

# Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)

Volume 12 Issue 2, Fall 2022

ISSN(P): 2075-0943 ISSN(E): 2520-0313

Homepage: <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/JITC>



Article QR



**Title:** Islam and Nationalism in the Thought of Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani

**Author (s):** Ariff Aizuddin Azlan

**Affiliation (s):** University Teknologi MARA, Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.122.15>

**History:** Received: August 25, 2022, Revised: October 23, 2022, Accepted: November 01, 2022, Available Online: December 25, 2022

**Citation:** Azlan, Ariff Aizuddin. "Islam and nationalism in the thought of Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 12, no. 2 (2022): 212–224. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.122.15>

**Copyright:** © The Authors

**Licensing:**  This article is open access and is distributed under the terms of [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

**Conflict of Interest:** Author(s) declared no conflict of interest



A publication of

Department of Islamic Thought and Civilization, School of Social Science and Humanities,  
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

# Islam and Nationalism in the Thought of Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani

Ariff Aizuddin Azlan\*

Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

## Abstract

The dynamic of nationalism's theoretical position has facilitated the unfolding complexities throughout history; and it still triggers an intellectual debate among the contemporary scholars. Carved out as a formidable socio-political force, nationalism today stands out as a substantial brand of resistance that defies all odds. This study has employed the qualitative method of analysis to build a framework to explore the ideas and thoughts of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani pertaining to the concepts of Islam and nationalism. Furthermore, this study argued that Afghani's conception of Islam and nationalism was an effective tool in balancing the principles of modernity. In similar vein, Afghani's core ideas and its underlying values suggested some different trajectories of fundamental synthesis of the nationalism and Islam. To elucidate further, Islam is viewed as a dominant force that perpetuated the development of Afghani's comprehension on nationalism. This study culminates that Afghani's concept of nationalism-is the fundamental source of social unity that has consolidated the backbone of Islamic movement within the framework of Pan-Islamism by emphasizing the concept of unity and *ummah*.

**Keywords:** Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Nationalism, Pan-Islamism, Social-unity, Western thought

## Introduction

Nationalism is one of the critical concepts that explains the dynamic of operationalization of underlying social structure within a particular context of political regimes. According to Leon P. Baradat, nationalism is the theoretical definition of the state formation.<sup>1</sup> The gist of nationalism can be traced back to the spread of ideas particularly in the form of trade and communication activities in the European continent. It is also a form of socio-political commitment that was derived from a large number of people that constitutes the same level of cohesion and unity. Hans Kohn argues that nationalism is perceived as the position of political loyalty transferring from an individual to a group, and it is a spontaneous reflection of political movement with the sole purpose of limiting the power of regimes and dominating the state through power of the people.<sup>2</sup> Arguably, nationalism is an inevitable political force that seeks to mitigate the regime's centralization of power from being abused in the name of full-scale authoritarianism. Under dire circumstances, it was argued that the phenomenon of colonial oppression resulted in a critical synthesis of manufactured nationalism and the movement of Pan-Islamism. The former was perceived as a turning point that led to a gradual change in the course of Muslim history of oppression.

---

\*Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Ariff Aizuddin Azlan (PhD), Senior Lecturer of Political Science, Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies, University Teknologi MARA, 70300, Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, at [ariffaizuddin@uitm.edu.my](mailto:ariffaizuddin@uitm.edu.my).

<sup>1</sup>Leon P. Baradat, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1965), 9-29.

Contrary to the Western conception of nationalism which did not recognize the role of Islam, Afghani maintained that Islam as a way of life is extremely central to the understanding and the development of nationalism with special reference to Muslim *ummah* and community.

## 2. Background of the Study

Basically, not many people can be perceived as the prominent figures especially when it comes to contribution towards Nationalism and Pan-Islamism, like Jamal al Din al Afghani (1838-1897). He was regarded as the modern political thinker, and often been associated with the spiritual father of all reformists in the Muslim world during late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

The environment during his early childhood was surrounded by the era of political turmoil; and to a certain extent, the conditions of *ummah* during that time were morally impacted by the reign of Western colonial power. Under these challenging situations, Afghani stood out championing the Islamic cause by calling for a total reformation and demanding the unity and solidarity of the Muslim community, in order to stand up against the European injustice. His sudden demise in 1897, marked a turning point for Muslims to embrace the impacts of his legacy of thought. Various books and articles were written and documented for his ardent contributions in political thought.<sup>4</sup> The aim of this article is to deeply expound the contributions of Jamal al Din al Afghani especially with reference to his concept of nationalism and Pan-Islamism.

