

MAULANA HUSSAIN AHMAD MADANI AND COMPOSITE NATIONALISM(RE-EVALUATING THE CONCEPT OF INDIAN MUSLIM NATIONALISM)

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Abstract

This study examines the political ideology of Hussain Ahmad Madani (1879-1957), an Indian academic and activist prominent in the twentieth century. The essay focuses on Madani's contribution to the Indian independence struggle, particularly his influence on religious academics (the 'ulama) to maintain their support for a unified India. The essay commences by presenting the different groups vying for the Muslim representation in pre-independence India, which encompasses the Deoband tradition, from which Madani originated. It is noteworthy that the secular elite's endorsement of an independent Islamic state contrasts with the religious intellectuals' advocacy for a secular and unified India. I suggest that the primary factor contributing to this irony is Madani, and I analyze Madani's personal and public writings in order to recreate his ideology. Madani's writings indicate his adoption of liberal concepts, such as subjective rights, as a means to criticize the British from within their own framework. By adopting this method, Madani had to acknowledge the consequences, which included the realization that religion could not serve as the fundamental framework for constructing citizenship. Madani, in

opposition to partition and the creation of Pakistan, advocated for the concept of "composite nationalism." This theory, although theologically contentious during Madani's time, played a significant role in establishing the legitimacy of the Indian Muslim community following independence.

Keywords: Hussain Ahmed Madni, Indian Nationalism, Composite Nationalism, Indian Muslims.

INTRODUCTION

In 1904, the renowned Indian philosopher-poet Muhammad Iqbal composed "Tarana-e-Hindi," also known as "Anthem of the People of India," wherein he expressed that India surpasses the entire globe in greatness. He resembled the people of India to nightingales and India itself to a beautiful rose garden. Religion does not promote hostility amongst individuals. We, as Indians, consider India as our motherland." This song, which highlights Indian nationalism, gained popularity as an unofficial national anthem during the period of colonization in India. Even Mahatma Gandhi recited it while in prison to maintain his morale. After gaining independence, the newly formed Indian government contemplated adopting it as the national anthem of the country.

Merely six years subsequent to the initial anthem, Iqbal published another one, titled "Tarana-e-Milli," or "Anthem of the [Religious] Community." In this poem, Iqbal reimagined the concept of home, departing from a nationalist portrayal of India. He proclaimed, "Central Asia and Arabia belong to us, India belongs to us. We are Muslims, and our homeland encompasses the entire world. The essence of monotheism resides within our hearts. Our name and heritage cannot be easily eradicated." In contrast to the 1904 anthem, where Iqbal had solely defined identity based on the geographical nation, he now shifted and defined identity based on religion. Identity was no longer linked to a particular physical location that created a conceptualized community.

WHAT CAUSED THIS SUBSTANTIAL AND SUDDEN SHIFT IN IQBAL'S THINKING?

Academics have identified the concerns about becoming a citizen that the Muslim minority in undivided India had prior to gaining freedom. Aamir Mufti, for instance, has recorded the intense conflict that arose in the years leading up to independence regarding the definition of an Indian, particularly in relation to the extent to which Muslims were seen as part of Indian nationalism. Mufti draws a parallel between the current Muslim predicament in South Asia and the historical Jewish Question in Europe. This refers to the perception that Jews were not fully regarded as European and so not fully integrated into society, resulting in a marginalized status. Similarly, in the early twentieth century, far-right Hindu activists raised doubts about the Indianess of Muslims, contending that Muslim empires like the Mughals were alien intruders.

Indian Muslim political and intellectual leaders, in light of this sentiment, advocated for the establishment of a distinct territory, as they believed that only through a separate state could Muslims be safeguarded from the oppression imposed by the majority. This shift elucidates the reason why Iqbal initially proclaimed India as his

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homeland, but thereafter asserted defensively that "It is not easy to obliterate our identity and lineage," as if opposing a power that seeks to eradicate it. The conventional narrative of Pakistan posits that Muslim leaders, including Iqbal, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and others, initiated the formal movement for a distinct nation in the 1930s, having completely lost faith in the concept of a unified India. These figures organized themselves through the All-India Muslim League, a political party founded at the beginning of the 20th century with the initial purpose of advocating for Muslim concerns, in addition to the broader India National Congress. The Muslim League engaged in competition with other Indian factions in order to assert the Muslim perspective, and by the 1930s, it emerged as the sole champion of separatism. It gained a substantial following, with notable supporters ranging from the Marxist poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz to the Islamist writer Abu'l A'la Mawdudi.

