

## The British Empire and the Muslim World

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By the 1920s the British Empire embraced substantially more than half the Muslim peoples of the world. For much of the twentieth century Britain was the greatest influence over their development. Imperial security in large part dictated which territories of former Muslim empires or petty Muslim states the British came to rule. Imperial interests in combination with those of rival empires and local forces dictated precisely, and sometimes not so precisely, where the boundaries of new states were to fall. By the same token they dictated which peoples would have to learn to live together, or not as the case may be, in the increasingly demanding environments of the modern economy and modern state. Imperial techniques of government shaped the developing politics of these dependencies, often leaving major legacies to the years when the British had gone. The British Empire was the context in which many Muslims experienced the transition to modernity.

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At the beginning of the assertion of British power in the eighteenth century what has been termed the Islamic world system was almost at an end. Long-distance trade, a shared body of knowledge, a common legal system, and a common language of learning had linked peoples from Africa's Atlantic coast through to Central and South Asia. As time went on their influence had reached to the China Sea and island South-East Asia. According

to the pattern of commerce and the play of power great entrepot cities flourished from time to time in West Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean - Baghdad, Cairo, Istanbul, Isfahan. Ibn Battuta, the fourteenth-century Moroccan traveller, who spent twenty-four years journeying through this world visiting the territories of over forty modern Muslim states and finding employment as a judge, attests to the reality of this system. So, too, do those eighteenth-century scholars whose pilgrimages to Mecca were made from places as far afield as Timbuctu, Sinkiang, and Sumatra.

By the late eighteenth century the great empires which had dominated the Muslim world since the early sixteenth century were either dead or dying. The Safavid was long gone, having crumbled in an afternoon before a whiff of Afghan tribal power; the Mughal was reduced to a few villages around Delhi; the Ottoman was on the retreat but still held authority over much of the Balkans, West Asia, and North Africa. The Muslim world, however, was not in decline. Recent research has been at pains to emphasize the significant economic and political changes that were taking place in some areas: the growth of revenue farming, the spread of commercial agriculture, the rise of provincial elites and the regionalization of power.(1) Side by side with these changes there was also a religious renewal of quite extraordinary vitality. It was expressed in jihad movements which touched almost every Muslim land. This spirit continued with vigour into the period of British Empire. Some of its manifestations revealed state-making capacity as in the Wahhabi movement which underpinned Saudi power in Arabia, the jihad which led to the caliphate of Sokoto in West Africa and that which led to the Mahdist state in the Sudan. Other manifestations came in response to the fact of British rule, such as the Islamic reformist movement of Deoband in nineteenth-century India or the Islamic 'fundamentalist' movement of the Muslim Brotherhood in twentieth-century Egypt.

The first major step towards British Empire in the Muslim

world came in 1765 when the East India Company received from the Mughal emperor the right to raise revenue and administer justice in the rich province of Bengal. Subsequent major steps were the final defeat of Tipu Sultan, the last significant Muslim power in India, at Seringapatam in 1799, and the defeat of the French at Acre in the same year, which secured British command of the eastern Mediterranean. From these first steps British power expanded through the Muslim world, the process gaining great pace between the 1880s and the end of the First World War, when it reached from West Africa through the central Islamic lands to South-East Asia. In every area the strategic and sometimes the economic needs of empire combined with local forces to carve the shapes of modern Muslim states, and modern states in which Muslims live, out of former Muslim empires, caliphates, sultanates, and sheikhdoms.

In West Africa, British rule, along with that of the French, transformed the situation of Muslim peoples. Up to the end of the nineteenth century the savannah region to the south of the Sahara had been host to a series of Muslim empires and states which were expanding to the south and the west. They had participated in the long-distance trade across the desert in slaves, salt, and gold and some had been noted both for their wealth and their learning. British rule transferred the focus of economic effort towards the coast where Africans became involved in the production of cash crops - palm oil, cocoa, rubber - for export. Muslim peoples occupied the backlands of the new British colonies of Sierra Leone (1891), Gold Coast (1896), and Nigeria (1900). In the last-mentioned, which was by far the largest and most important, the

Hausa Muslims of the north, who had peopled the Fulani caliphate of Sokoto, were thrust together from 1914 in one colony with people from the central and southern regions whose religions and traditions were different.

In the Nile valley British economic interests, stemming from the development of Egypt's cotton production under the Khedival regime, and her strategic interests, stemming from Egypt's control of the Suez canal, led to the occupation of the country in 1882. Officially declared a protectorate soon after the outbreak of war in 1914 mass opposition to British rule from 1919 had led to a qualified independence in 1922 in which Egyptians regained control of their internal affairs but Britain retained control of foreign policy, the army, and the canal. The security of Egypt, however, was closely bound up with the control of the upper Nile valley, the Sudan, where in 1881 the Sufi shaykh, Muhammad Ahmad, had led a rising against Egyptian rule and established the Mahdist state. This had been conquered by an Anglo-Egyptian army in 1898 leading to the formation of an Anglo-Egyptian condominium in 1899. From the early 1920s the condominium became no more than fiction as the British, with Sudanese support, took the administration entirely into their hands. In the nineteenth century both the Egyptians and the Mahdists had had difficulty in imposing their authority over the non-Muslims who lived south of the tenth parallel. British power now held the southern peoples firmly within a Sudanese framework.

In East Africa security had led to the British presence in Somalia which was divided up with the Italians and the French in the late nineteenth century. Little had been done for the tribes

of the region apart from resisting Muhammad `Abd Allah who from 1899 to 1920 waged a jihad against the British. Muslim communities were established in all the British colonies of the region. Notable was the sultanate of Zanzibar which became a protectorate in 1870, while in Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika there were Muslim communities formed initially from the Swahili-speaking peoples who during the nineteenth century had been pressing inland from the coast. Through East Africa from Uganda to the Dominion of South Africa there were also Muslims of Indian origin, not least among them the Nizari Isma`ili followers of the Aga Khan, whose migration the British had encouraged to assist in developing the resources of the region.