## 3. The Framework of Islam and Nationalism

In Islam, the relationship between the God's teaching and politics is profoundly clear and related. Not only that Islam stands as a way of life, but essentially it is also confined within a framework of systematic methodology that emphasizes the uniqueness of a particular set of political system. Human beings are by nature a social animal; hence they cannot simply live alone in this world. On the contrary, Western nationalism has failed to acknowledge *Tawhid* as the main source of political power and majority of scholars depreciate the concept of Islam in making a substantial argument on nationalism. Samuel P. Huntington confirms this by arguing that nationalism as a political ideology is a product of Western civilization.<sup>5</sup>

To a certain extent, the separation of religion and politics was extremely encouraged in the West, and thus has left out the role of religion especially, Islam in assessing the real-world political phenomenon of nationalism. From an academic point of view, Western universities were highly inspired by the concept of nationalism that called for the ultimate reality;<sup>6</sup> and human minds and thoughts were central to every aspect of their lives. The logical reason was the only source for motivation in their respective thinking. In fact, nationalism has long been regarded as a Western

<sup>3</sup>Abdullah Albert, *The Legacy of Sayyid Jamal al Din al Afghani* (University Microfilms, Inc, 1968), 1.

<sup>4</sup>The reasons are variety in nature. Firstly, there was lack of fist-hand material and Jamal al Din al Afghani himself was not much as a writer, and he left many writings without any reference that can be traced. Secondly, he was believed to be involved in many covert activities, which the sources were difficult to find. Thirdly, there were lots of narrations about him that largely mixed up between the facts and the fiction. *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 53.

<sup>6</sup>Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982), 7.

brand of ideology that inspired many people who seldom believe in religious values.<sup>7</sup> As a matter of fact, nationalism was promoted as part of ideology in the absence of religious interference. In nationalism, the Westerners believe that the ultimate goal was how to wrestle the power from the incumbent's regime. Some Muslim scholars vehemently rejected nationalism on the ground that it is the resemblance of glorified tribalism<sup>8</sup> which has no place in Islam.

It has been argued that politics remains central for Islam when pleasure of God was sought.<sup>9</sup> Failing to bring in God's existence into the socio-political picture, would result into a huge loss to the individual and community. What makes politics even more inseparable from Islam is due to its nature of power acquisition by positioning the *Tawhīd* as the central belief. Ambiguous elements that question God's existence must be made to disappear and any form of association (*shirk*) must be refuted by all means. All things, either living or non-living, belong to the sovereignty of Allah only and this includes political power. However, the slight difference is that human beings are endowed with mind to differentiate between right and wrong, and they are given an opportunity to decide what is good for them in terms of social and political relations. As long as the human beings keep in mind that Allah *s.w.t* had provided Holy Qur'ān as a point of reference, in determining the worldly affairs and the political tranquility can surely be obtained with His blessings.

Therefore, politics in Islam must be understood within the Qur'ānic context. Allah *s.w.t* says in Quran, "We have neglected nothing in the Book."<sup>10</sup> Besides, it has also been confirmed that Qur'ānic verses like, "And consult them in affairs"<sup>11</sup> and following are the examples of verses related to political affairs and systems:

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad *SAW*), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (*SAW*), if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.<sup>12</sup>

It has been asserted that Islam encourages human beings to seek power, but not for personal gains that might lead to authoritarianism; but rather to use it as a means to serve Allah<sup>13</sup> once the political power is secured and it can be operationalized for the greater good of *ummah*. *Tawhīd* is part of the construction of one's political identity. Being a *khilafah* or Muslim leader requires a great sense of appreciation towards his origin. One cannot truly comprehend the true meaning of political power, without fully submitting himself or herself to the divine demand.

Michael J. Sodaro suggests that Islam stands out as a political ideology that conveys a number of significant messages to the people, and it has been part of the active force in the world for a very long time.<sup>14</sup> Given its nature of experience, Islam has survived more than a century and it witnessed

<sup>7</sup>Ariff Aizuddin Azlan, "The Political Thought of Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi in the Writings of Islamization of Knowledge and Tawhid," *Journal of Islamic Social Sciences and Humanities* 25, No. 1 (2021): 189-201.

<sup>8</sup>Abdul Rashid Moten, *Political Science: An Islamic Perspective*, 78.

<sup>9</sup>Abdul Rashid Moten, "Politics: An Islamic Perspective," *Intellectual Discourse* 1, No. 1 (1993): 28-45.