The traditional narrative often fails to adequately acknowledge the extent of disagreement among Indian Muslims about the issue of separation. Primarily, this history can be attributed to the fact that official British sources have always cited the Muslim League as the definitive representative of the Muslim population. Nevertheless, this depiction inaccurately reflects the actual situation. Recent historical analysis has shown that the Muslim League's strong support for Great Britain during World War II, in contrast to the broader Indian nationalist approach, was based on the condition that Great Britain acknowledged the Muslim League as the exclusive representative of Indian Muslims. The tactic proved successful: following the war, the British government promptly acquiesced to the League's request for an independent state, notwithstanding the objections raised by Muslim dissenters. The prevailing narrative suggests that Muslims overwhelmingly endorsed the establishment of Pakistan. Surveys conducted in India until the late 1930s indicate that the majority of India's Muslim population did not support the idea of division. Popular support for partition did not become widespread until the 1940s.

An intriguing irony in the history of Muslim nationalism is that while the majority of Western-educated Muslim elite, including figures like Iqbal and Jinnah, advocated for partition and the establishment of a Muslim state, the majority of traditional Islamic scholars (the 'ulama) did not share this view. A significant number of proponents of an independent state were secular intellectuals who viewed Islam as a defining aspect of their identity, albeit one that was under threat. In this regard, their endorsement of Pakistan was comparable to the secular backing of Zionism by the Jewish community. Conversely, several conventional scholars, despite their religious perspective and endorsement of Islamic law, campaigned for secular Indian nationalism and were paradoxically condemned by secular intellectuals for not being sufficiently devout. This essay seeks to comprehend this enigma by elucidating the intricate correlation between these factions and Indian nationalism. The initial portion commences by presenting a comprehensive outline of the diverse factions vying for Muslim dominance in the pre-independence context and scrutinizes the historical history of the 'ulama, which led them to favor a unified India.

Specifically, I attribute the primary influence on the endorsement of secular nationalism by traditional intellectuals to Mawlana Husain Ahmad Madani, the principal of the famous Darul Uloom seminary in Deoband. Section II presents a

concise overview of Madani's life and his impact on the 'ulama, as well as examines his initial writings opposing the British. In the third section, I analyze Madani's later political ideology, focusing on his well-developed anti-imperialist stance and his notion of "composite nationalism." Madani's advocacy for this theory of citizenship attracted significant criticism, with accusations of inconsistency and hypocrisy due to his resistance against British rule while accepting Hindu rule. In my perspective, Madani's work can be interpreted as an Islamic exploration of liberalism. When examined from this perspective, his body of work remains coherent and consistent. Contrary to Madani's claim of embodying old Islamic ideas, his thesis of composite nationalism is actually a modern liberal concept presented using Islamic terminology. To be more precise, I propose that Madani embraced liberal principles in order to critique British colonialism inside its own framework. However, in order to provide coherence, he also advocated for same principles in his concept of citizenship. Madani perceived the threat from Britain as significantly more than any posed by the Hindu majority. The call for a separate state primarily functioned as a diversion from British imperialism. Madani's promotion of Indian nationalism largely aimed to bolster the cause of anti-imperialism.

INDIAN MUSLIM POLITICS PRIOR TO THE PARTITION

Indian Muslims actively participated in anti-colonial resistance from an early stage, largely influenced by the displacement of the Muslim Mughal leadership by the British. In 1803, Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlawi, a prominent scholar of Islamic traditions, a spiritual leader of the Sufi order, and a legal expert, issued a fatwa, a religious decree, denouncing the East Indian Company and calling upon Muslims to oppose British domination, which he likened to enslavement. Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi particularly embraced Shah Abdul Aziz's appeal and aimed to combat the British by initially overthrowing the Sikh Empire in northwest India. He then intended to create the northwest region as a stronghold for waging jihad against the British. Barelwi was apprehended by opposing Sikh forces and subsequently put to death in 1831 during the Battle of Balakot. The demise of the individual signified the conclusion of the initial surge of collectively orchestrated Muslim opposition against the British.

