslim world is not monolithic, yet common sources of identity such as language, faith, history, and culture are used when national or regional interests are at stake. Moreover, political authoritarianism whether religious or secular is a norm not only in Islamic governments but also in the more secular governments and Islam throughout history has proven to be dynamic and diverse. This reality was proved by Esposito through a case comparison between Turkey as the modern secularist state and Saudi Arabia as the Islamist fundamentalist state. Indeed, this could be very revealing of how big differences could be among the Islamic states. These differences are usually related to sociological leadership and economic conditions.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Esposito mentioned that in Iran, Islam has been a source of government legitimacy and national development for two decades. For Esposito the main paradox is that the Islamic revolution in Iran did not spread to neighboring countries. This could be considered as evidence of the limited power of the Islamists and the absence of a global Islamic threat. Esposito writes that the United States leaders and the media assume that Islam and democracy are incompatible and the involvement of religion in politics lead to fanaticism and extremism because they ignore the fact that Islamic candidates and organizations have worked within the political system and have

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<sup>13</sup> John I. Esposito, "The Islamic Threat Myth or Reality?" New York, Oxford University Press, 1999.

participated in elections in many countries such as Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey and Jordan. He emphasizes the absence of religious authority within Islam such as the Pope institution within Christianity. He also considers that it is time to recognize the diversity of Islam because it is the only protection against a unified Islamic threat to the West; and also identify the existing ideological differences between the West and the Muslim world in order to facilitate tolerance and acceptance of them.<sup>14</sup>

Esposito believes that radical Islam is a consequence of economic deprivation, social alienation and political disfranchisement and that Islam is also capable of changes and adaptation. Furthermore, Esposito does not see an inevitable clash between Islam and the West and is not convinced that resistance, suppression, and containment are the only options left to the Western nations in order to pacify the Islamic world. Hence he believes that there is not a definite and inevitable incompatibility between Islam and democracy and that some of Islamic concepts actually provide bases for a different version of democracy.<sup>15</sup>

Esposito based many of his concepts on his understanding of the history of this region. He explains that the main reason for the actual struggle is the negative impact that some historical events have on the Western and Middle Eastern bilateral and tumultuous relations. For instance he singled out two important events that dominated Muslim history in the first half of the twentieth century: The first one is European imperialism. The second is the struggles for independence from colonial powers. These events were decisive in deciding the faith of the contemporary Middle East. Moreover, he stresses that

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<sup>14</sup> John I. Esposito, "The Islamic Threat Myth or reality?" New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp 77-127.

<sup>15</sup> John Esposito, "The Islamic Threat Myth or reality?" New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp 191-211.

the Western colonial powers altered the geographic map of the Middle East and generated the rise of nationalism and Arab socialism as the only option for the Arab elite to achieve the badly needed nation building. Furthermore, Esposito argues that the Clash of Civilization thesis distorts reality and dehumanizes the Muslims. He rejects Huntington's theory which says that Islam and the West have different political values and claims that the struggle in the Middle East is a challenge to the West which needs to be addressed by understanding and economic help<sup>16</sup>.

Accordingly, Esposito concludes that there is no negative association between Islam and democracy and that hostility toward the West in some Muslim countries originates more from specific political grievances than gratuitous hatred; and that those grievances should be addressed. He added that the pacification and organization of this region is a challenging task due to countless political injustices, social deprivation, and demographic congestion. Yet he thinks that it is worth all the sacrifices due to the region's strategic importance and the huge concentration of oil and natural gas on its land. He finally found that the variable of geography, economic interdependence, and international organizations are responsible for the rise of international conflicts. It is evident that Esposito's empirical studies pose a significant challenge to the Clash of Civilization thesis because he rightly pointed to the fact that it failed to concede that cooperation and dialogue amongst civilizations are not only possible but vital<sup>17</sup>.

Another prominent scholar Sherren T. Hunter argues that the conflictual relations between the West and the Muslim world did not originate from civilizational differences

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<sup>16</sup> John I. Esposito: "The Islamic Threat Myth or Reality?" New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp 226-239.

<sup>17</sup> John I. Esposito: "The Islamic Threat Myth or Reality?" New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp 240-249.

but from political and economical inequalities between the two worlds of the needy and the wealthy. Hunter criticized Huntington's use of the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict as civilizational because he didn't recognize the fact that Islamic Iran had friendlier relations with Christian Armenia than with Muslim Azerbaijan.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, Fouad Ajami, a Lebanese scholar, in his response to Huntington's thesis explained that the first Gulf war was a good example of a case of clash of state interests not a case of clash of civilization. He further notes that the focus of the nations is to learn how to compete in tough war economy and provide jobs to move out of poverty. He writes that we remain in a world of self help and of solitude of states. Dr. Ajami reminds us of the difficulty in finding alliances based on only faith purposes and gives us the example of the lack of support provided by other Islamic countries to the Islamic Azerbaijan in its fight against Christian Armenia. He argues that Huntington overestimated the cultural differences between civilizations and underestimated the Western influence on those same civilizations. He also asserted that Huntington dismisses the responsibility of the West in the buildup of hostile relations with the Muslim world<sup>19</sup>. Another scholar and critic of the clash thesis, Rubenstein, claim that Huntington actually still believes in the emergence of a new cold war era<sup>20</sup>. There are also very interesting arguments from James Kurth who argues that the West has gone through a very deep transformation in term of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, the real clash will happen not between the West and the rest as Huntington claims but between pro-Western

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<sup>18</sup> Hunter, Shireen, "The Future of Islam and the West: Clash of Civilization or Peaceful Coexistence?" pp 16-20.

<sup>19</sup> Ajami, Fouad, "Response to Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilization?" Foreign Affairs, September & October 1993.

<sup>20</sup> Rubenstein, Richard and Jack, Crocker, "Challenging Huntington," Foreign Affairs. No. 26, 1999

conservatives, pro-Western liberals, and multi-culturalists in the U.S. and the rest of the West<sup>21</sup>.

The critics also maintain that Huntington ignores the internal changes and the complexity of the Arab and Islamic world. They assert that there is no single Islamic culture as Huntington implies but rather multiple types of political Islam and different perception of it. Therefore, the monolithic aspect of Islam is no longer a credible argument. Furthermore, they assert that there are many examples of harmonious relations between countries that came from different civilization than those of the same civilization. The critics also sustain that Huntington's understanding of Islam and Western relationships is fundamentally based on Islam as a potential threat to the West.

For instance, Edward Said, a well known critic of orientalism, in his article "The Clash of Ignorance" claims that Huntington's thesis is based on orientalist convictions because it is always biased toward the West which leads to a lack of a comprehensive understanding of the Middle East and Islam. For Said, the world is facing a clash of ignorance rather than a clash of civilizations. He contends that neither Huntington nor Lewis has much time to spare for the internal dynamics and plurality of every civilization. He goes further and writes that Huntington is an ideologue who wants to make "civilizations" and "identities" into what they are not: shut down sealed off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and countercurrents that animate human history. Yet, to Said history not only contains wars of religion and imperial conquests but also contains exchange, sharing and cross-fertilization, and that those labels, generalization and cultural assertions are inadequate. He concludes that the clash of

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<sup>21</sup> Kurth, James. "The Real Clash ." *National Interest* 37. (1994): 3-13,



civilization thesis is a gimmick like the “the war of the worlds” better for reinforcing defensive self-pride than for critical understanding of the interdependence of our time<sup>22</sup>.

It is obvious that the clash of civilization theory is an interesting one. Yet, many scholars and political analysts criticize Huntington for his weak justification and portrayal of civilizations and cultures as homogenous. It is also noticeable that Huntington’s evaluation of the intellectual and political history of the Islamic societies is seriously flawed. Actually, in the Middle East there are increasingly pressing calls for political independence and modernization in conjunction with cultural authenticity. The many debates taking place in many countries are an illustration of the dynamic process toward changes. These debates include even the so-called hardliners Islamic clerics and scholars. These dynamics should be considered a refutation to the civilizational clash claimed by Huntington and others. Additionally it is true that many people in the Middle East view cultural traditions, moral principles, and the role of faith in their life differently from the West, yet there are many other Western principles and values that are highly regarded and have a strong influence on these societies such as the system of check and balances, democracy, and the rule of law. The technological progress and the world economical transformation are affecting those countries that are yearning for change. Thus, it is not reasonable to assume that in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the several countries composing the Muslim and Arab world are a unified entity that shares the same political, intellectual, social and even religious values.

In order to elaborate on this clarification, I would like to explore and analyze the various and different aspects of the cultural components of the Arab discourse. I will demonstrate through the study of the biography and the scholarly work of many scholars

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<sup>22</sup> Said, Edward. "The Clash of Ignorance." *The Nation* 2000. Web. 12 August 2009.

the diverse cultural tone and beliefs in this part of the world. The goal of my thesis is to demonstrate that there is actually a clash of thoughts within the Arab contemporary discourse and that all tendencies are actually present within the political culture of the Arab world from the extreme left to the extreme right. Moreover, moderates and reformists always existed throughout the modern history of the region and had and still have a lot of influences. Therefore, I will divide the Arab discourse into three parts: the first part will be on the extreme left which is mainly composed of the, nationalists, baathists, socialists and the communists. The second part will be on the moderates and reformists, from moderate Islamists-reformists to moderate modernists. The third part will be on the fundamentalists and the extremists within Islam in the Arab world.

However, I will limit my study to Sunni Muslim scholars within the Arab world and will not include the Shiite scholars who are scarce in the region because of the limited number of Arab followers of Shia branch of Islam and subsequently their limited influence on Arab discourse. On the other hand and because this study is about scholarly texts and ideologies, I will exclude all policy makers such as Jamal Abdel Nasser the previous nationalist president of Egypt and Saddam Hussein the previous Baathist president of Iraq. I will also exclude all contemporary Western scholars of Arab origin because again this study is limited to Arab scholars on the ground.

Accordingly, I will start with the nature of the Arab left and its different components. The first component would be Arab nationalist Ideology and its different contributors such as Michel Aflaq. There is also a need to point to the differences between Arab nationalist thinkers. My initial starting point is the tentative hypothesis that the different components of Arab intellectual left once constituted a dominant intellectual

movement and was inspired by Western leftists and nationalists thoughts. I will also highlight the transformation Arab Nationalists had undergone by Aflaq and the Baathist movement. For instance, it is well known that Arab nationalist ideas resulted from the Arab opening to Western thoughts and Western political system. The Arab thinkers' encounters with the French revolution impacted their thinking as they were receptive to the political terms used by Western scholars and adopted their counterparts in Arabic such as: the homeland (*watan*), the nation (*umma*), and nationalism (*quawmmiya*). I will also describe how some nationalist thinkers were seduced by Western thoughts while others were to reject them as unfit for their society and looked to invent specific models. Yet I will explain how Michel Aflaq considered that the contact with the West since Napoleon campaign in Egypt had in fact negative effects on Arab renaissance, and his view of the Arab resurrection *baath* as a mission to save not only Arabs but Humankind as a whole. I will further analyze the communist movement in the Arab world and its leading scholars, their failure to impact the Arab intellectual renaissance and their transnational tendency. Socialist thought is also powerfully present in the Arab thinking but always mixed with nationalist views. Finally, I will demonstrate how the leftists Arab thinkers were all influenced in some ways by some of the European thinkers.

In the second chapter, I will explore the intellectual reformists' thoughts through some of its prominent thinkers. I will demonstrate that the reformist movement was wide and diverse in the Arab World. Moreover, there have been many thinkers who have employed originally non-Islamic or Western ideas as part of their process of thoughts to understand and analyze the different aspects of the Islamic and Arab culture. For instance, the "*Nahda*" or renaissance movement tried to adapt the main component of the

modern European civilization to the classical Islamic culture. Indeed, many reformists believed in peaceful coexistence between Islam and the Western world but still reject some practices of Western society. Thus many of them emphasize the transformative aspect of Islam and its ability to adapt to new realities, which constitute a powerful evidence of the absence of rigidity within the Islamic society.

In the third chapter, I will explore some fundamentalist thinking through some famous fundamentalists such as Mohammed Abdel whahab and Sayed Qutb and will try to analyze their effort to revive the fundamental principles of Islam in the modern world, I will also highlight their Islamic political theory and the contradiction between Western culture and the religion of Islam in their literature. I will also evaluate their supposed impact on some Islamic radical groups who use their ideas to justify violence and killings.

In the fourth and final part, I will evaluate the widening rift within the Islamic world between hard core Islamists, moderate Islamists, the reformists and the shrinking left. I will also evaluate the absence or the limited influence of liberalism in Arab discourse and the reasons behind that. Yet the big issue is about the role of the Arab intellectual movement in Arab political future, and I will also try to answer some crucial questions such as: Why is it very hard in this part of the world to establish a culture of democracy and respect for human right? Is the rift between the intellectual trends responsible for the chaotic situation in the Arab world?