<sup>10</sup>Al-An'am, 06:38.

<sup>11</sup>Al-e-Imran 3:159.

<sup>12</sup>Al-Nisa' 04:59.

<sup>13</sup>Abdul Rashid Moten, *Political Science: An Islamic Perspective* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 20.

<sup>14</sup>Michael J. Sodaro, *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 325.

the rise and fall of civilization, but was not completely written off from the religious map and its strength lies in the divine structure that yields a strong foundations for its followers. Zhongmin Liu argues that the ideologies of Islam and nationalism portrayed a complicated relationship.<sup>15</sup> Nationalism stresses the importance of modernity, while Islam ardently remains with traditions. In line with this assertion, Elizabeth Ozdalga coherently questions the opposite relationship between Islam and nationalism and she contends that nationalism cannot be restricted to the question of ethnicity, linguistic, nation-building, and the identity of culture.

But to a larger extent, it is the narrative of those power holders in a modern society frequently associated with the nomenclature of civilization.<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth offers a new insight on a competitive nationalism, in which the Islamic version of nationalism pose a major threat towards the secular form of nationalism.<sup>17</sup> When Islamic values are made possible to be instilled into the secular nationalism, and thus it creates a new framework of Islamic political movement. Gokhan Bacik makes an interesting case by arguing that nationalists and Islamist groups, even though, different in principles, but both are complementary to each other.<sup>18</sup> It could be seen that the exchange of values eventually occur under the pretext of political struggle. The prospect for a combination was also demonstrated by Tine Gade and Kamaran Palani in which they argued that Islam and nationalism inevitably fall under the category of hybridity, due to the increasing of political co-optation towards the religion.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, in order to interpret the gist of nationalism, the Islamic line of understanding must not be simply crossed. For instance, Aydin Babuna demonstrated a case study in Bosnia by arguing that the role of Islam is significant in explaining its impacts towards the process of Bosnian nation-building.<sup>20</sup> At that time, Islam was among the popular religions that helped to shape the nationalist movement. In supporting the statement, Reuel Hanks argues that Islam is a necessary element in the formation of national identity<sup>21</sup> and it can be gauged through the Islamic role of education, the strength of Islamic belief, and the political force of Islam. By combining all these factors, the force of national identity persists and strengthen the ideological orientation of Islam. Besides that, it can be argued that the turning point for Islamic nationalism, particularly in the Middle East, can be traced back from the downfall of Ottoman Empire, the rise of modern nation-states, the emergence of anti-colonial movements, which aimed at overthrowing the colonial regimes and most importantly the *salafiyya* movement initiated by Afghani and his ardent followers Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Zhongmin Li, "The Relations between Nationalism and Islam in the Middle East," *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 2, No. 1 (2008): 69-78.

<sup>16</sup>Elisabeth Ozdalga, "Islamism and Nationalism as Sister Ideologies: Reflections on the Politicization of Islam in a Longue Duree Perspective," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, No. 3 (2009): 407-423.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 407.

<sup>18</sup>Gokhan Bacik, "The Separation of Islam and Nationalism in Turkey," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17, No. 2 (2011): 140-160.

<sup>19</sup>Tine Gade, and Kamaran Palani, "The Hybridisation of Religion and Nationalism in Iraqi Kurdistan: The Case of Kurdish Islam," *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2022.2070269>

<sup>20</sup>Aydin Babuna, "The Bosnian Muslims and Albanians: Islam and Nationalism," *Nationalities Paper* 32, No. 2 (2004): 287-321.

<sup>21</sup>Reuel Hanks, "The Islamic Factor in Nationalism and Nation-Building in Uzbekistan: Causative Agent or Inhibitor?" *Nationalities Papers* 22, No. 2 (1994): 309-323.

<sup>22</sup>Zhongmin Liu, "The Relations between Nationalism and Islam in the Middle East," 71.

Claiming that Islam has no reservation in nationalism might be out of context and misleading. As a way of life, Islam dominates all aspect of human discourses. This framework suggests that the mixture of Islam and nationalism is a positive calculation and, in many instances, it can co-exist harmoniously with other religious believes. As will be exemplified later on by Afghani's experience in dealing with the political movement.

