

## **Nationalism in the writings of Iqbal and Said Nursi: A Comparative study of their perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

*The Muslim scholars in the Arab world, Turkey and the Indian sub-continent had mixed responses to the ideology of nationalism, ranging broadly from rejectionist to accommodative. Some scholars responded to the theory of nationalism and its derivative terms-nation and nation state-with an accommodative approach. However, Mohammad Iqbal challenged the theory of nationalism from an Islamic perspective and rejected all of its basic principles and secular foundations. Iqbal denounces all the characteristics of nationalism that divide humanity into tribes and nations and turns into a cause of enmity and violence among them. He says that the main concept that unites all Muslims of diverse social, linguistic, ethnic, territorial, and other backgrounds into one unified community is the sense of belonging to one community, Ummah. His rejectionist approach towards secularism, materialism, western democracy, and nationalism is based upon his concept of tawhid (Unity of God). Iqbal demands loyalty to God, not to thrones. Contrary to this, Nationalism demands supreme loyalty to the nation-state. Therefore, Iqbal was fully aware of the fact that the nation-state that would emerge from the secular ideology of nationalism would clash with Islamic laws and would become an "idol" to be obeyed fully and worshiped by the people. Said Nursi, on the other hand, used the words 'nation' (Millet) and 'nationhood' (Milliyet) in accordance with their Arabic meanings. He understood nationhood akin to a body, the spirit of which is Islam and the intellect of which is the Quran and belief. Nursi believed that there were two kinds of Nationalisms- Negative and Positive. Negative Nationalism, according to him is inauspicious and deleterious, which is nourished by devouring others, persists through hostility to others, causes enmity and chaos and is fully aware of the havoc it wreaks. Positive Nationalism, on the other hand, arises from man's inner need for social cohesion and is the cause of mutual assistance and solidarity.*

The present paper has differently tried to explore the divergent discourses and narratives on nationalism. It discusses the views of Iqbal on nationalism vis-à-vis Muslim Ummah. Moreover, an endeavor has been made to evaluate Said Nursi's reflections on western civilization and the case of negative nationalism which, according to him, causes enmity, hostility and wars in a society.

**Key Words:** *Islam, Nationalism, Ummah, Secularism, Democracy*

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## Introduction

The word ‘nation’ has been used since the 13<sup>th</sup> century and derives from the Latin ‘*nasci*’ meaning ‘to be born’. In the form of nation, it referred to a group of people united by birth or birthplace. In its original sense, nation therefore implied a breed of people or a racial group but possessed no political significance. It was not until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that the term acquired political overtones, as individuals and groups started to be classified as ‘nationalists’. The term nationalism was first used in print in 1789 by the anti-Jacobin French Priest Augustin Barruel.<sup>1</sup> By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Nationalism was widely recognized as a political doctrine and a major ingredient of the revolutions that swept across Europe in 1848. The rising tide of nationalism redrew the map of Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the autocratic and multinational empires of Turkey, Austria, and Russia started to crumble in the face of liberal and nationalist pressures.<sup>2</sup> By the end of 19<sup>th</sup>-century nationalism had become a truly popular movement, with the spread of flags, national anthems, patriotic poetry and literature, public ceremonies and national holidays. Each nation claimed its own unique or superior qualities where other nations were regarded as alien, untrustworthy, even menacing. This new climate of popular nationalism helped to fuel policies of colonial expansion that intensified dramatically in the 1870’s and 1880’s and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had brought most of the world’s population under European control. It also contributed to a mood of international suspicion and rivalry, which led to the world war in 1914.