In West Asia, protecting British routes to the East, managing the former Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire, and trying to honour the conflicting understandings reached with Arabs, Zionists and the French during the First World War led to the formation of three new states, all of which were held in trust for the League of Nations. There was Iraq whose boundaries to the west and south had no rationale in nature. To the north the British had insisted in adding the province Mosul from the French sphere of influence - a mixed blessing bringing on the one hand a mountainous barrier and eventually oil, but on the other hand a large population of discontented Kurds. Indeed, Iraq was a patchwork of possible identities with Kurds and Turks as well as Arabs, with Jews and Christians as well as Shia and Sunni Muslims, plus a host of tribal groupings. In 1921 the Hashemite prince, Faysal, was established as King to compensate for the loss of his Arab state based on Damascus to the French. There

was Palestine, which was carved out of three separate Ottoman districts and which for nearly two thousand years had been little more than a geographical expression. Here the British had agreed to provide the framework within which Zionists could establish for themselves a 'national home', an ambition which was likely to mean some cost to the eighty per cent of the population which was Muslim and the ten per cent which was Christian. The third new state was Transjordan which had even less basis than the other two, as it embraced no administrative region, specific people or historical memory. Originally intended as part of Palestine, it became a separate state when in 1921 the British permitted 'Abd Allah the brother of Faysal to establish a government there in part to satisfy his ambition and in part to settle the region.

In the Arabian peninsula Britain's interests were primarily strategic involving control of the coastline and the routes to India. In the Aden protectorates the British policed the region from Aden itself while curbing the ambitions of the Zaydi Imams who wished to reimpose the authority of the North Yemen over the sultanates to the south. Further along the southern Arabian shore the Bu Sa`idi sultans of Muscat and Oman ruled with the help of British advisers. In the Gulf the sheikhdoms of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Trucial Oman had all concluded treaties with the British in the nineteenth century and existed underneath the umbrella of British power. In each city state government was a family business, their revenues were slight, and the British intervened only when necessary. Their boundaries, moreover, in the desert world where men exercised authority over men and not land, remained ill-defined.

In India British relationships with Muslims did not seem to involve statemaking. Nearly half of all the Muslims ruled by the British were to be found in the subcontinent, some eighty million, yet Indian Muslims were less than thirty per cent of the population of the region. Equally Muslims as a whole, as far as they considered such matters, did not seem interested in a separate political existence, which was hardly surprising as they were greatly divided by language, background, and economic condition. However, there were aspects of Muslim politics and British policies which could point in this direction. Muslims in northern India with British encouragement had been concerned to focus their energies on the educational initiatives centred on Aligarh college. This had provided the platform for the formation of an All-India Muslim League whose demands, for separate electorates for Muslims and extra representation where they were politically important, the British had been willing to include in both the Morley-Minto constitutional reforms of 1909 and those of Montagu-Chelmsford in 1919. By the 1920s, however, Muslim separatism was a weak force in Indian politics, giving little hint of statemaking potential. Nevertheless, a Muslim platform existed for those who wished to make use of it.

In Malaya between 1874 and 1914 the British had brought nine Malay sultanates and three Straits settlements under their government. The aim was to create the optimum conditions for the rapid economic and commercial development of the land in commodities such as sugar, coffee, rubber, and tin. At the same time they aimed to foster the advancement of the Malay people within the traditional framework of Malay Muslim society. It was

a policy which gave the Malay Muslims the political realm, or at least its outward forms; the only area in which the sultans exercised effective power was in that of Islam where they took the opportunity to develop the centralised administration of religious affairs. On the other hand, immigrants, in large part Chinese, held the dynamic economic realm. There was a rapid change in the ethnic balance of the population, which by the late 1920s stood at thirty-nine per cent Chinese and just under forty-five per cent Malay.

In addition to the many areas in which British power was to be directly involved in nurturing modern states which were to be wholly or in part Muslim, there were others whose modern shape was the result either of British influence or of attempts to resist it. Arguably the existence of Iran owed much to the determination of Britain throughout the nineteenth century to preserve the country's independence and to hold back the advance of Russian power towards India. It was ironical that Britain's refusal to protect the Caspian province of Gilan from Bolshevik invasion in May 1920 led to the repudiation of the Anglo-Iranian agreement of 1919, which had been her attempt to assert hegemony over the land. By the early 1920s a new model army under Riza Khan was crushing regional revolts and making sure that the oil-rich province of Arabistan (Khuzistan) acknowledged the authority of Teheran rather than that of Britain.

In the case of Turkey it was primarily British power which had driven the Ottoman armies back through Syria to the Taurus mountains where the 1918 armistice line formed the boundary of the new state. Elsewhere British attempts, along with French and

American support, to fight Turkish nationalism by supporting Greek ambitions in western Anatolia, had come to grief when Ataturk's armies drove the Greeks into the sea. The Treaty of Lausanne recognised Turkey's frontiers as they were at the 1918 armistice.

In central Arabia the British had initially thought of using the father of the Hashemite princes `Abd Allah and Faysal, Sharif Husayn of Mecca, as their agent of control. But then they stepped back and wisely allowed the local leaders to fight for supremacy. The victor was `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Sa`ud the founder of the twentieth-century incarnation of the Sa`udi state. British power settled the ultimate boundaries of this state, as it established the frontiers of Transjordan, Iraq, and Kuwait in the 1920s: resisted Saudi attempts to incorporate the Yemen in the 1930s: and their ambitions in the Buraimi Oasis in the 1950s.

The expansion of British power had by the 1920s come to establish, or play a part in establishing, both many states of the modern Muslim world and states in which Muslim political interests might have a significant role to play. Even in the 1920s it is possible to discern potential areas of stress: in Nigeria and the Sudan there was potential for conflict between the Muslim north and the Christian or animist south; on the east coast of Africa and in the Malay states there was potential for conflict between indigenous peoples and economic immigrants; in Iraq the Kurds were already refusing to acknowledge the authority of Baghdad; in Palestine Arabs had already rioted against the Zionist presence; in India Muslim separatism, it is true, was weak, but the Muslim political platform was there to be used and

Muslims themselves offered meagre support for Indian nationalism. There were many faultlines. Whether these became open cracks or sulphurous craters would depend both on factors outside Britain's control and on how Britain ruled her Muslim peoples.