#### 4. Methodology

This is a qualitative study and descriptive in nature as it is deemed appropriate to engage with the qualitative approach for the framework of analysis pertaining to Afghani's ideas on Islam and nationalism. Jennifer Mason argues that qualitative research frequently associates with the analysis, explanation, and the building of argument in order to comprehend the context and complexities of the case study.<sup>23</sup> Besides that, one of the qualitative functions is to interpret the multi-layered meaning of social world. Therefore, in studying Afghani's thought, arguably, qualitative design offers a useful engagement of secondary sources, for instance, books and articles, and the 'holistic' approach of analysis.<sup>24</sup> In addition to this, David McNabb argues that in the field of political science, particularly in qualitative approach, the technique of library research has become common for a researcher in the field of history, inquiry, philosophy, and social theory and documents are relied heavily on the main source of data.<sup>25</sup> The arguments in this study are qualitatively constructed through the framework of thought and philosophy, and it sets out to examine human ideas in a particular theme. The results are expected to be in the form of a substantial analysis by testing the proposed argument.

Most importantly, the analysis is based on secondary data of written materials as most of Afghani's thought and political ideas can only be found in the form of published article. Therefore, the underlying significant of this qualitative style of interpreting the sources may also contributes towards a substantial understanding on Afghani's thought. By referring to the concept of Islam and nationalism, arguably, they are the foundation of the thoughts<sup>26</sup> and those concepts consistently explain the dynamic relationships between the nature of Islam and the modern creation of nationalism, as a political ideology. Furthermore, in order to strengthen the analysis, this study also makes use of the historical research approach, by scrutinizing closely at the secondary sources which were available in the library regarding Afghani's political life. This particular method had been argued as the process of uncovering the ideas of the past that have tremendously influenced the present.<sup>27</sup>

#### 5. The Position of Islam in Afghani's Thought on Nationalism

Arguably, the basis for Afghani's thought was his informal education that he received in the field of Islamic philosophy. He believed that Islamic philosophy meant something to him and it was unique in the sense that it profoundly differed from those of Western traditional philosophy, and it would be a major reference for the establishment of a well-structured Muslim society. During Afghani's time, there were two competing model of societies, Islam and the West; and in his view, the followers of Islam were disoriented and at their weakest point. Muslim-ruling lands were

<sup>23</sup>Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (London: SAGE, 2002), 3.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>David E. McNabb, *Research Methods for Political Science: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (London & New York: Routledge, 2015), 304.

<sup>26</sup>Bruce Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 16.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 210-211.

colonized the European civilizations; and the supremacy of white race and Christianity began to fill the current theme that outpaced Islam. To counter this perception, Afghani's put forth its proposal and attempted to reclaim the lost glory of Muslim nations. He relied heavily on the history of previous Islamic caliphate and their remarkable performances in establishing an Islamic form of governance and where Islam was widely recognized as a religion of tolerance and peace for a long time. From this point of view, Afghani was the eminent reformer who had utilized nationalism by incorporating Islam as the ideological muscle that mobilized the socio-political engines of Muslim community.

One of Afghani's earlier attempts was calling for the Islamic state. Even though, there is no precise verses in the Holy Qur'an that discusses about the particularity of Islamic state, but Afghani believed that the Islamic state model could be made possible by injecting some of the Qur'anic principles, and the Prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*) into it.<sup>28</sup> Manzooruddin Ahmed argues that no clear-cut concept of state can be found in Islam, but indirectly, people tend to debate about the nature of Islamic state in the form of *'ummah* and *khilafah*.<sup>29</sup> The development of Islamic state as an attractive concept gained a substantial popularity among the Muslim intellectuals. In this regard, Islamic state must be interpreted within the framework of political reflection. In addition, the practice of the caliphs during their reign after would also be taken as a prominent model in explaining the rationale of Islamic state. In supporting the argument, Ibn Taimiyah demonstrates in his book *al-Siyasah al-Sharī'ah* that Islamic government was necessary and Islam strongly demands the exercise of authority because it is one of the major religious duties that requires special attention.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, it was no surprise that Afghani's properly engineered and attempted to execute its thought on political movement by positioning Islam on the frontline. He argued that if Muslims tend to ignore the significance of political power then and it would be difficult for Islam to remain relevant; and this, in turn, would accelerate the de-Islamization of the thought and attitudes of the Muslim people.