## Nationalism- Diverse Perspectives

Liberals and Conservatives have divergent views on Nationalism, the former subscribe to a civic view of the nation that places as much emphasis on political allegiance as on cultural unity whereas the latter regards the nation as primarily an organic entity bound together by a common ethnic identity and shared history. Socialists, on the other hand, tend to view the nation as an artificial division of humankind whose purpose is to disguise social injustice and prop up the established order.<sup>3</sup> Nationalism, for Marxists, is an example of ‘false consciousness, an illusion that serves to mystify and confuse the downtrodden and working classes preventing them from recognizing their genuine interests.’<sup>4</sup> The approach of

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, Third edition, p. 55

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* .p. 156

<sup>3</sup> *ibid* .p. 162

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics*, Palgrave 2011, p. 162

Poststructuralists and Postmodernists to nationalism tends to suggest that at the heart of the nationalist project is a narrative or collection of narratives.<sup>5</sup>

In the Indian subcontinent, the scholars like Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad responded to the theory of nationalism and its derivative terms *nation* and *nation-state* with an accommodative approach. Other scholars, however, such as Muhammad Iqbal and Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdoudi, challenged the theory from an Islamic perspective and contested all of its basic principles of the secular foundation.

### **Nationalism and Iqbal**

The political thought of Iqbal is deeply embedded in his broad and comprehensive Islamic conception of *tawhid*, the unity of God, the unity of life, the unity of the Ummah and the unity of humanity. His rejectionist approach towards secularism, materialism, western democracy, and nationalism is based upon his concept of *tawhid*. His philosophy of selfhood (*khudi*) and its related concepts like ‘man of belief’ (*mard-i-momin*), ‘perfect man’ (*mard-i-kamil*), and his conception of the Islamic social order and divine vicegerency are not only interrelated to each other but also are steeped in his dynamic conception of *tawhid*. Therefore, his concepts and ideas, which bear the message of *tawhid*, are contrary to the ideology of nationalism, which is rooted in secularism and materialism. He stressed that Islam is a practical means to make the principle of unity a reality in humanity’s intellectual and emotional life, and *tawhid* supplies the foundational principle of world unity. By portraying Islam as a practical means for making the principle of *tawhid* a living factor, Iqbal suggested that Islam unites and integrates all aspects of life (e.g., intellectual, emotional, social, political, etc.) into a unified whole. In other words, Islam totally disagrees with the artificial division or compartmentalization of life into ‘religious life’ and ‘worldly life.’ This unified and holistic perception of life is the exact opposite of nationalism which bifurcate life into ‘worldly’ and ‘religious’ domains.

Iqbal at several places, elaborate Islam’s unified approach to life. He writes that according to the law of Islam there is no distinction between the Church and the state. The state is not a combination of religious and secular authority, but it is a unit in which no such distinction exists.<sup>6</sup> Unlike Hegel, Iqbal did not have to make a synthesis of “reason” and

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<sup>5</sup>ibid.p.162

<sup>6</sup> Syed Abdul Vahid, ed., *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, 1992, 60-61

“spirit” in order to form a state. For him, the state by itself is spiritual because all that is secular is spiritual in Islam. He wrote: ‘The state according to Islam is only an effort to realize the spiritual in a human organization’.<sup>7</sup> The underlying purpose of the unity of matter and spirit, as well as the unity of the “religious” and “worldly” realms, is nothing but the success in this world and the Hereafter. Iqbal asserts that unlike secularism and nationalism, Islam provides a balance in life by joining matter and spirit into a harmonious union for human betterment here and in the Hereafter. Since Islam makes not much division between state and mosque, it demands ultimate loyalty to God and implies that His laws prevail in all spheres of life, including the political. Iqbal writes that Islam demands loyalty to God, not to thrones. And since God is the ultimate spiritual basis of all life, loyalty to God virtually amounts to man’s loyalty to his own ideal nature.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike Iqbal, the Western notion of nationalism demands supreme loyalty to nation-state. Since nationalism is basically secular, behind its division of life into ‘religious’ and ‘worldly’ realms lies the division of loyalty: one to state and another to God. Moreover, in the case of a clash between loyalty to God and loyalty to state, nationalism says that loyalty to state must be overriding. The rationale for such a view is that nationalism, being a political concept, demands political loyalty to state and would like to see state’s laws prevail over all other laws. Iqbal laments that in the present-day political literature the idea of nation is not merely geopolitical; it is rather a principle of human society and, as such, it is a political concept. Since Islam also is a law of human society, the word ‘country’ when used as a political concept, comes into conflict with Islam.<sup>9</sup> This clearly shows that political principles and the laws of a nation state would clash with Islamic principles and laws, because Islam would like to see its own principles and laws work and prevail in all of a society’s institutions, including political institutions. The rejectionist approach of Iqbal towards nationalism was based on his interpretation of the Qur’an and the Prophetic traditions. He was fully aware of the fact that the nation-state that would emerge from the secular ideology of nationalism would clash with Islamic law and would become an “idol” to be obeyed fully and worshiped by the people. Iqbal while castigating the hazardous effects of nationalism and disunity among Muslims mentions in Baang-i-Dara:

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<sup>7</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 155

<sup>8</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 147

<sup>9</sup> Shamloo, *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, Lahore, 1948, p. 225

“In Taza Khudaon Mein Bada Sub Se Watan Hai, Jo Pairhan Iss KaHai, Wo Mazhab Ka Kafan Hai”

“Country, is the biggest among these new gods! What is its shirt is the shroud of Deen (Religion)”

Tracing the origin of nationalism to Machiavelli’s views, Iqbal referred to him as: “that Florentine worshipper of Untruth.” He points out that Machiavelli blinded the eyes of the people and wrote a new code of guidance for rulers, thereby sowing the seeds of war and conflict.<sup>10</sup>

The main objection to nationalism on the part of Iqbal is due to its secular foundation that separates religion from the nation-state or that reduces religion to insignificance in the political sphere, is based on the Qur’an, which describes Islam as the complete system of life. The Qur’an says: “The Religion (the *din*) before Allah is Islam” (3:19). According to Sayyid Abul A‘laMawdudi, ‘Islam means complete submission to Allah, which means obeying all of His commands in all aspects of one’s life, including the political realm’.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Islam is an all-embracing order of life that provides systems and institutions for all spheres of life.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the Islamic political system is an integral part of Islam. This implies that Islam does not believe in the superficial division of life into religious and worldly realms. It also underlines the fact that separating the politics from religion, are against Islam’s unified concept of life. Quranic verses throw light on this point, as well as that Muslims should follow Islam in its entirety:

“O you who believe! Enter into Islam wholeheartedly and follow not the footsteps of the Evil One; for he is to you an avowed enemy’ (2:208) and: “If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted” (3:85).

Iqbal’s second objection to nationalism is concerned with the formation of nation-states on the basis of geographical, racial, linguistic, and such other differences. This raises two problems: superficial differences are made the criterion of nationality as well as identity for people, and the

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi, The Mysteries of Selflessness*, London: 1953, p. 134

<sup>11</sup> Sayyid Abul A‘laMawdudi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, 1983

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

Nation-states that emerge from such peculiarities demand absolute loyalty. The disapproval of nationalism on the part of Iqbal was based upon these very reasons, as well as upon the Quran:

“O mankind! Lo, We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Lo, the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo, Allah is Knower, Aware.”(49:13)

Iqbal explained these divisive and mischief-making characteristics of nationalism in the context of the Indian subcontinent and in general terms. He pointed out that if nationalism was accepted in the subcontinent, Muslims would have two wrong ways before them: “The Muslims as a nation can be other than what they are as a ‘*millat*’ and Muslims would have to forget Islam as a complete system of life.” Iqbal pointed out how the leaders of the Hindu majority community persuade Muslims to believe that religion was a private affair. Those leaders believed that Muslims should not regard themselves as a separate nation. Instead they should identify themselves with the majority. Iqbal asserted that accepting such a viewpoint would reduce Islam to the private corners of life and that this would have dangerous implications for the subcontinent’s Muslim community.<sup>13</sup> During his lifetime Iqbal realized that Indian Muslims were in a critical situation. They had lost their religious identity in a din of conflicting interpretations of Islam. The influential interpretation was that of Deobandi School who stressed the apolitical character of Islam and emphasized upon individual devotion and purity. Some Muslim leaders and organizations were associated with the Indian National Congress, led by M. K. Gandhi, in order to attain the common secular aim: independence from British rule. They held the opinion that after independence, Muslims would be able to represent themselves in the decision-making bodies and their rights would be duly protected by the secular constitution of independent India. An important organization of Muslims- *the Jamiyyat-i-Ulama-i-Hind*- held almost the same opinion. As its president, Hussain Ahmad Madani, and his supporters developed the theory of ‘united nationalism’ (*muttahid-a-qaumiyat*) as opposed to the ‘the two-nation theory’ (*do qauminazaryya*) of the Muslim League. According to Madani, the Muslims should join hands with the Hindus, since both communities regardless of their religions, belong to one homeland. ‘They should fight against the common enemy- the British’. They should unite together to expel the oppressive