## CHAPTER TWO: THE ARAB LEFT: NATIONALISM, BAATHISM, COMMUNISM AND SOCIALISM

The awareness of the Arab people of their national origin began with the weakness of the Ottoman rule and their access to foreign culture. As a result, they were able to receive a display of Western thoughts and acknowledge its political systems. These encounters produced an array of new ideologies inspired from the European discourse. For instance, Arab thinkers discovered new perceptions and concepts especially the ones used by French thinkers and that inspired the French revolution. Consequently the Arab discourse saw the emergence of two trends of thoughts. The first one was the nationalist Arab movement that was represented by various Arab political groups with a secular and revolutionary tone advocating independence and liberty from colonialism. These groups gained a lot of momentum due to their activism and the growing number of their subscribers; they even organized a conference in Paris in 1913<sup>23</sup> where they pledged to fight for Arab rights and future. The other trend was based on Islamic concepts and was represented by the Islamic reformist movement and led by two Islamic scholars: jamaleddin Afgani and Muhammad Abduh.

In the case of the first trend that period could be considered a turning point in the Arab discourse leading to the materialization of a new set of political words such as: nation "*Umma*," nationalism "*Qawmya*," and equality "*Musawat*." Moreover, a public dialogue took place about the pertinence of these terms in the Arab case and new concepts of Arab nationalist thinking derived from these mainly European terms.

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<sup>23</sup> Al Marefa." Al Moatamar Al Arabi Alawal." At: [www.marefa.org](http://www.marefa.org)

Unexpectedly a powerful Arab nationalist concept emerged that had a huge momentum and generated very important consequences. In fact, the historic rise of the nationalist Arab taught was first introduced by Boutros Al Boustani, a Lebanese scholar<sup>24</sup>.

### Section 1: Boutros Al Boustani: The Founder of Arab nationalism:

Botrous Al Boustani was born in Al Dabiya in Mount Lebanon in 1819 and went to a prestigious missionary school in Syria where he studied the Arabic language and its different dialects. He studied Arabic literature, philosophy, and theology as well as Latin and Italian. After his graduation, he worked as a professor at the same school and converted to the Protestant faith while working for the American missionaries in his school. Al Boustani founded the first association in Syria called “the Syrian Association for the Science and Arts.”

He was an accomplished journalist and ended up publishing his own magazine in 1869, he was credited of issuing the first Syrian paper called “Nafir Souria” which used to promote tolerance and rejected religious extremism. In 1863, he founded the national school which was considered a revolutionary step within the Syrian educational system. Hence this school was the first in the country that called for religious freedom and reject sectarianism. He was also a prolific author who wrote a very famous dictionary “the ocean of ocean or *Mohit Al Mohit* and six volumes of the first Arab encyclopedia called *Dairat Al Maharif*<sup>25</sup>.

Butrous Al boustani advocated patriotism in the Arab world. He was convinced of the existence of a solid relationship between secularism and nationalism; and considered

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<sup>24</sup> Al Marefa “ Al Moatamer Al Arabi Alawal.” At: [www. Marefa.org](http://www.Marefa.org)

<sup>25</sup> See Boutross Al Boustani, biography at: [www.marefa.org](http://www.marefa.org)

that the love of a country should be considered a part of a religious faith. He also rejected sectarianism *Taifia* and considered that sectarians are enemies of their nation and should be stripped of their citizenry. Al Boustani was in fact a fervent advocate of freedom in all its aspects: religious freedom, freedom of speech, and personal freedom. Most importantly, he was one of the first to call for a clear separation between state and religion. He perceived religion as a private matter between a person and his creator, while politics belong to the public sphere. Thus he was a liberal who believed that democracy and secularism are necessary steps toward progress and modernity. He argued that the concentration of the civil and spiritual powers in the hand of one person can spread injustices and have tremendous negative impact on the development of any nation. He actively worked toward the achievement of his nationalistic views until his death in the 1883<sup>26</sup>.

Following his death, during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the struggle for a new Arab society based on nationalist ideology began to take shape emboldened by the inaptitude of the Ottoman Empire, its increasing nationalism and its troubles with the western powers. The call for a unified Arab nation was embraced by Arab thinkers and gained momentum among the general public. The new Arab nationalist concept captivated the mind of various Arab intellectual circles and led to the first Arab nationalist conference in Paris that unified all Arab political tendencies. In the Aftermath of this conference, the participants agreed that the Arabs have the right to a homogenous identity due to their common language, race, culture, and common history. The Arab nationalist movement took advantage of the western definition of groups in nationalist ideology and applied it to their case. In fact,

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<sup>26</sup> Marefa. "Moatamar Al Arabi Alawal" [www.marefa.org](http://www.marefa.org)

the political scientists in Europe of the nineteenth century agreed that groups of people who share a common language, race, history, tradition, and political aspiration are entitled to the right to claim their unity as a nation and consequently their right to a common nationality. However, this first step was only a timid move to gain recognition and respect from the collapsing Ottoman Empire<sup>27</sup>. Thus they were eager to preserve the unity of the Empire due to its status as it represents the Islamic *Kilafa*. Their aspirations were very modest and were limited to local governance of their regions based on an eventual policy of decentralization and regionalization under the banner of the *Kilafa*. Yet, they failed to convince the Ottomans to make changes and address their grievances; such as the adoption of the Arabic language as an official language of the Empire alongside Turkish language and the Arab culture as a cultural component of the Ottoman Empire. On the contrary, the Ottomans were very opposed to these modest demands and used harsh repressions to stop them. Their attitude generated a huge anger among Arabs and indicated the end of their submission to the Islamic *Kilafa* as the ultimate religious and political authority. Accordingly the calls for a complete independence from the Turks and the creation of a unified Arab nation became public and Western nations took advantage of the situation for their own purposes, they actually took a leading role in this showdown and actively encouraged the Arabs to fight for their freedom and claim their own identity<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Marefa. "Al Moatamar Al Arabi Alawal" [www.marefa.org](http://www.marefa.org).

<sup>28</sup> See Mohamed Said Taleb, "Al Kawmia Al Arabia fi Mowajahat Al Awlama" "The Nationalism Arab Encounters with Globalization", <http://www.reefnet.gov.sy/booksproject/fikr/25/3qawmieh>



After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire the Arab nationalist thoughts emerged even stronger than before, yet diverse in substance with multiple variations of it, the next thinker represents one set of this diverse trend.

## Section 2: Amine Al Rihani: the moderate nationalist

Amine Al Rihani was born in 1876 in Al Ferikeh village, in Mount Lebanon. He went to elementary school in his village and moved to New York afterwards where he joined his father who owned a drugstore there. Al-Rihani worked for his father while pursuing his studies in high school. He then went to night school to start a career in law. Yet, he abandoned the legal field and dedicated himself to be a full time writer. In 1898, he returned to Beirut to learn Arabic and acquire some expertise in his native language, where he spent four years, he returned to New York to start writing in both Arabic and English. His writings were mostly about literature, sociology, and politics. In 1912, he went back to Lebanon where he spent his time writing before traveling to many Arab countries such as Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, Morocco, and the Gulf States. During this trip, he met with many Arab rulers and connected with intellectuals as he tried to promote his nationalist ideas and called for a unified Arab nation.

Amine Al Rihani's writings are a clear evidence of the influence that the French enlightened thinkers such as Rousseau and Voltaire had on him. This influence can also be perceived through his rejection of religious fanaticism and his calls for tolerance,

democracy, and secularism. Most importantly, he called for a mutual interaction and dialogue between Eastern and Western civilization. Al Rihani died in Lebanon in 1940<sup>29</sup>.

Amine Al Rihani enthusiastically advocated complete secularization of the political and educational system. He argued that secularization would generate freedom of thoughts, which consequently translates in the liberation of the political system. He also called for a sincere dialogue between all intellectuals regardless of their religious faith, Christians and Muslims, about all matters including religion and politics. According to him, Christians and Muslims should be treated equally in order to achieve unity which can only be achieved gradually; likewise the foundation for an Arab nation requires an effective nonsectarian pan-Arab educational system which is the sole protection against differences and divisions. However, Al Rihani distinguished himself in the intellectual arena with his rejection of intolerance and intellectual superiority. Due to his interaction with both the West and the East, he was able to formulate his own globalist vision of Arab nationalism as a way to reach integration in the world through openness, inclusion and the acceptance of the other as a part of us and the difference as only another way of being human.<sup>30</sup>

### Section 3: Sati Al Hussari: the ideologue of Arab nationalism

Sati Al Hussari is considered by many to be the real first theorist of Arab nationalist ideology; for instance, he was born in 1880 in Sana, Yemen to a distinguished father from Aleppo Syria. In fact, his father was a respected judge who provided him

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<sup>29</sup> See Amine Al Rihani biography at: <http://www.ameenrihani.org/index.php?page=biography>  
See also: [http://www.alhewar.com/Bushrui\\_Rihani](http://www.alhewar.com/Bushrui_Rihani)

<sup>30</sup> Sitka, C. Funk & Betty J. "Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West." *ameen rihani biographie*. 2006. Web. 20 October 2009.

with the necessary means to get a perfect education helping him to acquire proficiency in many languages at an early age. He graduated from Istanbul, Royal School and was appointed as a teacher in a secondary school in the Yyania District, which is situated on the borders between Albania and Greece. Hence, he was influenced by the growing nationalist sentiment in the region, especially the increased adherence of the Turkish people to their Turkishness and their altered perception of their Islamic identity<sup>31</sup>

Al Hussari was highly appreciated by the Ottoman regime and appointed to many key positions in Macedonia, the center of the nationalist activities for various Turkish officers, including Mustapha Kamal, Ataturk who established the association of Union and Progress after the 1908 military coup in Turkey. Al Hussari did join the Turkish association of the Union and Progress that promoted a negative vision of Arab identity; however he renounced his membership and claimed his allegiance to Arab nationalist ideology. He moved to Syria after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and due to his broad knowledge of educational issues acquired during his work as director of the teacher's institute and chief editor of two educational periodicals; he was called by the Syrian government to be in charge of important positions at the Education Ministry Until he was promoted to be the Minister of Education in 1920. Al Hussari activism for Arab Nationalism cause started right after he moved to Syria as he joined the Arab nationalist circles surrounding Prince Feisal. He immediately gained the Prince trust and joined him into exile in Iraq after the French occupation of Syria<sup>32</sup>.

AL Hussari was known for his strong advocacy of Arab nationalism, due to his militancy he was again forced to leave Iraq in the late 1930s and moved to Lebanon. He

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<sup>31</sup> Diwanalarab. "Al Hussari Biography".<http://www.diwanalarab.com>

<sup>32</sup> Diwanalarab. "Al Hussari biography". <http://www.diwanalarab.com>

was welcomed by the Syrian government that offered him a consultant post in the ministry of education. However, in 1947, he moved to Cairo and worked for the Arab League as a manager to its institute of research, while managing to publish most of his books before moving back to Iraq in 1968<sup>33</sup>. A staunch nationalist, He continued his advocacy for a unified Arab nation based on his conviction that the common language, religion and history are unifying factors for any group of people and that the Arab people speak the same language, have the same religion and share the same history, consequently they basically form a unified nation. Besides that he claims that sooner or later this nation will be established due to the fact that Arabs have existed as a homogenous group for thousands of years and will continue to exist for thousands more. He justifies his convictions by explaining that there is awareness in Arab consciousness that all Arabs are meant to have a moral connection binding them together and that will exist for ever<sup>34</sup>.

On the other hand, Al Hussari was open to Western culture and did not see any issues with borrowing and learning from it. He called for an extensive contact and broad relations with it although he excluded any interaction in some areas such as literature and language. In this regard it is interesting to notice that despite his openness Al Hussari made a clear distinction between sciences and technologies on one side and cultural traditions on the other. Furthermore this nationalist thinker completely refuted the idea of religious unity instead of national unity and claimed that it would be a mistake for the Arab people to still believe in Islamic unity. He considers the Arab unity *Wahda Arabiya* as an independent issue totally separate from the Islamic unity *wahda Islamiya*. Thus he

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<sup>33</sup> Diwanalarab. "Al Hussari Biography": <http://www.diwanalarab.com>

<sup>34</sup> Sati, Al Hssari, "Hawla Al Kawmia Al Arabia" "About the Arab Nationalism", Cairo, Center for Arab Unity center, 1987, pp 65-180.

stresses that while Arab unity would be hard to achieve but possible, the Islamic unity is unattainable. He rejected the *Islamic Kilafa*, and claimed that the debate about this issue is detrimental to The Arab cause and interests<sup>35</sup>. In any case Al Hussari is credited of being the first and largest contributor to Arab nationalist theory by the majority of Arab nationalist circles.