However, Afghani also found that there was an internal threat from the Muslim circle itself, in which he perceived that a tyrant Muslim ruler could rule by the authoritarian means. Vying for power among the Muslim community was also seen as an imminent and viable threat that could facilitate colonial agenda in undermining the Muslim community.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Afghani's endgame in this colonial trapping was nationalizing the Muslim identity who were oppressed by foreign powers such as Muslims in Egypt and India. At the same time, Afghani's deep concern was the cooperation between the Muslim countries of Afghanistan and Iran. If both countries could work out their differences, it would be good for the unity of Islam, but Iran under Shah Nasir al-Din's regime had been deeply influenced by the British. Afghani's attempt at Islamic-based unity remained redundant. Moreover, his tasks on focusing the cooperation among the Muslim leaders went impasse. For instance, his proposal for the establishment of Islamic constitution and *shura*-based government did not gain popularity in Iran.<sup>32</sup> When Afghani was in Istanbul, he purposely convinced the Ottoman rulers to accept his ideas on the formation of Muslim league.<sup>33</sup> The league's proposal was to consolidate Ottoman empire in terms of international relations and as a way of promoting the Muslim nations. Despite his efforts, the sultan turned down. According to him, if a total change was to take

<sup>28</sup>Ahmed Ali Salem, "Challenging Authoritarianism, Colonialism, and Disunity: The Islamic Political Reform Movements of al-Afghani and Rida," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 21, No. 2 (2004): 25-54.

<sup>29</sup>Manzooruddin Ahmed, "Key Political Concepts in the Qur'an," *Islamic Studies* 10, No. 2 (1971): 77-102.

<sup>30</sup>Tamara Sonn, "Political Authority in Classical Islamic Thought," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 13, No. 3 (1996), 309-324.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

place, an internal structure of political system must be revamped. Unnecessary elements in political regimes that yielded no benefits to the community must be rescinded and replaced with the one that suits the Islamic guidelines.

Theoretically, Afghani understood nationalism as the total rejection of disunity among the believers, who share the same belief system. He theorized the integration between Muslim groups and nations.<sup>34</sup> Inevitably the Islamic notion of nationalism would appeal to all Muslims, if they are not segregated in the matters of religious rulings (*fiqh*); extremely obsessed with a particular religious figure; differences in school of thought like the *Sunni-Shi'i* issues and many more. If none of proactive measures were taken to preserve the cohesion then later on, the colonial opportunists would easily exploit the Muslim sentiments to their advantages. For him, the Western version of nationalism contained an inevitable flaws and shortcomings. Typically, the Westerners believed that religion and politics must be separated by all means. A Muslim scholar argues that the central focus of secularism is the originality of the non-divine in every aspect of life.<sup>35</sup> The proponents of secularism were inclined to the point of view that only human beings possess the means for political power and logical reasoning and this was the dominant choice in determining the quality of life. But Afghani totally refuted this secularist standpoint, in which he argued that Islam served as the only mechanism that connects all nationality.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, Islam was the only valid 'identification card' with definition that all human beings belong to the same category, and Afghani stressed that the solution for Muslims unity was already laid down in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. As long as the rulers observed the Islamic guidelines, they would be able to bring forth peace and political tranquility into their kingdoms. Man's political power is transient and it would not function properly without taking into account the centrality of *Tawhid*. In lieu of this, there is no argument that could support the divorce of religion and politics. Even, a Muslim thinker like Hassan al-Banna vehemently condemned the establishment of the secular regime because secularism hinders the progress of Islamization<sup>37</sup> and must not take place in the Muslim lands.

When Ahmed Ali Salem argued that Afghani's attempted to revive the Islamic civilization throughout his political reform,<sup>38</sup> he was right because Afghani firmly pointed out that religion was a basis that forms the underlying structure of civilization.<sup>39</sup> Even though, logical reasoning was often closely associated with the secular mode of Western thinking, but Afghani did not totally refute it because, the rational capacity is bestowed by God and it can be used to improve the condition of society as long as it does not transgress the religious boundaries. While for Muslims, Islamic principles are a pre-requisite for the survival of civilization; but modern civilizations nowadays profoundly integrate the advancement of science and technology as a pre-requisite. Arguably, religion is guided by the divine authority, while science is understood as the pursuit of free inquiry.<sup>40</sup> The creation of a robust civilization must include the elements of science for the purpose of changes

---

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Abdul Rashid Moten, *Political Science: An Islamic Perspective*, 6.

<sup>36</sup>Ahmad Ali Salem, "Challenging Authoritarianism, Colonialism, and Disunity: The Islamic Political Reform Movements of al-Afghani and Rida," 33.

<sup>37</sup>A. Z. Al-Abdin, "The Political Thought of Hasan Al-Banna," *Islamic Studies* 28, No. 3 (1989): 219-234.