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<sup>13</sup>Latif Ahmad Sherwani, *Speeches, writings and Statements of Iqbal*, compiled & ed., Iqbal Academy Lahore, 1995, p. 304

and merciless force, the British imperialism, and shatter the chains of slavery.<sup>14</sup> Another well-known scholar, Abul Kalam Azad, who initially had rejected secularism and nationalism, later made an accommodative entry and advocated the idea of a united nationhood. He also joined the Indian National Congress and was convinced that Muslims in an independent India would be fully protected.<sup>15</sup> Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, a pioneer of contemporary Islamic resurgence, was the one who refused to do so and rejected nationalism on the grounds that it is antithetical to Islam. Hence, like Iqbal and unlike Madani and Azad, Mawdudi's approach to nationalism was that of a rejectionist. He contended that 'Nationalism can take birth only from cultural nationality; and everyone who has eyes can see that the people of India do not constitute a cultural nationality.'<sup>16</sup> According to Mawdudi, Nationalism and Islam are so incompatible to each other that if one flourishes the other will decline.<sup>17</sup> Like Mawdudi, Iqbal also believed that replacing western democracy for western imperialism would not make much difference to the Muslims in the subcontinent.<sup>18</sup> Although the opinion of Iqbal was not based on communalism; rather it was based on his perception of Islam as an all-pervasive social order that accepts no division of life, unlike nationalism.<sup>19</sup> It was mainly for this reason that Iqbal proposed the formation of a separate Muslim identity in 1930. Besides his Islamic conception of life, which is contrary to nationalism, the second component of his political thought (the unity of the *ummah* and the unity of humanity, which is also based upon his concept of *tawhid*) also goes against nationalism. Therefore Iqbal stressed upon the fact that, the main concept that unites all Muslims of diverse social, linguistic, ethnic, territorial, and other backgrounds into one unified and open-ended community is the *Ummah*. He points out that 'the inner cohesion' of the Islamic *Ummah* does not lie in ethnic or geographic unity, or in the unity of language or social tradition but in the unity of the religious and political idea.<sup>20</sup>

### **Nationalism in the perspective of Said Nursi**

Said Nursi defined the words 'nation' '*millat*' and 'nationhood' in accordance with their Arabic meanings. As is well-known, the word *millat* was originally used to denote a

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<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Miyan, *Ulama-i-Haqqaur Un ke Mujahidana Karname*(The Ulema of Truth and Their Achievements), 2 vols. Delhi: 1940, p. 302

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by A. B. Rajput, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, Delhi: 1946, p. 158-59

<sup>16</sup> Mawdudi, *Nationalism and India*, 4th ed. Delhi: 1965, p. 33

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 10

<sup>18</sup> , Shamloo, *Speeches*, op. cit. 203

<sup>19</sup> Syed Abdul Wahid, ed., *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, Lahore, 1992, p. 167