The second significant surge occurred during the Indian Rebellion in 1857. The uprising was initiated by rebellious sepoys in Meerut, comprising both Muslim and Hindu soldiers, and swiftly extended its reach to other regions in northern and central India. Upon reaching Delhi, the mutineers proclaimed Bahadur Shah Zafar, the titular Mughal emperor, as the sovereign of India. A group of influential Indian 'ulama actively participated in the resistance movement. Thirty-four highly esteemed 'ulama jointly issued a fatwa, officially declaring war against the British and asking all Muslims to unite in the rebellion. The rebellion was swiftly suppressed, thanks to both the British's superior military capabilities and the collaboration of several ethnic and religious factions with the British forces. Following the rebellion, Bahadur Shah Zafar was banished to Burma, marking the official demise of the Mughal monarchy. The British Crown replaced Company authority and implemented direct governance by the Government of India Act of 1858, initiating the almost century-long era of British Raj.

Following 1857, Muslims began to focus inwardly, seeking internal resolutions to the obstacles presented by British governance. A significant number of individuals came to the realization that the British's establishment of authority following the events

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of 1857 rendered military opposition impractical. Conversely, Muslim leaders currently prioritize education, religious rejuvenation, non-cooperation, and similar methods to oppose foreign domination. Various manifestations were observed in this internal rotation.

The Aligarh Movement was one among the movements that arose at this time. The reformist movement, led by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, was centered in the northern city of Aligarh. It aimed to further the values of modernism and pragmatism advocated by its creator. Sir Syed, a progressive intellectual who had previously served as a clerk at the East India Company and who sympathized with the British during the 1857 insurrection, advocated for the acceptance of British governance and European ideas among Muslims in India as a means of ensuring their community's survival. As a component of his appeal, he established a Scientific Society in 1864, which rendered European scientific works into Urdu and Hindi; he initiated the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (later recognized as Aligarh Muslim University) in 1875, modeled after Oxford and Cambridge; and he authored numerous books advocating highly rational interpretations of Islamic law and theology. Sir Syed contended that by receiving a current, scientific education, Muslims will be empowered to engage in present-day politics without being hindered by outdated superstitions. Sir Syed was the pioneer in articulating the two-nation thesis, which eventually became a significant aspect of Indian Muslim political philosophy. According to this theory, Muslims and Hindus are considered distinct countries, not based on ethnicity or language, but on religion.

Sir Syed garnered influential backers who aided him in establishing his scientific and educational institutions, although he also encountered significant detractors, especially the emerging rival faction in Deoband. The Deoband movement originated from a madrasa founded in the town in 1866 by the esteemed scholar Qasim Nanotwi and his colleagues. In contrast to Sir Syed, the founders of Deoband held strong opposition towards the British. Many of them actively took part in the 1857 revolt, and all of them can trace their lineage back to older Muslim leaders who also opposed British rule, such as Shah Abdul Aziz and Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi. The Deobandi academics exhibited a strong aversion against the prevailing modernizing tendencies in society, which were further intensified under the direct authority of the British. They firmly advocated that the most effective solution for preserving the faith was to prioritize a rigorous traditional Islamic education. Their strong aversion to British intervention was so extreme that they actively opposed the acquisition of English language skills or the adoption of modern British customs, which sharply contrasted with the Aligarh Movement.

Deobandi scholars established a structured framework for traditional education in India, encompassing the study of the Qur'an, hadith, Arabic language and literature, Islamic law, theology, Sufism, rhetoric, and Aristotelian logic. In addition to the education of religious scholars known as 'ulama, Deobandis also established connections with the general Muslim population in India through influential Sufi networks and missionary movements like the Tablighi Jamaat. During the initial years of the institution, Deobandi scholars refrained from direct involvement in politics, although they did express their endorsement for various initiatives that opposed Britain.

As an illustration, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, who served as a chancellor of the school during its early years, issued a fatwa endorsing the Indian National Congress upon its establishment in 1885.