<sup>38</sup>Ahmed Ali Salem, "Challenging Authoritarianism, Colonialism, and Disunity: The Islamic Political Reform Movements of al-Afghani and Rida," 47.

<sup>39</sup>Margaret Kohn, "Afghani on Empire, Islam, and Civilization," *Political Theory* 37, No. 3 (2009): 398-422.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 409.



and progress, but if science was blindly taken without adhering to the God's wills then it should be considered as null and void and unfit to be regarded as the Islamic civilization. Afghani opined that when the modernization took place in the nineteenth century, social environment displayed a sign of progress in terms of development, and it is not wrong for the Muslim community to borrow some of the modern elements of science so that they could fit in the purpose of consolidating the Islamic civilization inclusiveness of good governance, military, commerce, trade, and society.

Besides that, Ibn-Khaldun's work such as *Muqaddimah* had directly influenced Afghani's thought regarding the question of nation and unity. His central focus was the civilizational aspects of political dynasties and most importantly the formation of '*asabiyah*' or known as group solidarity. Arguably, in *Muqaddimah*, Islam was the dominant factor that laid down the foundation for a stable civilization.<sup>41</sup> Without Islam, the structure of civilization would not hold for a long time and would collapse from within. Within the context of Arab people, Islam was a symbol of unity that unites the Arab Muslim community. Afghani added that once a nation is positioned under a good state and the state can generate a form of socio-political specialization contributing to the functioning role of nation.<sup>42</sup> He emphasized strongly, the need to having a good education. It could be assumed that the function of knowledge is to unite, while ignorance tends to divide. For civilization to be further advanced, the sense of unity explains the whole change involving the varieties of socio-political units. The position of Afghani's thought illustrates the profound influence of Islam towards the consolidation of Islamic social order and means for challenging the colonial supremacy. Without Islam, the unity of Muslim political units and the spirit of '*asabiyah*' (solidarity) would be challenged, and remain irresponsive and apolitical to the greater cause of '*ummah*'. It would be hard to imagine the future of Islam, if the first few Caliphs after the time of Prophet (*SAW*) had no political power and military muscle. This explains why Afghani passionately developed his interests in Islam and later on converted his Islamic thought into a practical and tactical move for developing his own version of nationalism.

### 6. Afghani's Thought on Pan-Islamism

In Muslim world, the concept of Pan-Islamism emerges as a manufactured phenomenon. This leads to a theoretical question of what Pan-Islamism is? Basically, Pan-Islamism has been conceptualized as a new form of political appeal concerning some of Islamic tenets. James G. Mellon argues that Pan-Islamism is based on a specific Islamic orientation that distinguishes between a society that is Islamic and un-Islamic.<sup>43</sup> He opines that Pan-Islamism exhibits a religious-based attitude in a society that places Islam as the only source of way of life. Practically, Pan-Islamism was an indirect response to the Western ideas and political strategies that severely undermines the Muslim community. Therefore, the concept of Pan-Arab must not be loosely interpreted and confused with the Pan-Islamism, in which the former encompasses the Arab nations only, but the latter is inclusive of all Muslims people across the continents.<sup>44</sup> Within the Pan-Islam framework, citizens of different nations who embrace the same religion and submit to the oneness of God will be considered under the same roof of Islamic kinsfolk.

Fast track development in communications, technology, and transportation that took place in Europe had accelerated the colonial motivation in stepping into the war of conquest, and a new version of civilization was introduced in some part of the Muslim countries under the pretext of ambiguous setting. Besides that, an intense competition persists between the two largest civilizations

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 411.

<sup>42</sup>Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*, 69.

<sup>43</sup>James G. Mellon, "Pan-Arabism, Pan-Islamism and Inter-State Relations in the Arab World," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, No. 4 (2002): 1-15.