<sup>20</sup> Wahid, *Thoughts*, op. cit. p. 60

religion and membership of it. Today, the word ‘*Ummah*’ is used in its place.<sup>21</sup> Said Nursi understood nationhood akin to a body, the spirit of which is Islam and the intellect of which is the Quran and belief. Nursi during the first period of his life was aware of the absolute necessity of achieving Islamic unity. Many ideological approaches were explored with a view to halting the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire. The best known of these were Turkism, Ottomanism, and Pan-Islamic unity. Ottomanism had been the official ideology of the *Tanzimat* (constitutional reforms) period, but survived only briefly during the Second Constitutional Period; the ideas most widespread among intellectuals of that time were Turkism and pan-Islamic unity, with the latter subsumed under the general notion of Westernization. It was at this point of time that Nursi first made his voice heard on the issue of pan-Islamic unity, joining those of Namik Kemal, Tevfik Fikret, Hoka Tehsin Efendi, Ali Suavi, Mohammad Abduh and Jamal ud-din Afghani. All these were controversial figures in the Islamic world because of their activism or ideas. The acceptance of these thinkers on the part of Nursi did not extend beyond their ideas on pan-Islamic unity. ‘Although their ideas on various subjects may be thought to be extreme in one or the other, they had embraced the ideal of Islamic unity wholeheartedly’.<sup>22</sup> It seems that Nursi was following contemporary currents in order to secure Islamic unity. Said Nursi worked hard throughout his life on the need to prevent the fragmentation of the Muslim world. He remarks that ‘for the strongest bond of Arab, Turk, Kurd, Albanian, Circassian and Laz, and their firmest nationhood is nothing other than Islam’.<sup>23</sup> His belief that Islamic brotherhood was a key to the whole issue of Islamic resurgence was something that should be seen primarily as a divine command rather than a means to achieve political ends.<sup>24</sup> According to Nursi, one of the obstacles to Muslim unity was the penchant among peoples of the East for aping the nations of the West. Substantiating Nursi, Hans Kohn says that Muslim countries were going through a secularization process similar to that in Europe. Nursi in various treatises reprimanded the Asian countries for their blind and inappropriate imitation of Europe and its institutions to the detriment of Muslim unity. He believed that the people of the East were becoming characterless. However, Nursi was in favour of Europe’s many democratic and humanistic

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<sup>21</sup>Celik, *Nursi and the Ideal of Islamic Unity*, p. 26

<sup>22</sup>ibid. p. 248

<sup>23</sup>Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, p. 83

<sup>24</sup>Celik, *Nursi-Ideal Islamic unity*, op. cit. p. 311-21



institutions, including constitutionalism and republicanism. What he rejected was the unqualified adoption of western ideals of materialistic and exclusivist aggressive nationalism.

Nursi believed that there were two kinds of Nationalism- Negative and Positive. Negative Nationalism, according to him is inauspicious and deleterious, which is nourished by devouring others, persists through hostility to others, causes enmity and chaos and is fully aware of the havoc it wreaks. Positive Nationalism, on the other hand, arises from man's inner need for social cohesion and is the cause of mutual assistance and solidarity. It bestows strength on those who espouse it and is a means for further strengthening of Islamic brotherhood. Nursi was a great preacher of positive nationalism and refutes the negative nationalism from the very onset. The latter which is ominous and harmful is fed through swallowing others and sustained through enmity against others. Consequently, such nationalism causes mutual antagonism and discord, which Quran and Prophet <sup>PBUH</sup> had prohibited.<sup>25</sup> Islam has forbidden the national (tribal) zealotry of the age of ignorance. The Quran is very explicit on this point:

“When non-believers set in their hearts zealotry, the tribalism of the age of ignorance, God sent down His peace and reassurance upon His Messenger and the believers, and fastened to them the word of self-restraint and God-consciousness to which they have the better right and of which they are worthy, God knows everything.” (48; 26)<sup>26</sup>

Nursi takes a dig at the pro-colonialist European officials and preachers of nationalism and see them as the conspirators against the unity of Islam. He says that Nationalism or ethnic differences have been unleashed in this century, particularly by devious European officials following the well-known principle of divide and rule. The target of this insidious assault is the Muslim world.<sup>27</sup> Nursi elaborates the ill effects of negative nationalism in a very precise way. He argues that earlier outbreaks of negative nationalism have harmed Islamic unity and the Muslim world. For example, the Umayyad's preferred Arabs in their government and so both offended other [non-Arab] Muslims and suffered many misfortunes. European nations became excessively nationalistic during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which ignited the long-standing ominous French– German enmity and caused the vastly destructive First World War. And in our own history, just as Babylon was destroyed by

<sup>25</sup>Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi, *The Letters; Epistles on Islamic Thought, Belief and Life*, Translated by Huseyin Akarsu, New Jersey, 2007, p. 337