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British policies in the Muslim dependencies shaped their political development. These were in part dependent on cost, and given the limited resources of many territories this had to be low, in part dependent on those nostrums which found favour with officialdom, and in part dependent on British attitudes to the Muslim world. To these attitudes we now turn.

The British came to the Muslim world with attitudes formed by the rhetoric of Europe's long encounter with Islam. There was the Christian polemic against Islam with its accusations that Muhammad was an impostor, that his faith was spread by violence, that it endorsed sexual freedom on earth and promised sensual bliss in heaven. These accusations were sustained by nineteenth-century missionaries who added to them issues such as the position of women and the existence of slavery. There was memory of the crusades which influenced many a British speech regarding the Ottoman empire down to 1920 and doubtless the odd decision such as Lloyd George's determination in that year to join France and the USA in letting the Greeks loose in Asia Minor. There was a religious romanticism which gave a special meaning, for some at least, to events such as the capture of Jerusalem in 1917 and the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine.

On the other hand, there was the Enlightenment response to the Muslim world in which it became a marvellous store of opportunities not just to test Christian certainties but also to let the imagination roam. Galland's translation of the Arabian

Nights in 1704, alongside growing numbers of travellers' tales, whetted the appetite for caliphs, genies, lamps, and fabulous happenings. The taste was developed by writers and musicians, poets and painters, reaching one of its apogees in the early decades of the twentieth century in the poetry of that unsuccessful member of the Levant consular service, James Elroy Flecker, and the films of Rudolf Valentino. Great were the possibilities of flowing robes and Muslim headgear whether it was Cambridge undergraduates hoaxing the civic authorities that they were the Uncle of the Sultan of Zanzibar and his entourage in 1905 (2) or T. E. Lawrence playing out his fantasies in the Arabian desert in the First World War. Amongst the problems of this exotic essence with which things Muslims were bestowed was the fact that it made Muslims seem more different, and perhaps less able to accept change, than was in fact the case.

Against this background British understandings of the Muslims they ruled were developed. One which was widespread in India and Africa in the late nineteenth century was that Muslims were fanatics, prone to holy war against non-Muslims, and therefore difficult to reconcile to British rule. This view had its origins in the various jihad movements, which the British encountered in early nineteenth century India, it was kept alive by the Mutiny rebellion, which was considered, wrongly, to be a Muslim conspiracy, and it was not laid to rest by W. W. Hunter's famous tract *The Indian Musalmans* written in answer to the Viceroy's question 'Are the Indian Muslims bound by their religion to rebel against the Queen?' In the late nineteenth century Indian administrators continued to regard Muslim fanaticism, and for some the word Muslim was usually accompanied by the term fanatic, as the greatest danger to British rule. This understanding of Muslims was translated into Africa in the 1880s in discussions of 'Arabi Pasha's revolt in Egypt and the Mahdist rising in the Sudan. It was nourished by the jihads which spluttered into existence from time to time in the early decades of the twentieth century in French and Italian as well as British

African territories. The use of the blanket term 'fanaticism' often concealed an unwillingness, and perhaps an inability, to analyse what was really taking place in Muslim societies. It also meant that Muslims as Muslims tended to be seen as a problem, and frequently as a force to be propitiated.

Closely connected to the fear of Muslim 'fanaticism' was the fear of Pan-Islamism, of united Muslim action against the British Empire. The British were right not to dismiss the threat. In principle, though to no great extent in fact, Muslims could regard themselves as one community and the Ottoman caliph as the successor of Muhammad as a leader of that community. There had always been networks of scholars and mystics across the Islamic world. Such connections were reinforced in the nineteenth century by the increasing numbers of Muslims performing the pilgrimage to Mecca and travelling in general. From the late nineteenth century knowledge of other Muslim societies was greatly increased by the growth of the press notably in India and Egypt. Moreover, there was an influential Islamic thinker, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d.1897) who was arguing for a pan-Islamic response to the incursion of the West into the Muslim world. On top of this there was the policy of the Ottoman empire under 'Abd al-Hamid II to foster connections with Muslims in British territories, whether they be in Cape Town, Zanzibar, or Bombay. The government of India, furthermore, was left in no doubt about the pan-Islamic feelings of its Muslims as they protested with increasing vigour at the Western takeover of the central Islamic lands. Their protests reached a peak in the Khilafat movement of 1919-24, which was the greatest movement of protest against British rule since the Mutiny rebellion. From 1920 the government of India urged London to take into account Indian opinion in negotiating Turkish peace terms. Curzon and Lloyd George refused to be influenced; in 1922 the Secretary of State for India, Montagu, was forced to resign on the issue. The eventual decline of the Khilafat movement proved Curzon and Lloyd George right. Pan-Islamism, as Harcourt Butler often told his Indian colleagues, was 'more a feeling than a force'. (3)

Respect for Muslims as a former ruling people was another somewhat different aspect of British attitudes. It mingled with the sense that Muslims such as these were not unlike the British - upright and independent peoples, believers who worshipped one God, experienced in the work of government and courageous in that of war. Indeed, there was a tendency for British officers, so often successful examinees who aspired to gentry status, to be over-impressed by the company they kept, whether it was the rulers of vast acres or those with summary power of life or death over many men. Aspects of such attitudes were explicitly expressed in two of the more fateful policies adopted in the early twentieth century. Thus, Lord Lugard spoke admiringly of the Fulani in fostering indirect rule in northern Nigeria referring to 'their wonderful intelligence, for they are born

rulers'.(4) In not dissimilar vein Lord Minto in replying to the famous deputation of Muslim nobles, landowners and ministers of native states in 1906, whose initiative was to lead to the establishment of a separate Muslim political identity in British India, referred to the deputees as 'descendants of a conquering and ruling race'.(5)

Such evidence suggests clear links between British attitudes to Muslims and policy. Of course, all attitudes were bound to be modified by context whether rhetorical or real. Gladstone, for instance, thought Turks totally unqualified to rule the Christians of the Balkans but perfectly qualified to rule the peoples of Egypt, a good number of whom were Christian. British Indian administrators adopted a totally different attitude to the so-called 'aristocratic' Muslims of upper India as compared with the peasant cultivators of east Bengal. Nevertheless, the all-pervasive impact of British attitudes is striking, whether deployed through forms of indirect rule or the great example of direct rule, namely India.