<sup>44</sup>Manzooruddin Ahmed, "Key Political Concepts in the Qur'ān," 80.

of Islam and Christian and Pan-Islamism was engineered for the purpose of bringing back the glory of Islam, just like the time of the prominent Caliphs used to. A scholar suggests that the term of Pan-Islamism is synonymously used with the concept of Islamic revivalism.<sup>45</sup> The emergence of Islamic revivalist was due to a socio-political oppression experienced under a secular regime. Many of the associated members of Islamic revivalism had the exposure of Western knowledge, for instance, Sayyid Qutb argued along the same line with Afghani that the West posed imminent political and social threats to the stability of Muslim community. However, the conflict between Islam and the West did not occur a decade ago, rather it had developed through centuries. Samuel P. Huntington confirmed that the Islam-West conflicts took place in the post-Cold War; and he further argued that the central theme in world politics was the interaction and clash of the Western and non-Western civilizations.<sup>46</sup> There exists a dichotomy of thought in the Muslim community itself in which one prefers to emulate a secular and liberal version of thought and the other one is inclined towards the Islamic values. This hardened the position of *ummah* in obtaining the organic version of unity that solely proclaimed *Tawhīd* as the unifying force in every aspect of life. To a certain extent, an individual Muslim is committed to the teaching of Islam, and practiced it as his way of life but in terms of politics probably he or she prefers an open interpretation that suits the current needs. In other words, this explains the position of modernity within the context of Islamic approaches towards socio-political framework. Arguably, an Islamic revivalism precisely aims for a specific methodology of the modern Islamic political struggle by combining a number of elements such as the well-structured organization, education, tangible resources and so on.

One of Afghani's significant contributions of his political thought was the establishment of Pan-Islamism. Just like the approach of Islamization, Pan-Islamism is a phenomenon of socio-political movement equal to nationalism in which different people and classes are united under Islam. In Pan-Islamism, he theoretically and practically engineered the consciousness of the Muslim people, so that they know who they were up against with and the real and visible enemy of Islam. It has been argued that Afghani critically transformed Islam from just a question of believe into a practical political ideology in obtaining grassroots support among the Muslims in opposing the Western dominance.<sup>47</sup> Arguably, the Pan-Islamism thought was a critical response towards the colonial encroachment in the other parts of the world. Afghani dissatisfaction towards the uneven playing field projected by the West had triggered him in moving forward, and sought for a thorough Islamic political solution for the restitution of *ummah*. As suggested by a scholar, Afghani's efforts in restoring the glory of Islamic state and safeguarding the sanctity of religion had resembled, more or less, the principle attitude of nationalist.<sup>48</sup>

Jacob M. Landau argues that Pan-Islam is the mixture of an ideology and movement that includes, several premises such as: the need to have a substantial authority in leading the Pan-Islam, the unity of the Muslim world and their obedience to the rightfully appointed Caliph; the readiness of sacrificing personal interests for the cause of Pan-Islam, well-established politics, economics, and military and the formation of a Muslim state in every corner of the world.<sup>49</sup> These premises are preconditioned for the success of Pan-Islam. To be brief, Afghani's concept and understanding on

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>46</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 29.

<sup>47</sup>Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 35.

<sup>48</sup>Nikki Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 130.

<sup>49</sup>Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Islam: History and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2016), 5-6.

politics seemed consistent and logical and his enthusiasm in bringing Islam into a popular movement deserves a special recognition that emphasizes the relationship between nationalism and Pan-Islam.

Due to his vast experiences via travelling, he knew exactly what was the missing link of the distorted image of Muslim community. He transcended his grievances into a holistic approach, hence, the end result of Pan-Islam is the unity of the Muslim world headed by a spiritual and political leader.<sup>50</sup> In addition, Afghani's thought on Pan-Islam was directly influenced by the Ottoman ruler of Sultan Abdul Hamid II and his writing titled *al-'Urwa al- Wuthqa* (1884) was an essential starting point of Pan-Islamism.- In analyzing the underlying reasons behind the rationalization of Afghani Pan-Islamism and perhaps it is the best to revoke Li Ruiheng's argument on the impact of Russo-Turkish War in 1877 that did not favor the Ottoman Rulers and slowly witnessed the decline of their empire.<sup>51</sup> Apparently the defeat had further motivated the Ottoman to re-strategize their approaches in the campaign against the West. With Afghani at his side, Sultan Abdul Hamid II was able to mobilize the Pan-Islam movement in obtaining the grass root support. As a well-known Muslim theorist who respectfully earned the trust of the Ottoman palace, Afghani blatantly targeted and condemned the West for the destruction of Muslim lands. In doing so, Afghani pursued a combined theory of nation state and nationalism as a guiding principles in his discourse to undermine the West.<sup>52</sup> Even though, some would perceive that Afghani was inclined to the will of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in strengthening the Ottoman's internal rulings, but clearly he did not deviate from his original plan of uniting the whole *'ummah*.