<sup>26</sup>Al-Quran,48;26

<sup>27</sup> Nursi, *Letters*, op. cit. p. 337

internal tribal division, the beginning of the Ottoman State's second constitutional period [declared in 1908] saw the formation of many minority-based groups or societies, particularly among the Greeks and Armenians. What befell the Ottoman State consequently illustrates the harm of negative nationalism.<sup>28</sup> Nursi while regarding negative nationalism as a form of societal egoism; elaborates the calamitous outcomes of it and describes that the national or tribal conflict between Muslim communities is so great a misfortune that it is like getting bitten by a snake to avoid a mosquito. At a time when the 'European powers resemble huge dragons just waiting to attack us to satisfy their insatiable greed, our national integrity is harmed by encouraging hostility and taking sides, because of national differences, against our citizens in the eastern cities and the co-religionists among our southern neighbours'.<sup>29</sup> Nursi, while expressing the horrible repercussions of negative nationalism calls to avoid the acrimony towards the Arab Nations by alarming that there is no reason for enmity towards our southern coreligionists, from where the Qur'an's light and Islam's radiance came to us, for such national conflicts only benefit Europe. And generally, such feelings may cause enmity towards the Quran and Islam, which means treachery to all Muslims' worldly and other-worldly lives. To destroy these two worlds' cornerstones under the pretext of serving social life through nationalism or patriotism is stupidity.<sup>30</sup>

The second type of nationalism according to Said Nursi is the positive type of nationalism, which 'arises from the intrinsic requirements of social life, produces a beneficial strength; and is a means for further strengthening Islamic brotherhood.'<sup>31</sup> Moreover, from Said Nursi's viewpoint, the sentiments of positive nationalism must serve and protect Islam, it should be its arm our and citadel; it must not take the place of it.<sup>32</sup> For the reisa hundred fold brotherhood within the brother hood of Islam which persists in the Intermediate Realm and World of Eternity. However strong national brotherhood it is, it may be like a veil to it. But to establish it in place of Islamic brotherhood, as Nursi asserted, is a foolish crime like replacing the treasure of diamonds within the citadel with citadel's stones, and throwing the diamonds away. Positive nationalism bestows strength on those who espouse it and is a means for further strengthening Islamic unity. While writing about positive nationalism, Nursi points out that, to love fellow members of one's group is

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* p. 338

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* p. 338

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* p. 338

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p. 338

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* p. 338-339

necessary if brotherhood and unity are to be preserved, and remains positive so long as superiority over others is not claimed. Nursi, at every opportunity, tries to show how harmful racism and negative nationalism can be. He strove to convince his immediate audience that since time immemorial, their country had been witness to numerous migrations and demographic upheavals, with many outsiders drawn to settle there. Nursi argued that considering a particular race to be superior or giving priority to race over religion is an artificial conception that destroys harmony in society, results in inequity and injustice. Thus to construct movements and ideologies on the basis of race was not only meaningless but injurious to the health of society and extremely harmful for mankind.

For him generally, the nationalism of any kind was a secular political phenomenon which would break the Islamic bonds between Muslims. With this stance, contrary to most Western-educated intellectuals of his time and like Abul Ala Mawdoodi and Allama Iqbal, Nursi supported the idea of pan-Islamic unity, rather than western notions of nationalism.

Therefore, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi refutes Hans Kohn's 'universal sociological theory'<sup>33</sup> and draws the line of thought which was echoed by two other Islamist scholars of South Asia- Mawdoodi and Iqbal. Nursi asserted that then at ion hood of Muslims should be based on Islam and empowered by positive sentiments of nationalism. He, unlike Kohn, did not consider idea so nationalism to be a characteristic feature of transition from medieval to modern forms of organization. Instead, Nationalism for him was a universal phenomenon, not particular to specific period or place. In this sense, it existed throughout human history. The fact is substantiated by his famous sermon delivered at the historic Umayya dmosque in Damascus in 1911, where he again called upon the Muslim nations to be united around their religious identity. He repeatedly insisted that nationhood of Muslims is the only one, i.e., Islamic nationhood, and Muslims, in order to with stand the European domination and divisive influence of negative nationalist movements, should be united around this common nationhood.<sup>34</sup>

Nursi's main contribution to the subject was his separation of nationalistic sentiments in to two types or levels- positive and negative. He observed that the bond between the masses in the Western political system was based on racialism or negative type of nationalism,