In much of the Muslim British Empire in the 1920s and 1930s forms of indirect rule were in place. In northern Nigeria the British ruled through the sultan of Sokoto, his emirs, and the structure of Islamic government that existed under their authority. In Egypt the situation was rather more complex. British influence depended on the endemic rivalry between the King and the Wafd, the support of the large landlords of the Delta and the mercantile interests which benefited from the British connection, and the presence of British troops. In the northern Sudan from the 1920s the British made a concerted attempt to rule through tribal and rural chiefs, but by the mid-1930s had discovered that these men had less authority amongst

their people than they expected; they were then forced to deal directly with the urban elites. In the Gulf and along the south Arabian shore, influence was exercised through sultans, emirs and shaykhs with the use of the odd adviser, the dispatch of gunboats, and a touch of airpower. In Transjordan British will was exercised through the Hashemite emir, `Abd Allah, and British subsidies as well as the British-officered Arab Legion on which he depended. In Iraq that will was also felt through the Hashemite monarch, the core of ex-Ottoman officials who had supported the Arab nationalist cause, the tribal shaykhs, and the large landowners whom the land and water legislation of the 1930s made into rich and even larger landowners. In Malaya the British maintained the fiction of ruling through sultans while taking into their hands anything needed to enable rapid economic growth. Palestine, however, offers an exception. Here a form of indirect rule was developed through the Jewish Agency set up by Article 4 of the Mandate. When the British offered the Arabs a similar agency in 1923, unwisely they turned it down. They were ruled directly.

The general outcome of British policies of indirect rule or influence was to privilege conservative elements in the modern state systems of these societies as they developed. Islamic law, for instance, in its more conservative forms continued to be applied. In northern Nigeria it continued down to 1960 with the exception that inhumane punishments were banned. Even slavery was permitted to exist. In Malaya it achieved greater application as the sultans centralized Islamic religious organization and extended its control over village religious life. Forms of rule

were supported which had difficulty in incorporating new elements into the political system. In Transjordan, Iraq, and Egypt the monarchies, even though the latter two had Parliaments of a kind, had difficulty in expanding their base of support to embrace the new social groups which were being mobilized by economic change.

As always the nature of government helps to fashion the quality and style of opposition. In Malaya it was in part the Islamic reform of the Kaum Muda; in Egypt it was in part the nascent Islamism of the Muslim Brotherhood. The main opposition, however, came from the new western-educated classes - government servants, army officers, lawyers - who wanted to break their way into the charmed circles which wielded state power. Their success depended in large part on the pressures generated by economic change, the management skills of those in power, and the impact of the Second World War.

There are, however, some specific outcomes of policies of indirect rule, or influence, which command attention. In states where Muslims formed only part of the population they led to uneven development which stored up major problems for these societies at or soon after independence. Take Nigeria, for example, the home in a technical sense of indirect rule. The special policies directed towards the north meant that by the time of independence in 1960 only a small fraction of the population had been exposed to Western and secular values as compared with the peoples of the east and south. The overall impact of the British presence, not least the rapid growth of commercial agriculture, had led to the consolidation of Islam at the centre of popular identity; northern leaders conducted their

own relations with Muslim states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Ahmadu Bello's attempt to `northernize' government and commerce, which also meant to `Islamize' them, was to be expected once British restraints had been lifted. It led to fear amongst the Christian peoples of the south, his assassination in 1966, and the subsequent Biafra civil war. The advance of Islam remains a continuing threat to Nigeria's secular and pluralist constitution.

The Sudan offers similarities to but also differences from the Nigerian situation. The imposition of indirect rule led to the total isolation of the southern non-Muslim province from Arab-Islamic influences from the north. It was the only way the British felt they could build up the self-contained tribal units which the system of rule required. At the same time Christian missionaries were given relatively free rein in the area. The outcome was that the two halves of the country grew apart. The Muslim north kept pace with the social and political advance of the wider Muslim world; the increasingly Christian south remained isolated and immobile. At independence in 1956 the peoples of the south were placed in the hands of the northerners. This was followed by continuing friction between Christian south and Muslim north leading to the outbreak of civil war in 1967, which has continued on and off into the 1990s.

In Malaya the British had themselves to deal with the early consequences of their policies towards the Malay sultanates. After the Second World War, they found that the only way they could devolve power with Malay agreement was to ensure Malay supremacy in the political and administrative sphere. An

enduring tension came to be established in the modern Malay state between the privileged position of the Malays and the recognition of Islam in the national identity on the one hand, and the position of the non-Muslim Chinese and Indians on the other. It was a tension which was on occasion to break into open strife.

In other areas it is possible to see how specific policies of indirect rule gave a distinctive shape or quality to the modern state which emerged. In the Gulf British policies of recognising the Gulf sheikhdoms as separate entities enabled the emergence of the larger ones as individual states at independence. The British also protected them from the claims of their overmighty neighbours, for instance, those of Iraq over Kuwait and Iran over Bahrain. Indeed, they created the environment in which these family-run small businesses could, as the wealth from oil began to flow in the 1950 and 1960s, develop as family-run modern state corporations. In Jordan, where the British-officered Arab Legion had played such a distinctive role in establishing the state and where the dismissal of these officers in 1956 signalled the rapid diminution of British influence, the army continued to play the role of chief pillar of the Hashemite monarchy. It saved the regime in the great Arab nationalist crisis of 1955-58; it did the same in the Palestinian crisis of 1967-70.