Deoband gained attention from British intelligence in the 1910s, when Mahmud Hasan became administration of the institution. Mahmud Hasan was a Deobandi scholar from the second generation, who received education from Nanotwi and Gangohi. In contrast to the scholars of the initial generation, Mahmud Hasan adopted a distinctively political position, actively involving himself in matters related to both the Congress and the Ottoman Empire. When the Ali brothers initiated the Khilafat Movement in India, a pan-Islamic campaign aimed at dissuading the British government from destroying the Ottoman Caliphate, Mahmud Hasan encouraged his students to participate, much to the disappointment of the more politically disengaged instructors at Deoband.

The Khilafat Movement expanded and forged an alliance with Gandhi and Congress, emerging as a significant catalyst for Hindu-Muslim political cohesion. Although the Khilafat Movement saw broad participation, Mahmud Hasan attracted particular attention for spearheading a clandestine initiative known as the Silk Letter Movement. The campaign, known as the Silk Letter Conspiracy, was an endeavor during World War I to covertly establish connections between Indian Muslims, Afghanistan, and the Ottoman and German empires. Its objective was to organize synchronized uprisings and assaults against the British. The scheme was uncovered, and Mahmud Hasan and his closest confidants, including Husain Ahmad Madani, were incarcerated for a duration of three years in Malta.

The Deobandi intellectuals regarded the British as the main danger, in contrast to the Aligarh Movement, which welcomed the British and had suspicions towards Hindus. Deobandi intellectuals openly formed an alliance with Congress and made a commitment to support Gandhi's concept of Swaraj. Primarily, this can be attributed to their perception of themselves as intellectual and spiritual successors of the Shah Waliullah family. In essence, they identify with intellectuals who previously accepted a society controlled by Hindus without objection. Conversely, the British swiftly demolished Muslim governance in the area, encroached upon indigenous traditions and education, and ruthlessly and persistently modernized society. Therefore, Deobandi intellectuals like Mahmud Hasan deemed it wise to prioritize their attention on the British rather than getting entangled in conflicts with Hindus.

The All-India Muslim League emerged as another noteworthy Muslim political faction, alongside Deoband and the Aligarh Movement. The League, established in 1906, aimed to advocate for Muslim interests during negotiations with the British and Congress. The League's initial members and prominent figures, like as Iqbal and Jinnah, were primarily modernists who were influenced by the Aligarh Movement and had received a Western education. At first, there was no conflict between the League and Congress. However, in the 1920s, as communalism increased and Muslim participation in Congress declined, the League started vying with Congress to be the exclusive representative of the Muslim community. The League campaigners expressed dissatisfaction with Congress' inadequate consideration of the problems of the Muslim minority. Specifically, they dismissed the 1928 Nehru Report due to its failure to

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provide significant political autonomy to Muslims. In the 1930s, the leaders of the League grew more dissatisfied with their perceived lack of fair treatment from Congress. Consequently, they started considering the notion of establishing a distinct Muslim federal entity, if not an entirely new state. Upon assuming leadership of the League, Iqbal actively promoted the notion. After temporarily disengaging from politics, Jinnah resumed his involvement as the League faced defeat in the 1937 elections. Over the following years, he actively advocated for the two-nation theory, but with a more confrontational approach. In exchange for granting the League exclusive bargaining rights, Britain received backing from the League throughout the Second World War. As a result, Britain acquiesced to the request for Pakistan, despite objections from both Congress leaders and anti-separatist Muslims.

LIFE HISTORY OF HUSSAIN AHMAD MADANI

Mawlana Husain Ahmad Madani (1879-1957) lived and functioned during this specific social and political environment. Madani, being from the United Provinces, commenced his education at the prestigious Darul Uloom in Deoband in 1892. During his time there, he developed a strong bond with Gangohi and Mahmud Hasan. He was inducted and granted authority in the Sufi path by Gangohi, and he became Mahmud Hasan's most trusted advisor. In 1898, Madani's family relocated to Madinah, which was then a constituent of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, he temporarily halted his education at Deoband in order to reunite with his family. Madani resided in Madinah for around fifteen years, making only infrequent and short visits to India. Upon completing his studies in the Hijaz, he seamlessly transitioned into the field of teaching, where he swiftly gained recognition and acclaim as a distinguished scholar of hadith. In 1917, Mahmud Hasan was found guilty of conspiracy during the Silk Letter Movement. Madani joined his teacher in Malta jail, where they stayed for a duration of three years.