However, it is important to notice that the historical evolution of Arab nationalism shows multiple variations of it, such as *Baathism* and *Nassirism* and these different trends weakened the ideology and created a wide disagreement between its adepts who turned against each other multiple times in recent history. As a result, it is difficult to have one coherent definition of this ideology. Nevertheless, it is well known that all Arab nationalist thinkers used Arabic language as a tool to build Arab nationalist consciousness about the strong bond and affinities between all Arabs. During the evolutionary process, new concepts were added such as the nationalist *Baath* which mean nationalist resurrection. This concept was the corner stone for the creation of the Arab *Baath Party*. In fact, the party adopted the concept of the eternal mission of the Arab nation which means that the unified Arab nation would be assigned a mission in this world. The emblem of the Party has three components: unity, liberty and freedom. Accordingly the Baath Party considers that the Arab nation has a history of creations and innovations which took many forms such as the Hammurabi's legislature, Islam, the *Abassid Kilafa* during which Arabs contributed to the human civilization tremendously, thus they are permitted to accomplish such a role. For that reason the *Baathists* dismiss the periodical declines and failures that did strike Arabs during different time in history

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<sup>35</sup> Sati, Al Hussari, "Al Oruba bina Doatiha wa Moaridaha", "Arab Nationalism between Opposition and Acceptance", Cairo, Center for Arab Unity Studies: 1985, pp 40-95.

as only temporary and can be addressed by concerted efforts by all Arab people in order to resurrect their nation or *Baath*<sup>36</sup>.

For instance, the creation of the *Baath party* derived from a nationalist political movement which was represented by two political groups formed by mainly Syrian intellectuals. The members of these groups were supportive of the Iraqi revolution and held the first conference of the Baath Party in 1947. Unexpectedly the concept of resurrection *Baath* gave birth to one of the most nationalist political and influential Party in the Arab world in modern time. The most prominent figure of this Party is Michel Aflaq.

#### Section 4: Michel Aflaq: The founder of the Baath Party:

Michelle Aflaq was born in 1909 in Al Maydan, a suburb of Damascus where his father, a Roman Orthodox, worked as a cereal merchant. After his graduation from Al Asiya High School, which was owned by the Orthodox Church, he went to Paris to study history with a group of Syrian scholars and while he was there he met Sallah Al Dine AL Bitar, his friend and partner, who helped him establish the Baath Party.

His leftist views were obvious at that time. In 1935, he returned back to Syria and taught history at the first Tajhis High School. His articles in the Syrian press were famous among intellectuals and made him a prominent figure in Arab politics. He then dedicated himself to politics and tried to establish a nationalist political party. In april 1947, Aflaq established the Baath Party with the help of his friend Al Bitar and held the position of the general secretary of the Party. However many disagreements and dissensions surfaced right after the birth of the Party which led to its split into two factions, one Syrian and the

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<sup>36</sup> See the Baath Party general description and goals at: <http://www.aljazeera.net>

other Iraqi. Oddly enough and Despite Aflaq's Syrian nationality, he headed the Iraqi wing and settled there until his death in 1989<sup>37</sup>.

Michelle Aflaq is credited of being the master mind of the Party as he introduced an array of new ideas and set new concepts in nationalist Arab discourse. Yet his most interesting idea is his conception of *Inkilab coup d'état* or revolution and his vision of the way it should be carried out in order to save the Arab nation from the damage done to it by the Western influence. For instance, Aflaq was blaming Western powers and their influence for all the struggles Arab people have to go through, and that since Napoleon Bonaparte Egyptian's campaign, the western encounters with the Arabs had hindered their efforts to attain their objectives of progress, prosperity and unity. In contrast to other nationalist thinkers he rejected the idea that different Western schools of political thoughts are inspirational to Arab thinkers and contended that Arab realities are unique, for that reason they need specific ideas that are compatible with their culture and way of life. He stresses that the Arab nation can draw on its own history, traditions and outstanding civilization to formulate their own political system and concepts<sup>38</sup>. Hence he was very vocal on this issue because he was eager to distinguish himself from the popular view among some Arab nationalist thinkers about the usefulness of European thoughts and political culture. Yet his most vehement criticism goes to the European colonialism of the Arab world as he pointed to many ills that came with it including the purposeful partition of the Arab land into a bunch of spurious and weak states.

In any case, Aflaq concept about the Arab Baath Party was idealistic as he assigned a mission to it which is the establishment of a powerful Arab nation; and asked

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<sup>37</sup> See Michel, Aflaq biography at: <http://www.islamicnews.net>

<sup>38</sup> Michel, Aflaq, "Fi Sabil Al Baath", 2ed edition, Beirut, Dar Al Taliah, 1963.

for a total commitment to its ideals in order to realize the Arab unity. However he is widely criticized for the erratic conception of this process that stipulate that Arab nation should be divided into two groups, the first one is composed of a small number of people who realized the importance of the cause, and the second one composed of the majority of Arab people who are not aware yet of its importance. Then he stressed that the first group is invested with the authority to direct the nation toward resurrection or *Baath* and has the right as a minority to represent the majority<sup>39</sup>. In this regard, he explains that the majority is still oblivious to the fact that its identity is indispensable to its survival; therefore this majority has to surrender its will to the minority that would eventually represent it to get the job done. This elitist approach, which gave a special status to a minority due to its knowledge, is merely a rejection of the democratic majority rule and could be traced to his dismissal of Western political culture which relies mainly on democracy, he called for a new political approach that fits the needs of a different society. Furthermore, Aflaq emphasized the virtues of this minority that should be organized as an institutionalized revolutionary organization, as professional, dedicated, and good not only to the Arab nation but for human kind in general. Hence he defended his revolutionary doctrine as the only path towards the achievement of the nation's development and that Arabs cannot reach the much needed development through evolution because it would take a long time while revolution is the most convenient and shortest way to achieve it<sup>40</sup>.

Although Aflaq agreed with other Arab nationalists on the glorification of the past and its role, he really worships it as powerful tools that entice the Arab people to fight for

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<sup>39</sup> Michel, Aflaq, "Fi Sabil Al Baath", 2ed edition, Beirut, Dar Al Taliah, 1963.

<sup>40</sup> Michel, Aflaq, "Fi Sabil Al Baath" 2ed edition, Beirut, Dar Al Taliah, 1963



their future and make history again. This nostalgia of the past is a very important element of Aflaq personality and that could be the main reason behind his attitude toward the Islamic religion. As a matter of fact, it is very surprising to notice that as a Christian he was very appreciative of Islam as he believed that it is impossible to dissociate Arab nationalism from this religion. Therefore, Islam is an essential part of Arab nationalism as it contributes to it; and because religion and nationalism came from the same source which is the heart and the will of Allah. Furthermore, he believed religion in the West is different from religion in the Arab world because Islam is perfectly expressed in Arabism and signaled the awakening of Arabs. Moreover, he views Islam as being the “true” religion that always defends the oppressed and fight injustice and corruption. He pointed out that regardless of the Arabs’ religious faith or sects, Arabism is linked to Islam which gives it its nationalist dimension and form its nationalist Arab identity. Therefore, Islam is at the heart of Arab nationalist cause and the Baath movement.<sup>41</sup> There are rumors and some indications that Michel Aflaq actually converted to Islam in his late years and informed some members of the previous Iraqi regime and also his family about this conversion.

#### Section 5: Antuan Sadaah: The regionalist:

The regionalists are also present in the Arab discourse; these thinkers reject the idea of Arabism or the ideology of Arab nationalism that derived from it. The following thinker, Antuan Sadaah, was the leading scholar of this trend of thoughts; Sadaah was born in Al Shouir village of Mount Lebanon on March 1904. He was the son of Khalil

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<sup>41</sup> Michel, Aflaq, “Fi Sabil Al Baath” 2ed edition, Beirut, Dar Al Taliah, 1963

Sadaah, a Roman Orthodox, who was famous for his progressive ideas and militancy. In 1990, Antoine Sadaah moved to Brazil to join his father and while he was a student he participated in his father's journalistic work and helped him publish his paper "*Al Jaridha*" and "*Al Majala*" the magazine. Since his early age Sadaah choose the path of regionalism as he believed that Syria is his only homeland and that he has no ties to other Arab people in other states. Accordingly he founded the Syrian Nationalism Association, "*Al Rabita Al Watania AL Souria*" as well as the party of free Syrians "*Hyzb Al Ahrar Al Sourien*" while he was still in Brazil in order to promote his idea. Sadaah went back to Lebanon to take a teaching position in the American University of Beirut. However, he left his job and dedicated himself to militancy for the party he previously established called the Syrian National Social Party.

Paradoxically Saadah was from Syria, the country that was a staunch advocate of Arab nationalism, which will have dramatic repercussions on his life and made it hard for him to promote his agenda and gain momentum. In fact as soon as the party was established, the state issued a ban against it while all its members were detained and prosecuted, including Saadah. He was liberated after a while and in the aftermath of his liberation; Saadah decided to immigrate again to avoid any retaliation. Unfortunately, in 1947, he returned again this time only to be arrested and accused of conspiracy against the state. He was then sentenced to death and executed on July 8, 1949<sup>42</sup>.

Antuan Sadaah was the founder of a new ideology of regional nationalism limited to Syria *Quawmia Souria* while he rejected liberalism, democracy and vehemently believed in the legitimacy of a charismatic leader; which could be perceived as an

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<sup>42</sup> See Antuan Saadah biography at: <http://www.asharqalarabi.org.uk>

acceptance of dictatorship rule. He was also eager to explain that religion and politics should be separated. Thus he called for a brotherhood within Syria where the Syrian people would be united by their shared social and economic environment and religion would be kept a private matter and a spiritual connection. In this regards his apprehension of the Islamic religion is very flagrant if we consider his opposition to the Arabism concept, which according to him limit unity of people to the only Arabs who are Muslims and marginalize other religious groups. Accordingly Sadaah exposed his vision of united Syria that included all sects and races under the banner of the Syrian nation. Furthermore he proposed the free choice in religious matters in order to prevent the Muslim majority from discriminating against religious minorities. He stated that the Syrian constitution should not include any allusion to religious affiliation and rejected religion as a component of political system. Hence, he also dismissed the Arabic language as a unifying factor as stated by Arab nationalists; primarily because it is credited of being the language of the Koran.<sup>43</sup>

In any case he tried to give an account of his own idea of nationalistic/regionalist unifying factors and singled out regional geographical locations and social environment as true requirements for national unity. In this regard He tried to refute the idea of broad Arab nation and explained that the Arab world is huge geographically, encloses many regions and that make it impossible to have a unified national identity. Since he was a Christian, Sadaah was very fretful of the Muslim majority in the Arab world; that was probably due to his fear of an eventual Islamic hegemony over other religions. The Arab nationalists' thinkers were outraged by

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<sup>43</sup> Antoine, Sadaah, "The Creation of Nations", The electronic version at: <http://www.ssnp.com/new/library/saadeh>

Sadaah's comments about Arabism, culture and Islam and vehemently rejected his concept of geographical location as a factor in the formation of nations<sup>44</sup>.

### Section 6: Shuhdi Aliya Al safi and Communism

The research of the history of the communist and socialist Arab movement shows that the adepts of these ideologies barely contributed to the field. The absence of any meaningful concept or ideas specific to the region is striking. Thus this finding could explain the very limited popularity of these ideologies within the Arab world. However, Shuhdi Aliya stands as the thinker who was committed to the cause of communism and lost his life for it.

Shuhdi Aliya Al-Safi was born in 1912. He went to a western style school and then to college from where he graduated with a degree in English. During his time at the university he became involved with the leftist and nationalist students movements. After his graduation he took a job as a secondary school teacher but left for Oxford University to further his studies in English language. After his return to Egypt in 1940, he took again a teaching position and was appointed to supervise the Ministry of Education.

During his time in the Ministry he became a member of the Central Committee of Iskra, a nationalist organization in Egypt, and was assigned the management of the house of scientific learning, which had attracted many young Egyptians intellectuals to the communist movement. In this regard Shuhdi Aliya could be accredited of bringing the nationalist agenda of the Iskra group within the communist movement called (*Ahdafuna*

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<sup>44</sup> Antoine, Sadaah, "The Creation of Nations", The electronic version at: <http://www.ssnp.com/new/library/saadeh>

*Al-watania*) our national goals. Additionally he was the leading figure of the Egyptian national committee of students and workers which led the students and workers famous revolt of February – March 1946 against negotiations held back then between the Egyptian government and Great Britain<sup>45</sup>.

Shuhdi Aliya was a member of the democratic movement for National Liberation (DMNL) and the editor of its newspaper the masses *Al-Jamahir*. However, he clashed with the other members over the movement's goal and its relations with other movements and issued articles calling for the establishment of a communist party that represent only the working class. The Central Committee in his movement refused the idea which made him leave and establish his own revolutionary organization called *Hautr Al- Tayyar Al- Thawria*. In 1948 Aliya was sentenced to seven years in prison for his activities. However, due to some connections he had with the free officers led by Abdel Nasser of Egypt who were in charge of the regime; he was able to manage and publish articles in the newspaper the evening *AL Massa*.

Surprisingly, Aliya had a very odd relationship with the Nasser's regime as he was very supportive of the revolution of 1952 and the rulers afterwards, yet he was arrested numerous times and even tortured, nonetheless he stayed the course and continued to support Nasser's government until his death in prison on June of 1960.