No form of indirect rule had such a momentous outcome for the peoples of the region as that conducted in Palestine. Arguably the transformation of the Jewish Agency of 1920 into the Israeli state by May 1948 was from the beginning a possible outcome of the terms of the Palestine mandate. Britain had

undertaken, although against the grave reservations of the Foreign Office and her military administration in Palestine, to create 'such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home', (6) and this is what emerged, albeit in nation-state form. But Britain's declared policy to the bitter end, with the one deviation of the Peel Commission recommendations, was to establish a bi-national state. The administration of the mandate, however, and the outcome, were disasters. Admittedly, few could have predicted when the first High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel, took up his post in 1920 the events which so complicated Britain's rule: the levels of Jewish immigration resulting from persecution in Europe, the levels of Arab intransigence resulting from justifiable anger and poor leadership, the impact of the Second World War, the holocaust, the rise of American influence, and the decline of British influence. By the mid-1930s the Palestinian Arabs were radical, politicized, organized and using strikes and violence. From 1937-39 there was open rebellion in particular against the recommendation of the Peel Commission that Palestine be partitioned and in general against the British presence. The Palestinian plight attracted popular concern as well as that of intellectuals and students in Egypt, Iraq and other Arab countries. The cause was also adopted by Islamic movements; Arab governments discovered they could win support by taking up the Palestinian issue. Nor was concern restricted to Arab lands. Palestine remained a continuing issue for Indian Muslims and featured regularly, for instance, in emotional speeches and resolutions of the All-India Muslim League. By 1947

Palestine was an economic and strategic liability for the British. There seemed, moreover, to be no solution agreeable to Zionists and Americans on the one hand and the Arabs on the other. In February 1947 the British referred the problem to the United Nations, refused to implement a UN partition plan of November 1947, and surrendered the mandate on 1 May 1948.. The consequence of this imbroglio was a serious loss of goodwill from the Arab world towards Britain at a time when her position in that world depended on that very commodity. There was also the establishment of the Palestinian grievance which was to be a focus of relations between regional powers and super powers in the region for decades. At the same time, Israel, which was seen as a stake of Western provenance thrust into the heartland of Islam, was throughout the Islamic world a focus of resentment against the West.

If the outcome of British policy failures in Palestine was to help shape the political landscape of West Asia for years after independence, the same can be said for their impact on South Asia. Here, the Princely States apart, the British were involved in direct rule. The classic Indian nationalist analysis of their ruling style was that the British divided Muslims from Hindus and ruled. Matters, however, were rather more complex. Certainly, British attitudes and British policies helped the development of Muslim organizations in northern India, but other crucial factors were the impact of both Muslim and Hindu revivalism. This said, Muslim separatism was a weak growth in the 1920s and 1930s and its political party, the Muslim League, did very badly in the 1937 general elections, winning rather less than a quarter of the Muslim seats available. That this party was able to be a serious player in the endgame of British India was because it won over four-fifths of the Muslim seats in the 1945-46 elections. Its fortunes had been transformed by the Second World War, the British need for Muslim support in that war (half the Indian army, for instance, was Muslim), the mistakes of the nationalist movement, and the leadership of Jinnah, the Muslim League's president. Ultimately, as Ayesha Jalal has revealed, India was divided because the Indian nationalists wished it.(7) The dynamics of the process were instinct in the federal system set up by the 1935 Government of India Act. The

nationalists wanted to inherit the strong central power wielded by the British. The Muslim League wanted a weak centre, indeed Nationalist-Muslim parity there, to protect the Muslim provinces from an over-mighty centre. Ultimately the nationalists insisted on partition. The emergence of Pakistan was the outcome of a combination of forces. With regard to the specifically British contribution, certainly British attitudes and policies had their part to play in establishing a Muslim political platform. But in the final act weight must be given to the dynamics of a federal system set up to enable the British to wield all the powers they needed in India from the centre while allowing Indians to get on with the business of government in the provinces. The consequences of partition have loured over the subcontinent since 1947, bringing three wars and threatening more.

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Muslim attitudes to the British varied according to their particular Islamic understandings and to their particular experience of British rule. They were subject, too, to change through time; the kind of person who was a cultural collaborator in the late nineteenth century was more than likely to be a dedicated nationalist opponent well before the mid-twentieth century. There were, nevertheless, some distinctive aspects to Muslim attitudes. The British were often seen primarily as Christians. Certainly they were people of the book, people who shared the same prophetic tradition, but by the same token they were people whose scriptures had been corrupted and whose beliefs were misguided. Early contacts could involve set-piece debates with Christian missionaries like those which were held at Agra (India) in 1854, one of whose Muslim protagonists became a pensioner of the Ottoman sultan and the formulator of the most

influential modern Muslim critique of Christianity.(8) At their most extreme religious strategies for dealing with the Christian presence might involve attacking Christian revelation at its heart, as did the Punjabi Muslim, Ghulam Ahmad (d.1908), who founded the Ahmadiyya missionary sect. He claimed that he was

the messiah of the Jewish and Muslim traditions; the figure known as Jesus of Nazaareth had not died on the cross but survived to die in Kashmir.(9) But equally the problem of Christian power could be confronted with humour, as did the Indian satirist Akbar Allahabadi (d. 1921)

The Englishman can slander whom he will  
 And fill your head with anything he pleases  
 He wields sharp weapons, Akbar. Best stand clear!  
 He cuts God himself into three pieces. (10)

A second set of attitudes focused on the extent to which the manners and customs of the British could be followed and their material culture adopted. Thus, the Sultan of Pahang, `Abd al-Samad (d.1898) declared that he never `fired an English gun in his life nor wished to fire one, that he preferred walking to driving and eating with his fingers, according to Malay custom, to the use of forks; that wine was forbidden by the Koran and that he did not know how to play the piano.'(11) For most of British rule Muslims debated what they could and could not accept from the culture of their ruler. Wine and pork were for believing Muslims distinctive cultural markers; the freedom of women was a greatly contested issue. Tables and chairs, knives and forks, trousers and ties, however, came widely to be adopted, although ties went out of fashion in the late twentieth century when it came to be thought that they represented the sign of the cross.