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<sup>33</sup>Hans Kohn, *Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East*, p.18

<sup>34</sup>Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, quoted in A. Davutoglu, "Bediuzzaman and the Politics of the Islamic World."

ideology, which, instead of promoting equality and justice, breeds enmity and wars in a society. Therefore, he consider edit as an extremely harmful idea for the entire mankind, leading it to annihilation. Nursi believed that unity, harmony, accord and solid arityamong members made their society able to function in accordance with justice and progress. Therefore, Nursi held Islam and its principles as eternal and permanent power, while ideas of negative national is mandracism were astemporarily unstable sickness. Said Nursi lived in an age when materialism was at its peak and many crazed after communism and the world was in great crisis. In that critical period, he pointed people to the source of belief and inculcated in them a strong hope for a collective restoration of mankind from the bondage of crude materialism. At a time when science and philosophy were used to mislead young generations into atheism and nihilism, and at a time when nationalism was the rallying cry to expand ethnic, civil and nationalist wars, Nursi strove for the overall revival of a whole people, breathing into their minds and spirits whatever was taught in the institutions of both modern and traditional education and of spiritual training.<sup>35</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Nationalism, which is regarded as one of the oldest and most powerful ideologies had a great impact on humanity for the past few centuries. On the one hand, many writers, philosophers and researchers argued that millions of people have been killed, resources plundered, and humanity has been shattered in the name of nationalism. On the other hand, some would argue that nationalism was a binding ideology which gave stability to the territorial fragmented fiefdoms and made them into stable nation-states welded by the energized sentiments of nationalism. Nationalism, which emerged and spread in the West with jingoistic characteristics, also penetrated the Muslim Ummah. It divided them on various ethnic, linguistic, political or geographical lines. These considerations became the basis of nationalism. Hence the unity of Ummah which had a single determinant- faith (Islam)- became insignificant. The arbitrary division of Muslim countries in more than two dozen nations is a stark example of this venomous creed.

Iqbal and Nursi were pained to witness the disunity among Muslims and their attraction for Western secular ways of life. The writings of Iqbal suggest that as long as the nation-state continues to be secular, the clash of loyalty seems destined to continue. Iqbal has

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<sup>35</sup> Nursi, *Risale-i Nur Collection*, op. cit. p. viii

stressed upon, for this very reason, the need to make the Shariah supreme in any Islamic political entity and the necessity to reestablish Divine vicegerency to raise the Ummah above ethnocentric and nationalistic differences.

Similarly, Said Nursi's ideas have been axiomatic throughout. The recent turmoil across the globe vindicates the everlasting validity of his ideas for a prosperous and peaceful world. The horrific events of Nazi Germany, the atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda, mass scale persecutions in the Stalinist Russia and Maoist China would not have occurred if the calls of Mohammad Iqbal and Said Nursi had been adhered to. Of late, nations have realized that the narrowly conceived negative nationalism not only increases the chances of irrational conflicts among them but also comes in the way of cementing peoples' ties across the nations on cosmopolitan lines. Said Nursi had been more than prescient in understanding the menacing impact of violent negative 'nationalism' that actually proved the main cause for disastrous wars fought in the twentieth century. At a time when European values, sense of justice and philosophies were looked at with awe and appreciation by the people of the Orient, Mohammad Iqbal and Said Nursi revived interest in the core Islamic values of peace and progressive civilization. When the erstwhile seat of Caliphate was occupied by apologetic secular Muslim leaders immersed in European secularism, Nursi strove to reorganize the *Ummah* on Islamic lines through peaceful means. Working against all odds, Nursi endeavoured that negative nationalism characterized by narrow national prejudices do not take roots in the Turkish society post dissolution of the Caliphate, and therefore contributed tremendously in the inculcation of a political culture rooted in Islamic tradition. In the times of post-nationalism and globalization world is increasingly looking towards inclusive, pacifist and accommodative approaches to address the pressing issues of global peace and security, environment protection and fairness. In these circumstances the ideas of Mohammad Iqbal and Said Nursi become not only relevant but necessary as well.

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