#### Section 7: Samir Amine the Neo-marxist:

Samir Amine was born in Cairo to an Egyptian father and a French mother. His parents were medical doctors. He received a good education and moved to Paris to finish

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<sup>45</sup> See Shuhdi, Aliy biography at: <http://www.e-socialists.net>

his studies in politics. Amine was involved with the French communist party and eventually became a member. Yet he was not interested in Soviet Marxism and socialized with some Khmer Rouge leaders who were impressed by his ideas, His thesis about the effects of international integration of pre-capitalist economies was widely known and gained support among some neo-Marxist circles. After his graduation he moved back to Cairo and worked as a manager in a government run office for development<sup>46</sup>.

Yet, in 1960 Amine moved again this time to Bamaku Mali to hold an adviser position in the Ministry of Planning. He also took a position as a full time university professor in France. He will stay connected to African nations for years to come to work on development issues, became the director of the UN African office of the Third World Forum which is a nongovernmental association that debate and research the related issues. He also worked as a Director of the Third World Forum in Dakar which is an association of intellectuals from Africa, Asia, and Latin America that promote strong relations between nations. Amine has written many books and articles about politics and world affairs. He is considered to be a neo- Marxist theorist who opposed vehemently capitalism and the Western leadership of the world arguing that United States and Europe actually undermine the international law and that has dire consequences for democracy and rule of international law. He also blames Europe for its participation in the US military presence worldwide and considers the NATO alliance a real evidence of Western hegemony and the United Nations irrelevance. He argues that the collapse of the Soviet Union actually worsened the world conditions because of the United States, Europe, and even Japan willingness to preserve their interests at any costs and that the Third World nations are paying a heavy price for the imposed globalization. Additionally Samir claims

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<sup>46</sup> See Samir, Amin biography at: <http://findarticles.com>

that human history is not determined by material realities but it is a product of social responses to those realities. Therefore the raise of ethnic chauvinism and fundamentalism is a reaction to the disastrous consequences of globalization on poor nations. He also perceives the IMF and the World Bank as the guardians of the capital and capitalists. He contends that unless each nation is given the right to choose its notion of international economic relations and its stand on global economy, the world is going toward a tragic future. Moreover he blames liberal thoughts for being the platform for the American hegemony policy. Oddly enough he credited the Europeans of changing the course and distancing themselves from the Americans vision of capitalism and its supremacy. He also contends that globalized liberal capitalism and political Islam are not in conflict but on the contrary perfectly complementary; and explains that accordingly the Western nations especially the United States knowingly supported and baked political Islam.<sup>47</sup> In any case it appears that Samir Amin also distanced himself from the Arab world issues and committed himself to the Third world encounters with development and globalization.

It is obvious that the communist and socialist Arab thinkers failed to establish themselves as a meaningful authority within Arab discourse. As a matter of fact it is not that surprising if we consider that this ideology was alien to the Arab social environment and that its Arab adepts did not make any effort to spread the concept to regular people through translations. They also failed to adapt its theories to the Arab realities which limited the access to it to the Arab intellectual elite. Thus the collapse of the Soviet Union signaled the end of any communist prospects in the Arab world.

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<sup>47</sup> Samir, Amin, "The Driftage of Modernity: The Case of Africa and the Arab World" at: <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org>

The study of Arab left showed the deep differences between its leading movements and sometimes within the same trend of thoughts. The various differences between these different schools of thoughts can be summed up by the following table.



**Table 1: The Leftist Arab thinkers: the Variation within Their Trend of Thoughts**

Issues	Secularism	West / Globalization	Unified Arab Nation	Women	Democracy	Regionalism
Thinkers						
<b>Boutros Al Boustani</b>	Yes	Open to Western culture	Yes	Full emancipation	Yes	No
<b>Amin Al Rihani</b>	Yes	Favors mutual interaction and dialogue between Eastern and Western civilization	Yes	Full emancipation	Yes	No
<b>Sati Al Hussari</b>	Yes	Favors extensive contact with Western civilization; but exclude any interaction in the area of literature and languages	Yes	Full emancipation	Favors the leadership of a charismatic leader	No
<b>Michel Aflaq</b>	He considered Islam at the heart of nationalism	Rejects any interaction with Western culture	Yes	Full emancipation	Favors the rule of the elite represented by Baath Party	No
<b>Antoin Saadah</b>	Yes	Open to Western culture and full cooperation	No	Full emancipation	Yes	Yes
<b>Shuhdi Aliya</b>	Yes	Rejects Western culture	No	Full emancipation	Marxist ideology	Marxist ideology
<b>Samir Amine</b>	Yes	Rejects globalization	Yes	Full emancipation	Yes	No

It is evident that these Arab leftists' thinkers had a very wide and diverse array of ideas.

They barely agreed on anything, corroborating the idea of rift between the different components of the Arab Left.

### **CHAPTER THREE: THE ISLAMIC REFORMISTS AND MODERNISTS ARAB THINKERS**

As mentioned in the first chapter, in the Arab World, a spectacular intellectual reformist movement in conjunction with the leftist movement followed the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the failure of the Ottoman Empire to defend itself against the Western powers at that time lead to the emergence of a secular nationalist, Mustapha Kamel “Ataturk”, as the leader of Turkey who believed strongly in the *Turkishness* of the Turkish nation and worked hard to distance it from its past as the holder of the ultimate religious and political institution within Islam: the Islamic *Kilafa*. The Arab World, that was part of the destroyed Ottoman Empire, was also disintegrating according to the plan set by the Western powers that proceeded to the splitting of the Arab land into a bunch of weak states separated by arbitrary borders.

The influence of the nationalism on the rise in Turkey and the extensive one in European countries helped shape an active nationalistic and intellectual movement in the Arab world which gave birth also to the historic reformist movement of the 19th century as mentioned above. This early reformist movement was essentially lead by a group of Islamic thinkers who were against the rigid reading of the Koran. They were also against the excessive use of controversial part of the teaching of the prophet, the *Sunna*. However these reformists still view the sources of Islam as fully compatible with modernity and development. One of its most prominent pioneers was Muhammad Abduh, an Egyptian scholar.

## Section 1: Muhammad Abduh: The Leader of the reformist movement and Arab revival

Muhammad Abduh was born in Nile Delta in 1849. He was raised in a relatively wealthy family which allowed him to have a good education, first by a private tutor and ended up in a well known religious school at that time called *Ahmadi* Mosque. In 1866 he joined the prestigious religious school *Alazhar* in Cairo where he learned about the progress made by Western nations in various fields such as: technology, sciences and social studies.

It is worth mentioning that *Alazhar* was a turning point in Muhammad Abdu's life as he became the disciple of the well known Islamic reformist and pan-Islamic thinker Jamal Eddine Al Afghani who was prone to a United Muslim World as a substitute to the fallen Ottoman Empire. As a result the two thinkers became intertwined despite their disagreement over the enactment of the *Alnahda* or renaissance as they pleased to call it. Jamal Addine Al Afghani introduced Abduh to various field of knowledge in Islamic discourse such as astronomy, logic, metaphysics, and theology. After his graduation from *Alazhar*, Abduh took a teaching job in Cairo's teachers college. Nevertheless he didn't bind himself to the academic field and his interest stretched to journalism, politics and mystic spirituality. His skills in journalism helped him secure an editor position at the Egyptian news paper *Alwaquaa Almasriyya*<sup>48</sup>.

As a vocal reformist, Abduh joined the *Urabi* revolt; these acts antagonized the authorities and led to his exile from Egypt to Lebanon in 1882. He stayed the course in Lebanon as well and took part in the creation in of its new educational system based on Islamic teaching. However he moved back to Paris to join his mentor Jamal Eddine Al

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<sup>48</sup> See Muhammad, Abduh, biography, at: <http://www.daralameer.com>

Afghani after staying only two years in Lebanon. In Paris, the two thinkers created the Arabic journal: "Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa", the Strongest Bond, that voiced the opposition to the British colonialism. Hence he was then invited to Britain where he met with officials and discussed with them many issues related to their rule in the Middle East. It is also worth noting that he returned one more time to Lebanon in 1885 where he reached to different religious groups in Beirut in order to start a dialogue between the three religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. He also created an association of distinguished intellectuals who shared his beliefs and were committed to promote tolerance, dialogue and respect between different communities in this religiously diverse society. Abduh's polyvalent education and interests opened the legal field for him; subsequently he was appointed a judge after he returned to Egypt in 1888. Moreover, his religious scholarship allowed him to become the highest religious authority in Egypt called the mufti of Egypt<sup>49</sup>.

Abduh scholarship reflected his reformist and innovative ideas within Islam. It also outlines the substantial differences between his views and Afghani's views, as Abduh was the first scholar to call for a formal separation between religion and politics in the Islamic World, while Al Afghani favored a religiously run Islamic countries unified under the banner of Islam and its teaching. Thus, Abduh called on religious scholars to open up their mind for a new reading and flexible interpretation of Islamic texts in order to understand the huge transformations of the nineteenth-century and the progresses achieved in multiple scientific fields made mainly by Western nations. He explained that Islamic teachings encourage rational thinking and that one, *Ijtihad*, which is the effort made by a scholar to reach a decision to resolve a religious issue, requires a Muslim

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<sup>49</sup> See Muhammed, Abduh, biography at: <http://www.daralameer.com>

scholar to use both his knowledge and rational to reach that decision and not stick to rigid thinking and application of religious scripts in a different world.

Abduh tried tirelessly to promote the need for a revival in this archaic society crippled with ignorance and poverty. His argument was that *Atajdid* or renovation was necessary in order for the Arabs and Muslims to prevent the ineluctable invasion of the Western civilization from completely destroying their identity. Abduh was a very pragmatic Muslim; he believed that the Koran should be the sole constitution of the Arab world. Yet, he also believed that many traditions attached to the early époque of the Islamic society were archaic and had to be sidestepped and abolished such as polygamy. In order to establish that, sweeping changes needed to take place in mentalities within their world. Accordingly, he proposed the creation of a rational political and social system based on critical thinking and free of unhelpful traditions that block Muslims from adapting the precepts of their innovative and flexible religion. Abduh tried to overcome the backwardness, dictatorship, and colonialism in the Arab world by a rational understanding of the Islamic religion.<sup>50</sup>

## Section 2: Abdurrahman Al Kawakibi: the advocate of democracy and rule of law

Abdurrahman AL Kawakibi is considered to be a leading figure in another *Anahda* movement; he actually left his full print on it and contributed hugely to the debate about liberty, rule of law and repression during that period. Al Kawakibi was born in Aleppo Syria in 1855 to a rich and well known family. His dad was a scholar who raised him to love knowledge and studies; he first went to AL Kawakibi School where he

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<sup>50</sup> Huhammad, Abduh, “ Muhammad Abduh Raed Al Islah Fi Al Asr Alhadith” “Muhammad Abduh The Leader of Reformism in Modern Time” at: <http://www.islamonline.net>

learned the Arabic language and Islamic studies. Yet he did not limit himself to such studies but instead went on to study math and sciences and mastered both Persian and Turkish and even learned French and was fluent in English. This accomplished scholar was fascinated by law and how different types of political systems can impact the nations' fate. After his graduation, he took a teaching position and became a businessman. Meanwhile, he continued his quest for a legal position and succeeded finally to become a lawyer<sup>51</sup>. His job as a lawyer allowed him to learn a great deal about the oppression and dictatorship of the Turkish regime in his country. In fact, he committed his time to defend unjustly accused people, filing many lawsuits against the Turkish authorities including the governor of Aleppo Jamil Basha and winning some of the cases. Yet, as a vocal activist and eager to denounce publicly the regime's practices he switched to journalism and created the first paper ever published in Aleppo under the name *Alchahbae* in 1878. Unfortunately, the paper was hastily closed by the authorities after the publication of only few issues. His resilience allowed him to republish another paper under the name of *Aliktadal* in 1878 only to be later closed. Furthermore, Alkawakibi's status and popularity earned him the enmity of the Turkish authorities. To retaliate, they accused him of planning the assassination of the governor of Aleppo, but the Turks were unable to sentence him because of public's pressure and released him instead. They tried to silence him by appointing him mayor of Aleppo which he refused and prosecuted him again this time for trying to kill the Sultan. He was sentenced to death; but he appealed his sentence in Lebanon and was acquitted by the Lebanese court. Nonetheless, in 1896 Al kawakibi went to Cairo to pursue his fight against the dictatorship of the Ottomans 'rule. Accordingly, he published his previously written

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<sup>51</sup> Diwanalarab. "Aderahman Al Kawakibi biography". [Http://www.diwanalarab.com](http://www.diwanalarab.com)

famous book “*Umm-Al-Qura*” the mother of towns and “*Tabae Alistibdad wa Masari al-Isti’bad*” the attendants of despotism and the destruction of subjugation<sup>52</sup>.

These two books were a turning point in Arab discourse and generated a heated debate in intellectual circles. In fact, their content was revolutionary by 19<sup>th</sup> century standards because that was the first time that despotism and dictatorship were publicly denounced as hindrance to development in the Arab world.