A third set of attitudes embraces responses to British power. The context is crucial. Muhammad `Abd Allah of Somaliland waged jihad for twenty-one years against the British. He celebrated the death of a British officer who had tried to cut off his defeat in 1913 thus:

O Corfield, you are a traveller who  
 Will not stay long here below  
 You will follow the path where there is no rest  
 You are among the Denizens of Hell  
 You will journey to the Next World. (12)

In different circumstances, where the fact of Britain's dominance was indisputable, there could be resigned acceptance. 'They hold the throne in the hand', declared Akbar Allahabadi, 'the whole realm is in their hand. The country, the apportioning of man's livelihood is in their hand ... The springs of hope and fear are in their hand. ... In their hand is the power to decide who shall be humbled and who exalted.' (13) But then there were Muslims who genuinely gloried in the destiny they shared with their foreign ruler. Take Sayyid Husayn Bilgrami (d.1926), the distinguished Hyderabad civil servant who had the major hand in drafting the Indian Muslim memorial to the Viceroy in 1906. In verse of impeccable loyalty, but questionable merit, entitled 'England and India' he trumpeted:

England! 'tis meet that for weal and woe  
 In calm or storm, our chosen place should be  
 Where honour calls us by the side of thee  
 Thy friend be friend to us, our bitt' rest foe  
 The trait'rous knave who schemes thy overthrow. (14)

There are, however, some lines of Muslim response which require more detailed examination. The first is that of jihad. For all the fear of Muslim fanaticism displayed by the British, once they had conquered a territory and consolidated their rule, jihad, although often a worry, was rarely a serious issue. One reason was that in British territories which experienced forms of indirect rule Islamic law continued to operate. Even in directly-ruled British India Muslim personal law, the most cherished element of the *shari`a*, continued to be imposed in its bastard Anglo-Muhammadan form. It had long been the position of Sunni `ulama that, if the law was upheld, rebellion could not be justified. A second reason was that legitimately to conduct a jihad there had to be a reasonable chance of success. After Muslims had tasted the fruits of the Gatling gun and had come to appreciate the full weight of British power, they knew that they had little chance. Once this was understood, the alternative was *hijra* or flight from the 'land of war', as practised by the Caliph of Sokoto after the annexation of his territories, or the 30,000 Indian Muslims who in 1920 fled to the Northwest Frontier, many to their deaths, as part of the Khilafat protest. Considerations such as these help to explain the failure of Muslims in Africa and elsewhere to respond to the Ottoman call for jihad against the British Empire on the outbreak of the First

World War. (15)

The spirit of Islamic renewal which was no longer channelled into holy war now came to energize other responses to the British presence. The broad 'church' known as reformism was one. Amongst its more striking manifestations was the Deoband Madrasa of northern India, from which stemmed the Deoband movement. In this 'ulama created a way of being Muslim without the support of the state. Spreading knowledge of how to be a good Muslim was central to its purposes so it made good use of the printing press, of translation of texts into local languages, and of schools - by its centenary in 1967 it claimed to have founded over 8,000. Also central to its purpose was personal responsibility in putting Islamic knowledge into practice; the movement, therefore, was profoundly opposed to any idea of saintly intercession for man with God. To ensure its independence of the colonial state, it relied on popular subscription for support. Bureaucratic in organization, one of the ways it served its constituency was by offering a mail-order fatwa service. Most followers of Deoband supported the Indian nationalist movement and opposed the idea of Pakistan; they felt

they did not need a Muslim homeland to be their kind of Muslim. (16) Elsewhere no one went as far as Deoband in developing organizational structures to support what has been called a form of 'Islamic Protestantism'. In West Africa, however, ignoring the foreigner was a not uncommon response to the British presence.

For the most part Muslims could not ignore the British presence. They had to address the meaning of the new forces which were having such an impact on their lives: Western learning, the colonial state, and major economic change. This process led to the development of what is termed Islamic modernism. An important figure in this response to the West was the Egyptian, Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), who, after participating in 'Arabi Pasha's revolt, was exiled in the years 1882-88 and returned to be chief mufti of Egypt from 1889 to 1905. He accepted the Quran and *Hadith* as God's guidance for man but made other areas subject to man's personal reasoning. He wished to put an end to blind acceptance of past authority; Islam had to be re-interpreted in each new generation. Thus, he threw open the door to new ideas. These led through his intellectual successor, Rashid Rida, who talked in terms of the compatibility of Islam and an Arab national state, towards a purely secular

nationalism. (17) 'Abduh's ideas were particularly influential in North Africa and Southeast Asia. In Malaya they informed those of the Kaum Muda or 'Young Faction' whose leaders had extensive contacts with West Asia, several studying in Cairo. In the second and third decade of the twentieth century they attacked the traditional Islam of the rural 'ulama and Sufis

which was now administered by the sultans. After the fashion of Islamic reform they criticized all practice which hinted at intercession, but equally they looked to a positive approach to issues such as the wearing of European clothes or whether it was possible to take interest from a post office or a rural co-operative. Such assaults on the religious fiefdoms of the Malay Sultans were at one remove assaults on the British. By the 1930s Kaum Muda formed a nationalist opposition. (18)

The most clearly defined example of Islamic modernism was that created by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), the founder of Aligarh College (1875), and his followers in the Aligarh movement. The Sayyid, who was knighted by the British in 1877, was determined that Indian Muslims should come to terms with British rule. They needed to be able to command Western learning so he provided them with a Muslim-controlled environment for learning, which was modelled after a Cambridge college and in which they were taught by men from Cambridge. They needed to be able to play a role in the affairs of the colonial state, so he made sure that they knew how to debate Cambridge Union style, how to play cricket, and how to behave at tea parties. (19) Again, they needed to have as few religious obstacles to the process as possible so he used his personal reasoning, rejected the authority of the past, and strove to produce an Islamic theology for his time. The Quran and *Hadith* were reviewed in the light of modern science. In the process the Sayyid went much further than Muhammad `Abduh, further than most Muslims would go today. Muslims went to Aligarh in spite of rather than because of Sayyid Ahmad's views. Many became leading supporters of Muslim separatism and the movement for Pakistan. (20)