## 7. Conclusion

Ahmed Ali Salem argues that Afghani's political experiences and his targeted goals did not integrated as he had expected. In addition, Afghani's plans encounter with numerous shortcomings in which none of Islamic state was established, i.e. no Muslim land was freed from the colonial grip and the proposal for the Muslim League was not taken into account.<sup>53</sup> Even though, Afghani had addressed the serious issues that plagued the environment of Muslim community; but the grand idea was seen as too drastic to be implemented. Moreover, it was deemed unfit with the current condition of the Muslim states. However, Afghani's effort was fruitful since the significant part of his Islamic political programs invokes the ideas of unity between Islam and nationalism. After his demise, other Muslim reformers such as Rashid Rida had benefitted from Afghani's teaching and followed his style in addressing the major cause of backwardness in the Muslim world. Overall, his relentless efforts in introducing the relevance of Islam in his struggle over the identity of nationalism did not go in vain. It was believed that the Muslim community had gained a certain nationalist insight; and was well-aware about the political misconducts that could lead towards the downfall of the iron fist regimes. Arguably, Islamic form of nationalism or Pan-Islamism was perceived as the dominant vehicle, that is responsible for the dissemination of ideas of unity among the fractured society of the Muslim world. To be brief, Afghani's thought on Islam and nationalism was indeed an intellectual legacy that consolidates the Muslim's political identity.

### Conflict of Interest

Author(s) declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>51</sup>Li Ruiheng, "A Preliminary Study on the "Islamic State" Thought in Modern Islamism," *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 10, No. 4 (2016): 20-38.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>53</sup>Ahmed Ali Salem, "Challenging Authoritarianism, Colonialism, and Disunity: The Islamic Political Reform Movements of al-Afghani and Rida," 32.

## Funding Details

This research did not receive grant from any funding source or agency.

## Bibliography

- Al-Abdin, A. Z. "The Political Thought of Hasan Al-Banna." *Islamic Studies* 28, No. 3 (1989): 219-234.
- Ahmed, Manzooruddin. "Key Political Concepts in the Qur'ān." *Islamic Studies* 10, No. 2 (1971): 77-102.
- Azlan, Ariff Aizuddin. "The Political Thought of Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi in the Writings of Islamization of Knowledge and Tawhīd." *Journal of Islamic Social Sciences and Humanities* 25, No. 1 (2021): 189-201.
- Babuna, Aydin "The Bosnian Muslims and Albanians: Islam and Nationalism." *Nationalities Paper* 32, No. 2 (2004): 287-321.
- Bacik, Gokhan, "The Separation of Islam and Nationalism in Turkey." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17, No. 2 (2011): 140-160.
- Baradat, Leon P. *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988.
- Berg, Bruce. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001.
- Al-Faruqi, Ismail Raji. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*. Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982.
- Hanks, Reuel. "The Islamic Factor in Nationalism and Nation-Building in Uzbekistan: Causative Agent or Inhibitor?" *Nationalities Papers* 22, No. 2 (1994): 309-323.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.
- Keddie, Nikki R. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- . *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.
- Kohn, Hans. *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*. Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1965.
- Kohn, Margaret. "Afghani on Empire, Islam, and Civilization." *Political Theory* 37, No. 3 (2009): 398-422.
- Mason, Jennifer. *Qualitative Researching*. London: SAGE, 2002.
- McNabb, David E. *Research Methods for Political Science: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London and New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Mellon, James G. "Pan-Arabism, Pan-Islamism and Inter-State Relations in the Arab World." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, No. 4 (2002): 1-15.
- Moten, Abdul Rashid. "Politics: An Islamic Perspective." *Intellectual Discourse* 1, No. 1 (1993): 28-45.
- . *Political Science: An Islamic Perspective*. London: Macmillan Press, 1996.

- Othman, Mohammad Redzuan. "The Middle Eastern Influence on the Development of Religious and Political Thought in Malay Society 1880-1940." Ph.D. Thesis. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1994.
- Ozdalga, Elisabeth. "Islamism and Nationalism as Sister Ideologies: Reflections on the Politicization of Islam in a *Longue Duree* Perspective." *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, No. 3 (2009): 407-423.
- Ruiheng, Li. "A Preliminary Study on the "Islamic State" Thought in Modern Islamism." *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 10, No. 4 (2016): 20-38.
- Salem, Ahmed Ali "Challenging Authoritarianism, Colonialism, and Disunity: The Islamic Political Reform Movements of al-Afghani and Rida." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 21, No. 2 (2004): 25-54.
- Sonn, Tamara. "Political Authority in Classical Islamic Thought." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 13, No. 3 (1996): 309-324.