His book “*Oum-Al-Qura*” was actually a pseudo-conference among twenty-two representatives from many part of the Muslim world that came to identify the reasons behind the backwardness in the Islamic world and its remedies. Thus, he underlined that the reasons are political, religious and behavioral. According to him, the political reasons are: the lack of freedom in every aspect of social life such as freedom of speech and action, the lack of security and hope, the lack of justice and rule of law, the corruption of the political system by the involvement of cronies and criminals in policy making. The religious reasons include the radicalization of the religious field which favors the use of force in order to make people abide by the Islamic code and the polarization of the Islamic world into various groups and sects. It is also due to the loss of the tolerant aspect of Islam, the broad interpretation of the Koran and the Sunna, the ignorance of the religious clerics who are prone to issue wrong ruling and make people believe that religion reject science and rational thinking<sup>53</sup>. The behavioral reasons were: the widespread ignorance and lack of education, laziness and pessimistic thinking, the lack of coherent educational and adequate financial system, the absence of good citizenry and the

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<sup>52</sup> DiwanalArab. “Abdurahman, Al Kawakibi biography”<http://www.diwanalarab.com>

<sup>53</sup> Abdurahman, Al Kawakibi, “Al Aamal Alkamila” “The complete Work” Cairo, Center for Arab Unity Studies: 1970.

will to fight for what's right due to fear and cowardice. Alkawakibi went on to say that the essential and adequate remedies to all these ills are religion and science, as he believed that religion and science add and complement each other. Therefore, in his views, the Muslims should use their religion to understand the role of science and profit from it in their lives<sup>54</sup>.

Al kawakibi emphasized his views about repression in his other book "*Tabai AL Istibdad*," as he describes despotism and denounces it. He gave an extensive overview of how despotism is connected to every aspect of social life such as religion, science, wealth and education. In fact, he cited despotism and dictatorship as the devil that prevent any nation from reaching development and beating backwardness. He explained that despotism has a powerful effect on nation's mentality and kills any sentiment of compassion or goodness in any given society; as it makes people hate each other and even their country because of their loss of any form of moral dignity and sense of belonging and security. Thus, they become opportunistic, greedy and dishonest, only interested in materialistic pleasure in absence of any other alternative. He also described the despot ruler as the coward who fears his people more than they fear him. He even fears more education because educated people make him feel diminished and ridicule him. For that reason he needs to keep his people ignorant and servile because only then he can enslave and abuse them.<sup>55</sup>.

However, Al Kawakibi stressed that despotism could be eradicated and underlined the necessary steps needed for that purpose. He designed three requirements

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<sup>54</sup> Abdurahman, Al Kawakibi, "Al Aamal Alkamila" "The complete Work" Cairo, Center for Arab Unity Studies: 1970.

<sup>55</sup> Abdurahman, Al Kawakibi, "Al Aamal Akamila" "The Complete Wok" Cairo, Center for Arab Unity Studies: 1970.



in order to fight despotism: First, the nation should be resilient and willing to make sacrifices in order to fight dictatorship and just then its people deserve freedom. Second, he emphasizes the role of education and the spread of a social culture of justice, liberty and rule of law. Hence, force should not be the instrument in this fight and people should use conciliatory tone and negotiations instead of confrontation in order to reach their goal. Third, it is very important to have an alternate system ready to replace the despotic rule before its abolition which might make the regime accept the legitimate demands of the nation and liberate it.<sup>56</sup>

Al Kawakibi shaped Arab thoughts in a distinguished manner by focusing on the social issues facing the Arab world at that time and voiced his views on how to fix them. Yet, he is most accredited of being one of the first Muslims to voice secularist views about the role of religion in public life and earned him enmity among the religious circles. In fact, his denunciation of despotism was mixed with a call for a separation of religion and state. Indeed, it is worth mentioning that secularism or the separation of religion and state is a very sensitive subject in the Islamic world due to the wide belief that Islam is all about religion and state. Therefore, any allusion to that issue would generate a strong opposition and condemnation from all sides of the Islamic society.

As a result, Al Kawakibi ,who was very aware of the sensitivity of the issue, used to publish his articles on the subject under false names, for example he used the name “*Muslim hor al afkar*” the Muslim with free thoughts for his article in the Egyptian Newspaper “*Almokatim*” where he wrote that the elite has the duty to teach the mainstream people how to distinguish between religion and state and that this distinction

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<sup>56</sup> Abdurahman, Al Kawakibi, “Al Aamal Akamila” “The Complete Wok” Cairo, Center for Arab Unity Studies: 1970.

is a crucial step toward modernity. He went further in explaining how the state is supposed to take care of people's business and provides security, while religion is a private matter which incites people to act in a good way in this life in order to go to heaven in the other life. He also emphasized that Islam recognizes the freedom of religion and to voice any opposition to that by forcing Islam on others would be against the precepts of Islam. It is obvious that the storm raised by Al Kawakibi's comments was expected by him; hence he continued to publish his articles under different names to hide from his detractors who accused him of being an infidel and a traitor<sup>57</sup>.

Nevertheless, on the issue of women's emancipation, Al Kawakibi seemed to have abandoned his revolutionary and progressive message and instead adopted a more conservative tone if not more a radical one. As a response to the growing calls back then for a review of the women's status and role in the Islamic society, he presented a traditional view that perceived a decrease in woman's role and accusing her of being irresponsible, lazy and unproductive; especially women living in cities. He even claimed that this was very unfair to men and that women should participate and work harder in order to reach men level of work.

Even though Al Kawakibi favored women's education, he strongly rejected the liberation of women and said that Muslim women should avoid being mixed with men and should wear the *hijab* because it is a religious obligation. This message from Al Kawakibi was odd, vague and inconsistent with his previous reformists' social and political ideas. It remains very hard to understand Al Kawakibi rationale about women's status. Indeed, one assumption comes to mind: it might be due to his fear of retaliation

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<sup>57</sup> Abdurahman, Al Kawakibi<sup>57</sup>, "Al Aamal Akamila" "The Complete Work" Cairo, Center for Arab Unity Studies: 1970.

from some conservative segments in Arab society, thus he was very careful not to antagonize the conservative clerics by touching a very sensitive topic in traditional Arab culture which is the issue of women<sup>58</sup>. During that time another thinker emerged with a completely opposite rhetoric on this issue, his name is Kacem Amine.

### Section 3: Kacem Amine: the first feminist in the Arab world

Kacem Amine was born in Egypt in 1863 to a middle class family. He went to Egyptian schools and finished his legal education in France. During the four years spent at the University of Montpellier; he studied the French politics, society and culture. Thus he was very impressed by the extensive advances and scientific prowess of French thinkers, their knowledge and the freedom of speech they enjoyed. He also renewed his contacts with Jamaldin Al Afgani and his ideas and even became the personal translator of Muhammad Abduh in Paris. After his graduation he returned to Egypt, he voiced his support for the reformist agenda of Muhammad Abduh and started advocating his innovative ideas about freedom and development based on Arab culture. Yet, he rejected the bad traditions which are not rooted in religion.

Amine was a lawyer, later he became a prominent judge, writer and a social expert, but he stood out especially as a committed activist in social issues. Accordingly, he published many articles in the Egyptian news paper “*Almoawad*” tackling those issues. In his article, he defended social freedom in all its aspects, asked for social justice and advocated education for all, stating that education is the key to development and that an *Anahda* or renaissance could not be achieved without adequate educational system.

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<sup>58</sup> Jaberi, Muhamed. *At Turath wa Al Hadatha*. Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al Wahda al Arabia:1991

However, Kacem Amine distinguished himself from other *Anahda* thinkers by focusing on the issue of women. In fact, this thinker assigned himself to the defense of women's rights; he stated that the emancipation of women is crucial to any Islamic revival and that in the Arab world in particular archaic tradition not religion harms women and hinders any chance of development. Amine did not tackle the issue of despotism and dictatorship or the relationship between West and the Islamic world, or how to adapt the Islamic civilization to the new realities of a newly prosperous and developed Western world and barely attempted to address the issue of Arabism and Islam as he focused mainly on how to liberate women and how to make them an active part of the Arab society. The essence of his argument is that the condition of women in Arab society is the primary reason behind the endured backwardness in this part of the world and that it should be the first problem to address<sup>59</sup>.

Amine's displayed his views on women's' dire conditions and how to remedy to it. Thus, he cited many social and religious rules that are real obstacle to women's liberation such as hijab, polygamy, and even the Islamic divorce which is actually the Islamic rule that allows men to repudiate their wives at any time. He asserted that in the case of polygamy and divorce, some boundaries should be set that would stop men from abusing these privileges. Moreover, he claimed that there is nothing in the Koran that requires separation between men and women; and that women have to be free and stop being excluded from society in order to learn about life and be productive.

In any case, Amine did not present any bold ideas or revolutionary thoughts. On the contrary, he was very attached to the Islamic teachings and was aware of the impossibility of making radical changes in such a conservative society. Accordingly, he

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<sup>59</sup> See Kacem, Amine, Biography at: <http://www.arabphilosophers.com/Arabic>

asked for gradual changes within the boundaries of the Islamic teachings and was eager to remind people that Islam was actually a religion of change. In fact, Islam is the first religion to liberate women by giving them the liberty of action in managing their money and making decisions. Thus, Amine did not miss an opportunity to defend Islam, his articles and books are a great testimony of how he felt about his religion and the importance of it in his life.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, Amine stands out as the first thinker who linked the revival of Arab and Islamic civilization to women's' emancipation. His calls brought choked and angry reactions from a vast majority of the Arab society that sees it as an incitement to depravation and rejection of Islamic customs. He was also accused of being influenced by foreign culture and of being an apostate. Those assaults might have been an impediment to a great thinker who spent much of his time defending himself against them while he could focus on social changes that were badly needed at that time. Yet Amine was definitely an Arab nationalist who believed deeply in the "*Umma*" or Arab Nation, unlike the next thinker who rejected the concept of a united Arab nation for the concept of state nationalism, this thinker is the Egyptian Taha Hussein.

#### Section 4: Taha Hussein: The modernist

Taha Hussein was born in 1889 in Menia province, Egypt; His family was poor and illiterate. For this reason, he lost his sight when he was six years old due to a microbial disease and lack of medical care. Fortunately, he was able to overcome this

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<sup>60</sup> Sameer, Abou hamdan, " Kacem Amin: Jadaliat Al Alakae Bina Al Marae Wa Anahda", "Kacem Amin:Dialectic Relation Btween Woman and Renaissance" Cairo, Publishers International: 1993, PP: 50-210.

disability and went to school early in his life to learn the Koran, he then went to the famous university Alazhar where he met Mohammed Abduh and became his student and follower. Yet Taha Hussein was unhappy and frustrated with his other professors in Alazhar due to their reluctance to answer his questions, their ignorance of other cultures and the rigidity of their teaching method. He then left Alazhar and moved to the new Cairo University where he was eager to learn history, geography, Islamic civilization and languages. Although he graduated with a doctorate in Arab Literature in 1914, he managed to be part of a group of Egyptian students who were chosen to pursue their studies in France. As always, he was a brilliant student and graduated from the University of Montpellier with a bachelor's degree in classical literature and then moved to the Sorbonne University in Paris where he graduated with a doctorate in French. However, the most important person he met in France was a French lady called Suzanne who provided him with a great deal of help in this period of his life. She read to him and provided him with books written in Braille System. He ended up marrying her in 1917.

Taha Hussein moved back to Egypt and took a teaching position in the Egyptian University, he taught Greek history and the history of Arab literature. However, Taha Hussein was fired from the university after the publication of his book "*Achiir Al Jahili*" the Pre-Islamic poetry. This publication was a turning point in his life because it generated a storm of criticisms and protestations over his interpretations and views about the pre-Islamic era which led to his firing from the university. Nonetheless, he was offered a teaching position in the American University of Cairo, the position he kept until 1942 when he was appointed adviser to the minister of Knowledge and dean of the University of Alexandria until his retirement in 1944. Yet, he became a public figure

when he was nominated Minister of Knowledge in 1950. This period of his life was very productive as he worked hard to establish the rule of free education for all in Egypt which he considers it to be a right not a privilege for the rich. Ultimately, he reached his goal of making free education available for every Egyptian and made many Koranic schools switch to elementary schools. He was also credited with the creation of many Universities and graduate schools such as medical school and the school of agriculture. Furthermore, Taha Hussein was a chief editor to many Egyptians newspapers and wrote a lot of articles and a member of many cultural organizations<sup>61</sup>

As a writer Taha Hussein was a very prolific author; his works was extensive, diverse and open to other cultures. Among the most important books he wrote were “*Achiir Al Jahily*” or the “Pre-Islamic” poetry mentioned above, “*Alayam*” or “The Days” which was his biographical and famous book, “*Hadith Al Arbiha*” or the “Talk of Wednesday,” “*Aldimocratia Fi Al Islam*” or “Democracy in Islam.” Thus, in almost all his writings he was prone to promote modernization and innovations. In fact, his writing style was easy and new compared to the usual style at that time. He rejected the old approach to literature and called for a literature revival based on easy words and asked to change the ambiguous writing mode to a more comprehensible and clear one to everyone. Actually he blamed the traditionalist thinkers for the poor educational system and for the shortage in adequate teaching in public schools, graduates schools and teachers’ formation, especially teachers of Arabic language who lack a consistent knowledge of the language and stick to the traditionalist approach in teaching. Hence, he urged for a complete review and renovation of the culture, language and in almost every aspect of

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<sup>61</sup> See Taha, Hussein biography, at: <http://www.alsumereon.com>

Arab life<sup>62</sup>. This thinker was a well know scholar, for instance he was a foreign member of the French Scientific Group, a member of the Iraqi scientific group and the Italian scientific group. He was also an active member of the Arabic Language Group since 1940 and was elected president of the group in 1963 until his death in 1973.