The person, however, who brought Sayyid Ahmad's project close to fruition was not a student from Aligarh, although he was subject to Cambridge influence having done graduate work there from 1905-08. This was Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), the philosopher-poet of Lahore, who was knighted in 1923. He not only developed a dynamic vision of Islamic history as one of progress but also fitted the nation-state into that progress. At the same time he performed the key service of building a bridge between the Islamic idea of the sovereignty of God on earth and that of the sovereignty of the people as expressed in the modern state. Addressing the Muslim League in 1930 he declared that the Muslims were a separate nation in India and that the north-west of India should be formed into a Muslim state. (21)

By the late 1920s and 1930s groups of Muslims were coming forward who could not accept the way forward of the reforming `ulama, because they ignored the facts of life, and could not accept that of the modernists and their nationalist successors, because they ignored the facts of Islam. These Muslims formed movements which have been called 'fundamentalist' but which are better called Islamist. They are well represented by the Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Hasan al-Banna (d.1949) in Egypt in 1928, and the Jama`at-i Islami founded by Sayyid Abul A`la Mawdudi (d.1979) in India in 1941. For men such as these the real danger

was less British or Western power than the secular culture which came with it. What was needed was to capture the modern state and to use it to impose Islamic law and values on society as a whole. In Egypt in the late 1940s the Brotherhood was to play a leading role in the cause of Palestine and the struggle against British rule. In the subcontinent the Jama`at opposed the Muslim League's campaign for Pakistan; it did not believe that it would be an Islamic state. These movements were the forerunners of those which throughout the former British Empire, indeed throughout the Muslim world, would in the latter half of the twentieth century compete with the nationalists for the control of state power. (22)

We should note that these modernist and Islamist responses were at the level of the state. For the most part Muslims wanted to take over the state structure that British rule had created for them. Where they did not, it was because they felt these structures left them too disadvantaged. In the case of British India, they ended up by creating a separate state, which could embrace most, though not all, of them. In the case of Palestine, they could see no solution from which they would not lose. Of course, Muslims under their various British regimes were concerned about events in the wider Muslim world; Palestine was rarely far from their minds. But the prime focus of actions remained the state. As Muhammad Iqbal wrote:

Now brotherhood has been so cut to shreds  
That in the stead of community  
The country has been given pride of place  
In man's allegiance and constructive work. (23)

In spite of the poet's justified complaint there were supra-state responses to the expansion of British Empire across the lands of Islam. There was no shortage of pan-Islamic sentiment. In 1894 the Muslims of Lagos were in correspondence with the Ottoman Sultan, in 1910 Friday prayers in Dar el Salaam were still being said in his name, while pan-Islamic sympathies were evident in Malaya from the 1890s. Such feelings were most powerfully expressed in India, where the circulation of Muslim newspapers always shot up when there were crises in the Islamic world, where poets and writers embraced pan-Islamic themes not least amongst them the fate of Muslim Spain which carried heavy symbolism for the times, and where there was a powerful emotional identification with the heartlands of Islam - the Khilafat leader, Mahomed Ali, confesses in his autobiography how he

contemplated suicide in the autumn of 1912 when he heard that the Bulgarians were within twenty-five miles of Istanbul. (24) It was men of this ilk who sent a Red Crescent mission to Turkey in 1912, founded a society to defend the holy places in 1913, and led pan-Islamist activities throughout the 1920s, focusing in turn on the Khilafat, the fate of the holy places under Ibn Sa`ud, Palestine and the establishment of a university for the Islamic world. (25)

Against this background there were attempts to organize at a Pan-Islamic level to strengthen the Islamic world and to resist the West. It was an idea that was always at the mercy of the ambitions of the proposer of the moment. The initiative in the early 1880s came from the romantic Arabophile, W. S. Blunt, who wanted to do for the Arabs what Byron had done for the Greeks; he suggested the founding of a Muslim Congress to elect an Arab to replace the Ottoman caliph. The idea was taken up by Afghani, though not with its anti-Ottoman dimension, it was sustained in the circles around Muhammad `Abduh and Rashid Rida, and almost realized in Cairo in 1907 by the Crimean Tartar reformer, Isma`il Bey Gasprinski. After the First World War the Turks toyed with the idea of holding a congress to elect a caliph to replace the Ottoman holder of the office. Then the first two congresses were actually held in 1924 and 1926 with this aim in mind. In the first, however, Sharif Husayn of Mecca found he could get no support for his claim, and in the second the Egyptians were rebuffed in their attempt to bring the office to Cairo. A third congress was held at Mecca in the summer of 1926 where Ibn Sa`ud faced such strong criticism of his custodianship of the holy places that he was put off such meetings for good. A further Congress was held at Jerusalem in 1931 by Hajji Amin al-Husayni with the idea of winning support for the Palestinian cause. This established a secretariat which existed for some five years. From then on no major Muslim congress was held until the establishment of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in 1969 by Saudi Arabia in the wake of a serious fire in Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque. The charter of the Conference echoes several of the themes of the earlier congresses: the protection of the Muslim holy places, support for the Palestinian cause, and the fostering of Muslim solidarity in relation to the rest of the world. The issue of the Caliphate, however, is ignored. (26)

A supra-state vision also existed in the idea of Arab unity.