Taha Hussein was an adept of the regionalism concept; he advocated the *Pharonism* ideology which calls for the adoption of Egyptian nationalism instead of Arab nationalism arguing that Egypt does not belong to the Arab civilization, since it has a civilization going back thousands of years in history. His rejection of Arab civilization included his denial of the existence of the Pre-Islamic Arab Poetry which is a very important component of Arab History He goes further and implies that the Koran is not a reliable source of history. Not surprisingly, Hussein was a very controversial figure among religious traditionalist; they were outraged by his interpretation of t he Arab history, rejected his ideas and even called for his prosecution for insults towards Islam and the Koran<sup>63</sup>.

Nevertheless, Hussein did not back from his rejection of Arab nationalism and his belief that Egypt needs to be free from any link to Arab civilization in order for it to reach progress and development. His message was very powerful and reached deep into Egyptian society, yet his strong support of the 1952 Egyptian revolution protected him from any prosecution from Jamal Abd Al Nasser who is a strong proponent of Arab unity and nationalism. Taha Hussein called for the adoption of the European style of governance which includes political institutions and a strong military. He also recommended the nationalization of the Suez Canal which was effectively carried out by

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<sup>62</sup> Taha, Hussein, "Ala Hamech Assirra" <http://www.4shared.com>

<sup>63</sup> Saliba, G."Al Fikr Al Ilmi Al Arabi". Tripoli. Markaz Al Dirasat Al Massihiya Al Islamia:1998



Nasser in 1956. Taha Hussein's rejection of pan-Arabism, Arab unity and his barely veiled critics of Islam are still debated in Arab intellectual circles as they disparage him over his fascination with every aspect of European culture, his personal and social life.

It is obvious that despite their shared Islamic background and values system, these modernists and Islamic reformist thinkers disagree on many issues. Their similarities and differences on some important issues can be summed up in the following table:

**Table 2: The Islamic, Reformists and moderate Thinkers: The variations within their trend of thoughts**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Secularism</b>	<b>West/ Globalization</b>	<b>Democracy</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Unified Arab Nation</b>	<b>Regionalism</b>
<b>Thinkers</b>						
<b>Muhammed Abduh</b>	Favors a separation between religion and politics	Favors a borrowing from the Western civilization in the area of technologies and sciences	Yes	A partial emancipation with access to education	Yes	No
<b>Abderahman Al kawakibi</b>	Favors a complete separation between religion and state	Favors an interaction with the Western political thoughts	Yes	Against any change in the status of Muslim women	Yes	No
<b>Kacem Amin</b>	Favors a separation between religion and state	Favors a deep interaction with the Western culture and	Yes	Favors a complete emancipation of women	Yes	NO
<b>Taha Hussein</b>	Favors a full separation between religion and states	Favors a deep interaction with Western culture	Yes	Favors a complete emancipation of women	No	Yes

## **CHAPTER FOUR: SALAFI THOUGHTS: THE RAISE OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN THE CONTEMPORARY ARAB WORLD:**

The emergence of the contemporary Islamist political movements in the Arab world constitutes a complicated and a key issue in world politics today, drawing the interest of many academicians and political pundits. In the last decades these movements gained strength and positioned themselves as a very active component in the Arab political arena. Accordingly the Islamist political parties became increasingly influential within the political establishments in their respective countries capable of exercising effective pressure on their governments both directly and indirectly. These political movements are diverse, they rely on different discourses and religious interpretations and even conflicting views of the Islamic teaching and sharia law, yet one unifying factor to all these discourses is the use of the salafi thoughts<sup>64</sup>. The Salafism concept refers to the Islamic ideology within the modern Islamic thoughts that preaches complete compliance with the prophet sayings “*Ahadith*” and a literal understanding of the Koran in addition to all the religious scripts inherited from the virtuous ancestors “*Asalaf Asaleh*”. Therefore, I will introduce the founding scholars of the three main trends in contemporary Islamic thoughts within the Arab World that could be grouped under the banner of the salafist discourse. I will start with sheik Muhammed Abdelwab the father of wahabism, followed by Hassan Al Banna the founder of the brotherhood movement, and finally Saeed Kotb the famous dissent from the Islamist brotherhood that created the violent wing of this organization.

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<sup>64</sup> Abu Zayd, N.H. *Naqd Al Kitab Al Dini*. Cairo:Sna Li Anachr: 1994

### Section 1: Muhammed Abdelwahab: The founder of Wahabism:

Muhammed Abdelwahab was born into a wealthy and respectable family in 1703 in a small town near Riyadh in the Arabian Peninsula. Since his early age he showed an eagerness to learn, he was smart, resilient and he benefited from his father's status as a judge since he taught him personally. Thus he was able to study and memorize the Koran swiftly and moved to study other aspects of Islamic scripts and laws. As expected he became an erudite in Islamic studies and decided to travel throughout the region to better his knowledge and meet with fellow scholars, rumors had it that he mastered Turkish and Farsi languages, but there is no credible evidence to support that claim<sup>65</sup>. Abdelwahab's decision to move to Mecca proved to be a turning point in his journey as he became a student of sheik Muhammed Hayat Sendi and an adept of the Hanbali School of thought. He also immersed himself in Ibn Taymiyyah's books and was seduced by his ideas regarding theology, monotheism and polytheism. The influence of Ibn Taymiyyah was very detectable in his work as he displayed his views of a reformative movement of Islamic society centered mainly on two components. The first one was the abolition of old practices attached to previous traditions that accumulated throughout the centuries that he considered to be against the precepts of Islam. The second one was the restoration of the true meaning of monotheism or the worship of one god.

Furthermore Abdelwahab denied any legitimacy to the Islamic jurisprudence with its various trends. He also called upon Muslims to reject the worship of the graves of the pious dead who are considered within the Islamic community to hold divine power, and

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<sup>65</sup> See Muhammed ,Abdelwahab, biography at: <http://www.vipxvip.org/>  
See also: <http://www.saaid.net>

declared any innovation or “*bidaa*” un-Islamic and should be disregarded. It is obvious that Abdelwhab main goal was to convince Muslims that there is only one explanation of god’s book which is a literal one. He emphasized the importance of monotheism or “*atawhid*” but at the same time he warned that monotheism alone does not make a Muslim a good believer or “*Moumin*”. Indeed he explained that there are other requirements that are synonymous of a very strict way of life, such as the prohibition of music, drawing, visiting graves, and the observation of the Islamic dress code.

Abdelwahab views constituted a turning point in the modern history of the Islamic world. His conception of Islam resembled very much the ideas of his mentor Ibn Taymia’s who was a very controversial figure in Islamic discourse after being labeled as apostate or “*Mortad*” by the majority of the Sunni clerics and scholars who rejected his line of thinking. Abdelwhab followed in his path and rejected all other schools of thought and the totality of the Islamic jurisprudence which was considered a crucial source of precedents in laws and ethics within the Sunni spectrum. His declaration that he is the only true follower of the prophet and his companions generated the same reaction reserved earlier in history to Ibn Taymia as contemporary scholars declared him apostate as well and warned against his preaching<sup>66</sup>.

Furthermore, drawing on Ibn Taymia, Abdelwahab presented many arguments among the most important ones the following:

- He claimed that Allah has a human essence which gives him a physical presence that allowed him to sit on the throne or “*AL Kursy*” he created for himself. This argument is unconceivable by the mainstream Sunni scholars who consider that Allah exists everywhere therefore he can’t have a physical and specific place.

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<sup>66</sup> Muhammed, Abdelwahab, “Kitab Atawhid”, at: <http://www.muslm.net>

- His conception of the “Jihad” issue was broad and targeted many new enemies not included before, such as the non believers including Arab societies that are not aligned with his understanding of Islamic teaching. He even included the Turkish Caliphate, the ruling power at the time, that holds the “Imama” which is the religious and legal authority to rule and be obeyed. This was a first time in the history of the Sunni Arabs and constituted a first step towards the confrontation that followed between the Arabs and the Ottomans.
- He claimed that the Shiites were unbelievers and named them the rejectionists or “*Arawafid*” meaning that they rejected the true meaning of the Islamic precepts and even went further as allowing “Jihad” against them. These claims revived and deepened an old rift between the two groups of the Islamic faith and continue to have negative repercussions on their contemporary relationship.

The terms of the Abdelwahab’s doctrine became truly problematic in the Arab world due to few historic events. The first one was the alliance between Abdelwahab and Mohamed Ibn Saud who was the founder of the first Saudi state, the latter was looking for a religious authority in order to help him fight the Ottomans and establish his own state. Mohamed succeeded in his first fight against the Ottoman Empire and other Arab tribes in neighboring countries; and was able to establish his own state. However his good fortune didn’t last long enough and was defeated by the Ottomans who used the Egyptian army for that purpose. Nevertheless Abdelwhab influence didn’t stop with the collapse of the first Saudi state it continued to be the drive behind the establishment of the second one and the third and last one which constitutes the present Saudi state.

Nowadays the Saudi kingdom is the leading force in the contemporary world behind the spread and continuity of abdelwaheb's doctrine or wahabism<sup>67</sup>.

The relationship between the Saudi rulers and the wahabi clerics that run the powerful religious institutions in the country are very ambiguous and unclear. In fact Abdelaziz Bin Abdelrahman the founder of the actual Saudi state used the military force in the name of the wahabi doctrine to justify his invasions of some parts of Arab Peninsula to form his state. However, after the establishment of the kingdom Abdeaziz turned his back on the Wahabi's on several issues: First he refused to continue the Jihad against the "nonwahabi" Muslims. Second he tried to have a good relationship with the Shiite community within his state while trying to have a strategic alliance with the British government. These steps were definitely unacceptable by most of the wahabi followers which rejected theses measures and revolted against the regime, they were violently silenced and the king was able to eliminate the violent message of jihad from the wahabi movement and turned it into a political and religious institution charged of the ultimate role of legitimizing the regime, overseeing social and religious issues and spreading the Islamic religion or "*Adawa*."<sup>68</sup>

In current Saudi kingdom wahabism is powerfully present in every aspect of life; wahabi imams lead prayers, control the education system and legislation as well as the implementation of their own interpretation of Sharia law. Furthermore, they proved to be very useful to the Saudi regime as they were always supportive of the state during a time of crisis such as the occupations of the Grand Mosque of Mecca in 1979, the attacks of 9/11 and the war on terror. The reviewing of the positions of the wahabi religious

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<sup>67</sup> Muslim. "The history of Arabia Saudia" at: <http://www.muslm.net>.

<sup>68</sup> Muslim. "The history of Arabia Saudia" at: <http://www.muslm.net>

institution showed odd records signaling an opportunistic attitude and a desire to please the Saudi rulers. For example the previous Saudi mufti Ibn Baz was known for his readiness to call the scholars who disagree with him apostates, yet he issued many politically motivated religious ruling or “fatwayi” in order to justify the Saudi regime’s political decisions under the Islamic religious and legal principal that says that necessity allows the use of the prohibited; such as the “fatwa” that was against the Palestinian Intifada, the “fatwa” that authorized the Iraq war of the 1990 after the invasion of Kuwait, and the “fatwa” that authorized the “jihad” against the Soviet in Afghanistan in the 1980.

Nevertheless in the last decades this pacification of wahabism by the Saudi rulers appears to have failed, it has become a liability and a ticking bomb threatening the country, the region, and even the entire world. In fact, the radical faction within the wahabist movement or neo-wahabism was never completely eradicated in the kingdom. As matter of fact it mushroomed into numerous extremist factions that are present in the non-adherent wahabi circles and in the official wahabi institutions, they are cosmopolite, have their own clerics who issue their own “fatawi” and have a very strained relationship with the regime that struggle to deal with them.

The confrontation between the non-state Wahabi factions and the Saudi regime is only the tip of the iceberg. The confrontation became universal after the 9/11 attacks that were perpetuated by members of the al-Qaida organization with the so called war on terrorism. Indeed Al-Qaida is the face of the hard core Wahabist who are ready to use Jihad in compliance with their belief to achieve their political goals.

## Section 2: Hassan Al Banna: The founder of the Brotherhood movement

Hassan Al Banna was born on October 17, 1906 in a Small town called Almahmoudia in the Bahira district in Egypt. His family was deeply religious thus raising him in the strict respect of the Islamic precepts and enrolled him since his childhood in Islamic schools. At an early age he was involved in many social organizations with religious connotation. These organizations had two main purposes: the first one is the promotion of good behavior among Muslims. The second one is to denounce and resist the activities of Christian missionaries who were fairly numerous at that time. Yet he left for Cairo the Egyptian capital to finish his studies in Dar Al Oloum institution. His years in Cairo were a turning point in his life as he developed his leadership skills, his vision of his duty as a Muslim, and his eagerness to spread the religion of Islam or “Adawae”. After his graduation Hassan Al Banna choose to work as an elementary teacher because he believed that education is the cradle of the Islamic revival. His job did not stop him from activism through many religiously oriented associations until 1928 when he founded his own Islamic organization the Muslim Brotherhood Movement<sup>69</sup>.

In fact, the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a very hectic time for the Islamic countries. Islamic countries were shocked by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and their land subject to occupation by non-Muslim powers. In Egypt, which was occupied by the British, the calls for independence, resistance, modernization and reforms were increasingly popular, and many organized movements with different ideologies emerged claiming to have the adequate solutions for the ills in the Arab world. As noted before, the religious and reformist movement of Jamaledin Alafghani and Mohamed Abduh was

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<sup>69</sup> See Haasan, Al Banna, biography at: <http://www.ikhwan.net>  
See also, <http://directory.maktoob.com>



part of this debate. As expected, the religious Hassan Al Banna was leaning toward their reasoning, yet he was particularly in agreement with Mohamed Rachid Reda, a disciple of Muhammed Abduh who was less open to reforms and modernity. In 1927 Al Banna participated in an organization named the Young Muslim Brotherhood only to create his own which was the Actual Muslim Brotherhood organization in 1928, followed by the Muslim sisterhood in 1933. In just a few years the Muslim Brotherhood became the most important religious organization in the Muslim world, it expanded to all Arab countries and its adherents were growing in number.

Despite its importance and its political aspect, Al Banna argued that the Muslim Brotherhood was not a political party but only an idea of how to reform and go back to the true teachings of The Islamic religion. According to him, this idea was based first on education and on step by step reformation process. He said that the first step of this process should be the reformation of the Muslim as an individual, second step the reformation of the Muslim family, the third step the reformation of the Muslim society, the next step the reformation of the Muslim government and the nation or “Umma” while the ultimate goal should be the foundation of a strong and legitimate Muslim Kilafat. The success in the realization of all these steps would translate into global leadership for the “Umma.”<sup>70</sup>

Al banna was the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood for two decades from 1928 until his death in 1949. During that time he had fought on many fronts. His political enemies stretched from the Egyptian government of Anokrachi Basha to the Egyptian political parties who feared his growing popularity such as the well known “Alwafd party”. Since, he was mainly interested in fighting the British occupation; he issued a

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<sup>70</sup> Hassan ,Al Banna, “Rasail Hassan Al Banna” ‘Hassan Al Banna letter’ at: <http://rasail.blogfa.com>

religious “Fatwa” calling on all Muslims to carry the duty of “Jihad” against colonialist powers. His followers answered his call through street manifestations and attacks against British soldiers. On the issue of Palestine, Al Banna rejected the resolution of the United Nations ordering the partition of the land of Palestine between Israelis and Palestinians, and ruled that Palestine will forever be an Arab and Islamic land. Furthermore, his bold move to enlist and send his followers to Palestine to fight Israel was the main reason behind the decision of the Egyptian government to ban the Brotherhood organization in 1948. As expected its followers refused to accept this decision and revolted against it which resulted in bloody confrontations, imprisonments and the killing of the Egyptian Prime Minister, Anokrachi Basha, by a member of the Muslim brothers association. The turmoil led to the assassination of Hassan Al Banna in very ambiguous circumstances in 1949. Hassan Al Banna was not a prolific writer, his writings were limited to few books, and the most important ones were a gathering of approximately twenty letters sent by him to different events at different occasions where he displayed his religious, social, economical, organizational, and political views. At first impression, the reader of these letters would see that Al Banna was eager to convince his audience of the conformity of his ideas with the religion of Islam in its broadness that it included both religion and state; and that nationalism is bounded by the land that Islam’ borders and its teachings. He said in his letter to the 5<sup>th</sup> conference of Muslim Brothers that he believed that Islam is a religion and way of life; it regulates every aspect of men individual’s life both on this earth and in the after death. Therefore, Islam is a faith, worship, nationality, state, spirituality, and work. Thus Islam is the Koran and the sword, referring to the peaceful aspect of Islam and its call for readiness to self defense.

Furthermore in these letters, Al Banna outlined the major aspects of the Muslim Brothers doctrine as the following:

- It is a salafi organization because it is calling for a prompt return to the true sources of Islam: the Koran and the Souna.
- It is a sunni organization because its followers are required to abide by the teaching of the prophet and his legacy.
- It is also a sufi organization because its followers should bear the same behavior as the sufists who are unsoiled by the sins, hard workers, love of human kind and good doers.
- It is also a political organization because its followers are calling for reforms within the Islamic states and a review of the relationship between the Muslim World and the rest of the world.
- It is also a sports organization because it encourages its followers to exercise and build up their bodies because a strong believer is better than a weak believer.
- It is also a cultural and educational organization because it requires from its followers to be educated in compliance with the Islamic call for education from childhood until death.
- It is also an economical organization because the duty of every Muslim is to work hard to earn money and manage it.
- It is also a social organization because its primary concern is to identify both the social ills of the Muslim society and the ways to treat them<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> Hassan ,Al Banna, “*Rasail Hassan Al Banna*” : <http://rasail.blogfa.com>

Despite Hassan Al-Banna adherence to an orthodox form of Islam, he was a pragmatic politician who believed that politics is the act of compromise. Therefore he was flexible and ready to negotiate and work closely with the authorities in order to accomplish the so much needed progress. He also tried to avoid confrontations with the regime as well as with other political parties and organizations. He realized that confrontation would not work in the case of the Arab world because of the ruthlessness and dictatorship of the regimes, and the weakness of the opposition. Hence he preferred not to antagonize the authorities and realized what can be achieved instead of revolt, rejection and subsequently impotence. The ambivalence of the Al Banna's attitude toward the regime was very obvious; it could be traced to every aspect of the relationship between Al Banna and the authorities. However this approach was very detrimental to Al Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood organizations<sup>72</sup>. Many Muslim scholars especially the wahabists and other salafist criticized the idea of Al Banna and his disciples for being contradictory and sending incongruous messages. Henceforth an overview of the legacy of Al Banna and the actual actions of the Muslim Brothers organization show that while he contended that the regime is not legitimate and that the final goal is to change it, he accepted it as a reality on the ground and allowed himself and his followers to work within the boundaries set by the authorities. This cohabitation resulted in a policy of ignorance and absence of reaction from Al Banna and his followers to some decisions that are opposed to their religious concepts. Moreover the history of this organization is full of discrepancies and unpredictability; they alternately accommodated the regime and opposed it which led to many strategically erroneous decisions, thus damaging their

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<sup>72</sup> Abu Zayd, N.H. *Naqd Al Kitab Adini*. Caro: Sina Li Al Nashr: 1994

agenda; such as their refusal to participate in Jamal Abel Nasser government arguing that the government should be 100% Islamic.

On the other hand the same ambivalence lay within the Al Banna idea about the issue of woman in Islam. Actually he was prompt to create a division of Muslim sisters only few years after he founded Muslim brothers' organization. In deed in his writing about the issue, he affirmed the important role assigned to woman in Islam which is a man's partner in life. Yet he emphasized the biological differences which gave them different roles and consequently different rights to protect everybody's rights. He acknowledged that Islam was the first religion to call for education for both man and woman. He insisted on the education of women due to their role in educating their kids and managing their household. Yet he believed that woman's role should be limited to her home and be kept outside the men's world. His argument is that the Islamic society is supposed to be divided between men and women, and that men should have their own gathering places and woman their own. He even went further to prohibit mixed schools, universities, restaurants, and all public places where women and men can be mixed with each other. He argued that the Western habits and their way of life should not be implemented in an Islamic society because it will destroy the fabric and the harmony of that society. In his view, if a Muslim woman has to work outside her home she should do so in a manner that does not violate the Islamic requirements of a good behavior. Thus Al Banna considered that Muslim women are required to wear the veil in public.<sup>73</sup> It is well established in the Arab intellectual circles that Hassan Al Banna through his Muslim Brotherhood organization had radically changed the contemporary Islamic landscape. It became the most famous and influential Islamic movement in modern times. Its

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<sup>73</sup> Alandls. *Al Mara Al Muslima ka Ma YaraHa Hassan Al Banna* at: <http://alandls81.jeeran.com>

popularity spread to every Arab country and serves as the ideological platform to many important political movement and parties who impacts the political scene in their respective countries such as Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Sudan. It also had and still has a tremendous influence in the larger Muslim world, for example its presence in Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia and others, and even within the Muslim communities in Western nations. The appeal of the Al Banna's idea might be his moderate message and conciliatory tone; although he was distressed by the disappearance of the Islamic Empire and that his final goal was the establishment of a strong Islamic Caliphate.

However, he did not support the establishment of an Islamic theocratic regime in the Arab world but said that he preferred a consultative Islamic regime instead, based on consultation or *shura* rule. Moreover he was not opposed to a constitutional parliamentary western style regime because he believed that it fits the Islamic vision of governance. Yet the most interesting finding is his position on the concept of Jihad which is definitely different from other schools of taught within the salafi discourse. He acknowledge that there is two kind of jihad, the personal jihad which should be waged against oneself in order to reach moral and spiritual purity and the external jihad that should be waged only against foreigners in case of aggression. It was a major shift from the orthodox vision of jihad by the traditional Muslim scholars who viewed jihad as duty for Muslims in order to spread their religion and to defend the land of Islam.

### Section 3: Sayed Qutb: The founder of Qutbism

Sayed Kotb was born in Asyut Egypt in 1906 and was raised with rigor in a deeply religious environment. His parents sought a religious education for him and since

his early age he showed his fervor toward knowledge. He was able to memorize the Koran when he was just a child and ended up in the prestigious Dar Al Oloum University where he graduated with a degree in literature. He was then hired by the Ministry of education and able to secure a scholarship from the Ministry to study American teaching methods in the United States. He went to the US in 1948, earned an M.A in education from the University of Northern Colorado and went back to Egypt in 1950<sup>74</sup>.

His sentiment toward the United States is perplexing. On one hand he admired the progress achieved in the areas of sciences and technologies. On the other hand, he was critical and showed disdain for the culture and social life. His sense of moral superiority is palpable throughout his writing about a society he sees as perverted and immoral. In his book “In the America I have seen”, he described his feelings and displayed his rejection of Western values and the Western way of life. Hence his trip to the States was a decisive factor in his radicalization and shaped his views about Western culture. Accordingly, his return to Egypt signaled a new start for him as he became resolute to achieve his goals of radicalized society under the banner of Islam<sup>75</sup>.

Initially he felt in harmony of thought with Hassan Al Banna and the Muslim brothers who also believed in the establishment of an Islamic state, so his first step was to join and be an active member of the organization. He immersed himself in the militancy on behalf of the organization and became the editor of its journal called “Journal of the Muslim Brothers”. In fact, Unlike Al Banna, Qutb was a very prolific writer; he started publishing articles early in his life and wrote many books on non-religious and religious topics. At that time the Egyptian monarchy was struggling to fight the growing rebellion

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<sup>74</sup> See Sayed, Qutb, Biography at: <http://www.aljazeeraatalk.net>

<sup>75</sup> See Sayed, Qutb, Biography at: <http://www.aljazeeraatalk.net>

from the nationalists, especially the so called “free officers” led by the charismatic Jamal Abdel Nasser. Despite the ideological differences the “free officers” and the Muslim brothers, they formed an alliance against the monarchy, As a prominent member of the organization, Qutub was in frequent contact with Abdel Nasser and worked together to overthrow the king who went into exile in 1952. Qutub was credited of being the one who revitalized the Islamic brotherhood organization which was experiencing numerous problems due to the assassination of its leader, Al Banna and the rise of nationalist, leftist and pan-Arabist thoughts; he stopped its marginalization and raised its popularity. However, right after he took over the regime Nasser had changed the course and marginalized his previous allies, the Muslim Brothers, and even accused them of trying to assassinate him. He had some of them including Qutub who was promptly put into jail for ten years. During his incarceration Qutub radicalized even further and worked on his book “In the Shade of the Koran” or “Fidilali Al Koran”. He was released in 1964 for a short period of time; during which he published another book called “Milestones”. Yet he returned back to jail in 1965, only to be executed in 1966.<sup>76</sup>

Unexpectedly, after his execution Qutub became more problematic for the regime as people were looking to read his books and understand his ideas. Henceforth by killing him, Nasser inadvertently gave him the stature of Shahid or martyr that his followers use until now. Furthermore, he became a well known and respected figure within the Islamic radical groups’ circles that use his ideas as a platform for their radical ideologies. Consequently he became the main salafi ideologue of our current time.