This had its origin in the first stirrings of Arab nationalism before the First World War. Hopes had been raised by British support for Sharif Husayn during the War and by the establishment of an Arab state at Damascus in 1918. They were dashed by the state system imposed upon the region by the Allies in the post-war settlement. Ideas of Arab unity revived during the inter-war

period with the writings of Sati al-Husri, a former Ottoman official, and the establishment of the Pan-Arab National Covenant in 1931. They gained extra momentum during the Second World War, as the British declared themselves in favour of unity to win Arab support, as it became the declared policy of the Baath party, and as the Arab League came to be formed in 1945. They were stimulated further by the Palestinian problem and by Egyptian determination to use pan-Arabism to exercise leadership in the region. In the 1950s and 1960s, as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq sought strength in the world of super-power rivalries which had replaced the colonial era, there were attempted unions. Invariably rivalries between states prevented success; failure to defeat Israel discredited such ideas altogether. Dreams of Arab unity foundered on the nation-state system in the Middle East which British Empire had done so much to create.

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The impact of Britain's moment in the Muslim world demands more general assessment. It enabled, for instance, some Islamic sects to develop a global presence. British policy, for instance, encouraged the Nizari Isma`ilis to migrate from India to East Africa where they participated in its economic development, becoming in the process a wealthy and highly educated community. British patronage enabled the leaders of this sect, the Aga Khans, to recover their fortunes, stamp their authority on their followers, and become figures in world affairs. In a rather different way the connections of British Empire enabled the Ahmadiyya to carry their proselytising mission to East and West Africa in the 1920s. Now, despite the bitter

hostility of the rest of the Muslim community, they have missions in 120 countries.

British Empire presided over a more general expansion of the Muslim world. Through sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, although the British brought an end to warlike expansion, apart from special cases like the southern Sudan, it provided an environment in which peaceful expansion could continue to take place as Muslims spread from the hinterland towards the coast in West Africa or from the coast inland in East Africa in search of jobs and commercial opportunities. As Muslims, moreover, competed with Christian missionaries for pagan souls, they had the advantage of promoting a faith which was different from that of the dominant white man. Economic opportunity brought further expansion of the Muslim world elsewhere. Thus Indian Muslims using the opportunities provided by indentured labour came to form communities in the Caribbean. Then, too, Muslims in large part from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and East Africa, came to fashion that most distinctive of Imperial legacies, the Muslim community of Britain. Urdu, Bengali, and Gujarati became British tongues, Islamic issues became part of British political discourse, and the domes of purpose-built mosques began to punctuate the skylines of cities such as London, Birmingham, and Bradford.

Through the length and intensity of their encounter with Britain, Muslims from South Asia came to the fore in the Islamic world in terms of new ideas and organization. They had been moving in this direction in the eighteenth century, but the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a period of great

creativity. Indian reformism gave birth in 1928 to what is regarded in the late twentieth century as the most widely followed movement in the Muslim world, the Tablighi Jama`at or 'Preaching Society'. Indian modernism produced Iqbal whose influence has been felt far beyond the subcontinent. The figure of Mawdudi towers over the development of Islamism. While it was in Pakistan that there has been the most prolonged attempt to build a bridge between understandings of Islam and the requirements of modern society and state. Under British rule Islam in South Asia became less a receiver of influences from elsewhere in the Muslim world and more of a transmitter. This helped shift the centre of gravity of the Muslim world eastwards a process which is reinforced as East and South-East Asia become the economic powerhouse of the planet.

Overall strategies of British Empire helped to shape much of the state system of the modern Muslim world, and left key issues to bedevil subsequent development, amongst them the problem of Palestine, the relationship of the Gulf states to their larger neighbours and the role of Islam in the identity of modern states from West Africa to Malaya. Styles of rule gave shape to internal politics from the problems of civil war in Nigeria and the Sudan, through to the division of India at independence and the significance of the military in Jordan. The British, along with other European empires, enabled Islam to spread more widely than ever before. In the process Britain became in part Muslim herself.

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3. For European and British attitudes to Islam and the Muslim world see, Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge, 1991), Maxime Rodinson, trans. R. Veinus, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (Seattle, 1987), Kathryn Tidrick, *Heart Beguiling Araby* (Cambridge, 1981), Norman Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh, 1966), and Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims 1860-1923* (Cambridge, 1974).

4. Daniel, *Islam*, p. 465.

5. Sharif al Mujahid, *Muslim League Documents 1900-1947, I*, (Karachi, 1990), p. 102.

6. Article 2 of the mandatory instrument for Palestine, 1922, in C.H. Dodd and M.E. Sales, *Israel and the Arab World* (New York, 1970) p. 68.

7. Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge, 1985).

8. Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (London 1993), pp. 226-98.

9. Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious thought and its Medieval Background* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 1-46.

10. Ralph Russell & Khurshidul Islam, 'The Satirical Verse of

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11. Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 210.

12. Part of Muhammad `Abd Allah's savage poem 'the Death of Richard Corfield' in B.W. Andrzejewski and I.M. Lewis, *Somali Poetry: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1964), p. 72.

13. Russell & Islam, 'Akbar Ilahabadi', p. 9.

14. Saidul Haq Imadi, *Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk* (Hyderabad, 1975), p. 130.

15. C.C. Stewart, 'Islam' in J.D. Fage and others eds., *The Cambridge History of Africa*, 8 vols, (Cambridge 1986, VII, esp., pp. 192-202, and Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, (New York, 1982).

16. Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, (Princeton, New Jersey, 1982).

17. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 103-244.

18. William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (New Haven, 1967), esp., pp. 56-90.

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21. Hafeez Malik ed., *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan* (New York, 1971).

22. Richard Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, (New York, 1969) and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *the Vanguard of the Islamic*

*Revolution: the Jam`at-i Islami of Pakistan* (Berkeley, 1994).

23. Quoted from Iqbal's '*Rumuz-i-Bekhudi*' 'The Mysteries of Selflessness', 1918, in Wm. Theodore De Bary and others eds. *Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York, 1958), p. 756.

24. Afzal Iqbal ed., *My Life, A Gragment: an Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali*, (Lahore, 1942), pp. 35-6.

25. Mushirul Hasan, *Mohamed Ali: Ideology and Politics*, (New Delhi, 1981).

26. Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses*, (New York, 1986), and for the charter and activities of the Islamic Conference see Haider Mehdi, *Organization of the Islamic Conference: OIC: A Review of its Political and Educational Policies* (Lahore, 1988).