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<sup>76</sup> See Sayed, Qutub, Biography at: <http://www.aljazeeraatalk.net>



Qutb political thoughts are very clear and concise; there is no room in his mind for compromise and interpretations upon unusual circumstances. His vision of the world is very narrow, the unbelievers or non Muslims are according to him living in a state of jahilya or ignorance of god, as opposed to Muslims who hold the truth and surrender to god. Therefore true Muslims should live by god's orders in every detail of their lives because there is only one law and it is a divine law or the Koran. He rejected the use of *ijtihad* as a tool available to legal scholars in order to find circumstantial solutions to some unresolved issues, and labeled any tentative to legislate as shirk, which means the denial of the oneness of god and giving human beings access to god's power. He believed that the only option for humanity is the complete surrender to god's will and his divine law. It is very important to explore Qutb's idea about human law and regulations of a society since it will have unexpected consequences in the Arab world and in the world as a whole especially during our time with the rise of Islamic terrorism. As a matter of fact, Qutb rejects any form of human ruling; his argument is that the submission of human being to any other law aside from god's law would be a sin because it would imply that the source of the law should be worshiped as well; thus resulting in sharing the authority with god. He contended that he based his judgment on the *surat* in the Koran that says that god might forgive any sin to anyone except the sin of associating others with him (Koran). He explained that it would be hard to obey god and serve him fully if there are other laws issued by others. Furthermore he categorically rejects the concept of separation of church and state arguing that Muslims should only obey one law, *sharia* law. Qutb expanded Muslim's duties to include *adawa*, which is the effort to convert others, and this should be done with all the means possible including state abilities. He

equated obedience to state law to the ultimate surrender of freedom because to him the real freedom is in the obedience to god<sup>77</sup>.

Qutb was very explicit in denying any form of authority to any secular government due to his belief of the destructive character of non-islamic government. He also rejected the notion of a mixed government that uses religion in few areas of public life and not in others since Islamic religion is a divine system and cannot be partially adopted. He blamed western civilization for being the first to promote the *jahili* practice of separation between church and state that lead to the emergence of primitive societies. Qutb considered the fulfillment of the spiritual side of human beings crucial to their personal and social harmony, to him the material aspect of life is secondary to the spiritual one; in addition he believed that society would be destroyed when its submits to its materialistic side and primitive instinct. He denied the rationality of men arguing that man is primarily a spiritual creature and that rationality was given to him by god in order to understand, believe, and surrender to his will. Additionally he rejected pragmatism because it could lead to materialistic ends<sup>78</sup>.

On the issue of women, Qutb criticized the western societies for their treatment of women as sex symbols, he described in his writing that American society humiliates women for making them leave their principal duty which is homemaking. He contends that Muslim women not to follow in the footsteps of their American counterparts but to stick to the traditional and motherly obligations.

On the issue of jihad, Qutb sees an ongoing struggle between the west and Islam, he views jihad as an inescapable duty for Muslims. In a striking statement, he wrote that

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<sup>77</sup> Sayed, Qutb, "Fi Dilali Al Koran" "In the Shadow of the Koran", Beirut: Dar Acharq: 1982, Vol 1.

<sup>78</sup>Tariq, Al Bichri, "Sayed Qutb: Kiraa Tarikia" "A reading of History" at: <http://www.islamonline.net>

jihad is part of the Islamic faith because Islam is a social system of life, therefore Muslims are required to wage jihad to reestablish the will of god; furthermore he stated that jihad is a means to fight *jahily* or ignorant societies that block mankind's freedom. Qutb vision of jihad is primarily against the external forces, in order to free Muslims and non Muslims from their rulers who enslave them and make them unaware of the will of god. He strongly believed that when people are presented with Islamic teaching; they would react favorably and eventually convert to it. Qutb is in contrast with Al Banna on jihad as the latter believes that jihad should be waged first against oneself to gain purity and against foreign forces but only in the case of self defense or to free the land. Furthermore, Qutb idea of jihad emphasizes his notion of the world as a global nation under the banner of Islam and the complete surrender of the mankind to god after the destruction of the hostile forces. His powerful message in Milestones take him even further away from the Al Banna thinking; as he says that there is no room for negotiations or compromise with *jahili* societies and that only one will remain either Islam or *Jahilia*. Also Islam cannot tolerate a mixture between *jahilia* and Islam because Islam cannot be divided since there is only one truth and only one commander Allah, so his law or sharia should be implemented. Qutb never disavowed during his life, yet his writings suggest the emergence of two competitive ideologies within the Brotherhood organization. His radical concepts of jihad, relationship to other nations, and interpretation of the Koran are adopted by radical Islamists and used as a justification to commit terrorist acts against innocents' people<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> Tariq, Al Bichri, "Sayed Qutb: Kiraa Tarikia" "A reading of History" at: <http://www.islamonline.net>

#### Section 4: Osama Bin Laden: The Founder of Al Qaeda:

Bin Laden was born in 1957 in Riyadh to a very wealthy businessman that belonged to the inner circle of the royal family in Arabia Saudia. His parents divorced soon after his birth and his mother, who is Syrian, married another man who raised him along with four half brothers and sisters. He went to a western style school in Jeddah called Al-Thagar then to the King Abdul-Aziz University. He married a cousin from Syria at the age of seventeen.

Since his early adulthood he showed an unusual piety mixed with religious activism, unlike his true Wahabi counterparts who pretend to be apolitical, he was leaning toward the brotherhood ideology that preached the establishment of an Islamic nation. Driven by his conviction, he joined the Arab fighters in Afghanistan in 1979 to fight the soviet and free the country from communism. He was a good organizer and a good recruiter as well as he was able to recruit many Arabic young men with help provided by Western nations, Arabia Saudia and Pakistan. In 1990 the Soviet Union was defeated and Bin laden who returned to his country for a hero's welcome. Yet the first Iraq war drove a wedge between him and the royal family because he was against the presence of foreign forces on Arab land to liberate Kuwait. Subsequently, he moved to Sudan from where he was removed after being accused of conducting terrorist acts. In 1996, he went again to Afganistan to joint his partner Ayman Azawahiri, the leader of The Islamic jihad a sub organization that split from the Islamic Brotherhood and preached violence as mean to achieve the creation of an Islamic nation.

His return to Afghanistan was a decisive factor in his encounters with the Western world; since then he adopted a very aggressive tone and tactics and masterminded

numerous terrorist acts until 2001 when he commanded the most devastating terrorist act of all time on American land murdering many innocent people including many Muslims. Bin Laden never hid his goals which are: the defeat of Western forces in the Arab world including Israel and the establishment of a unified Islamic nation in the region referred to as the Umma Islamia. In this regard it is striking how these objectives are identical to Qutb's vision of an Ultimate Islamic Umma and in contrast with the Wahabi faith that prohibits the involvement of its followers in politics and promotes the focus on purifying the inner self through religious piety and prayers. Actually Bin Laden was not a religious scholar; there is no credible information on him being in any religious school such as Al Azhar institution or others, therefore it is only normal for him to draw his ideas from religiously cultured scholars such as Qutb<sup>80</sup>. However it is perplexing that he issued and still issues *fatawa* or Islamic legal rulings that are usually reserved to specialized scholars who spent many years if not decades studying the Islamic scriptures. Furthermore, this act could have very dramatic repercussions on the Islamic religious harmony and steadiness as it signals to others that the issuance of fatwa is not a complicated task requiring special expertise and that anyone can do it. Accordingly, the Islamic world has seen an increase in contradictory *fatawa* from radicals for political aims; in any case Bin Laden had not written books or scholarly articles.

Unexpectedly, the Salafi thinkers seem to have a very diverse trend of thought, their disagreements include some crucial issues that have a very big impact in the political arena of the Arab World and even the Islamic world. These various differences can be summed up in the following table.

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<sup>80</sup> See Osama Ben Laden, Biography at: <http://i-cias.com/e.o/osama>

**Table 3: The Salafist Thinkers: the variation within their trend of thoughts**

Issues	Secularism	West/ Globalization	Democracy	Women	Unified Arab nation	Regionalism
Thinkers						
<b>Muhammed Ibn Abdelwahab</b>	No	Complete rejection	No	Rejects any change in the traditional status of women in Islamic society	No	Yes
<b>Hassan Al Banna</b>	No	Favors interactions with Western culture in the area of sciences and technologies and the preservation of the authenticity of the Arab and Islamic culture	Yes	Favors a partial emancipation with access to education and emphasizes the priority of her natural role as a mother and wife	Yes	No
<b>Sayeed Qutb</b>	No	Reject any interaction with Western culture	No	Rejects any change in the status of women in Islamic society	Yes but under the Banner of the Islamic Kilafa	No
<b>Osama Ben laden</b>	No	Rejects any interaction with Western culture	No	Rejects any change in the traditional status of Women	Yes under the Banner of the Islamic Nation	No

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study of contemporary Arab Discourse revealed few interesting findings; the first one is that Arab nationalist scholarship flourished in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century due to internal and external factors. The main internal factors were: Backwardness, Illiteracy, the Ottoman Empire disintegration, poverty and social injustice. The external factors were: The spread of western liberal thoughts due to Western access to Arab society and the political vacuum left by the Ottomans who used to represent the religious legitimacy. Accordingly, growing calls for complete westernization took place at that time as well as a heated debate about the role of Islam in politics. Consequently some Arab intellectuals influenced by the rising ideology of nationalism in Europe believed that national unity is the only remedy to the ills of their homeland. They actually based their idea on the assumption that Arabs since the launch of Islam consider their Arabism part of their identity. Yet some of the first nationalist thinkers rejected religion as a unifying factor, such as Sati Al Hussari who consistently rejected the idea of Islam and insisted on the language, culture and history as the true requirements for nationalism, while others added the race factor as well. Nevertheless he neglected other important factors such as political environment and economical means and didn't give a complete platform for his Nation state.

In this regard the ideologue of the Baathist movement, Michel Aflaq was aware of the shortages of the Arab nationalist ideology as he tried to establish a new identity for the Arab societies that does not completely exclude religion from the social life. Nevertheless, since its emergence this ideology was challenged by the emergence of the

Islamist movements and the communist parties. On the other hand Jamal Abdel Nasser was able to establish a strong nationalist regime in Egypt that was quickly converted to dictatorship and started a long and bloody showdown with the Islamic brotherhood. The differences about Arab unity between the different components of nationalist movement, the baathists, nasserists and the movement of Arab nationalists, generated a rift that damaged Arab relations and encouraged the ideas of regionalism; it also impacted the moral of the masses that became disappointed and dubious about the nationalist ideology, especially after the defeat of 1967 war against Israel.

On the other side of the leftist movement, the communist parties were completely dependent of the Soviet Union on both ideological and political prospects. This dependency limited the innovations and creativity of Arab communists as they were unable to adapt an ideology that is initially against religion to a deeply religious society. Moreover, the communist 'parties were considered traitors by the majority of Arab societies because they aligned themselves with the Soviet Bloc on the issue of Palestine. As a result, this environment helped establish the Islamic identity as an alternative to the nationalist one and encouraged people to adhere to it, Yet the Islamist movements are various, their religious interpretations of Islamic principals are very different and opposite at times, and even tortuous to fit their political goals. Furthermore the absence of a stated religious authority in Islam gave an opportunity to a plethora of self claimed clerics and scholars that issue *takfiri fatwa* whenever they please. Yet the brotherhood movement is the most popular one within the field, actually its message is identical to the idea of nationalism about the unified nation but this time not on the bases of national origin but more importantly on the idea of religion. Hassan Al Banna the father of this



organization asked for a diligent return to the Islamic true principals. However he strategically accepted some liberal guidelines of democracy as necessary to the implementation of the Islamic nation, such as democracy, elections and human rights. Nevertheless there is an ambiguity of his understanding of some of the Islamic political tools such as the *shura* principal and how it should be institutionalized. Nevertheless not all Muslim Brothers agree with Al Banna, one of his followers, Sayed Qutb has a very different vision of the Islamic state, to him the state should be established by force because it is required by god. He also rejects any cooperation with the Western nations because of cultural and religious differences. On the other hand Muhammad Ablewahab founded the wahabist ideology that was supposed to be non political and strictly religious, is now providing an ideological frame for some of the most violent and extremist groups.

The Afghan war against the Soviet Union created a combination of extremists between initially different groups and led to the actual alliance between Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Aldawahiri who are trying to formulate their own vision of the Islamic nation. Although not particularly popular in the Arab world, these terrorists groups are a real hindrance to the developmental efforts of these countries due to resources wasted for security purposes. The clash of thoughts that is very perceptible in the Arab political discourse impacts the political scene in the Arab world and influences the public life in every Arab country. For that reason, the political players usually carry the message of one or more of these thinkers and sometimes elaborate on it.

On another note, there is a very noticeable absence of liberal thinkers in this part of the world; In fact liberalism in the Arab world is limited to the thinkers of Arab

renaissance or *anahda* who were not really liberals, although they were inspired by some of Western liberal concepts. Recently there are only few Arab liberal thinkers who struggle to formulate any consistent definition of their ideology, as did the Arab communists before them they are only borrowing ideas with no ability to renovate or adapt it to their surroundings.

The scene of the Arab contemporary discourse looks chaotic and even apocalyptic some times, the clash of thoughts is absolutely happening in this region; but most importantly there is a void that needs to be filled. In fact this plethora of ideologies is actually failing to truly satisfy an increasingly dubious and skeptical Arab public.

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