Madani's years in incarceration solidified his position against the British. In his subsequent memoirs, he would recall encountering several activists from all parts of the world who were also detained for their anti-colonial endeavors. Upon their return to India, Mahmud Hasan and Madani, Madani assumed the role of a teacher at the Deoband seminary. Shortly after returning to India, Mahmud Hasan passed away, and Madani was inevitably regarded as his successor in the Deoband hierarchy. During the initial years, Madani authored a memoir of his incarceration in Malta alongside Mahmud Hasan, documenting numerous incidents of mistreatment inflicted by the British authorities. Madani authored numerous political treatises, primarily consisting of anti-British polemics that highlighted the prosperous condition of India before colonial rule and the following dire situation suffered by India, particularly Indian Muslims. In addition, Madani underscored the worldwide damage that Britain was causing to Muslims, particularly through the elimination of the caliphate. Madani integrated his conventional schooling and teaching with a proactive involvement in politics, under the influence of Mahmud Hasan.

Madani not only engaged in writing, but also actively took part in continuous nationalist political endeavors. He actively participated in the Khilafat Movement in its last year, and then affiliated himself with the Congress party. He had a close relationship with Gandhi, collaborating with him to organize the non-cooperation movement and

other peaceful campaigns. In 1927, Madani assumed the position of principal at the seminary in Deoband. Around the same time, he also took on a leadership role in Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, the primary organization representing the religious scholars. Madani, as the leader of both the influential Deoband seminary and the Jamiat, exerted significant influence on the 'ulama. He actively encouraged them to provide their support to the Congress party and other nationalist endeavors.

Over time, as the Muslim League gained more power and influence, several religious scholars switched sides and backed the movement for separatism. Although many secular-minded Muslim League activists were involved, they sought the support of religious leaders by portraying an idealistic state that would implement Islamic law and ensure justice and prosperity for all residents in line with Islamic principles. Several religious scholars, notably the renowned Sufi sheikh and widely-read novelist Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi, were attracted to this idea. Thanawi's disciples, in reality, founded Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam as a competitor to Madani's Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind. The newly formed Jamiat associated itself with the League and began exerting influence over significant portions of both intellectuals and ordinary people, persuading them to endorse the concept of Pakistan. Madani faced mounting pressure from both the secular League and the religious Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam to leave Congress and align with what appeared to be the most favorable and maybe unavoidable course for Muslims.

Notwithstanding these advancements, the bulk of 'ulama continued to favor a unified India. What was the reason for that? Contrary to intuition, the 'ulama did not take a leading role in advocating for an Islamic state. Instead, the majority of religious leaders preferred a secular India, while the secular elite supported the idea of a separate religious state. I contend that the ironic pattern can be largely attributed to the notable impact of Madani and his unwavering dedication to secular nationalism. During the 1930s, Madani had established himself as a respected and influential figure among the 'ulama. He held the position of principal at the most esteemed educational institution, served as the de facto leader of the main 'ulama organization, and was regarded as a prominent representative of the initial two generations of Deobandi scholarship. Additionally, he gained recognition in his own capacity as a scholar, activist, and author. Consequently, the majority of 'ulama adhered to Madani's stance against partition, and it is probable that if he had changed his attitude, many 'ulama would have done the same.

Madani's steadfast adherence to this perspective, even facing harsh criticism from fellow Muslim political and intellectual figures, appears to be undervalued in the historical narrative of Hindu-Muslim relations in India. Madani, a highly esteemed scholar, established a theological foundation for Indian Muslims to embrace their Indian identity while adhering to secular nationalism. This ideology was beneficial for Indian Muslims who chose to remain in India or were unable to relocate to Pakistan. Simultaneously, this movement advocating for a united India served as evidence to Hindu nationalists that numerous Indian Muslims want to remain in India, indicating that not all Muslims in India resided there solely due to an unwillingness to relocate. Madani's study and activism played a significant impact in shaping the development of contemporary Muslim Indian citizenship.

HOWEVER, WHAT IS THE REASON BEHIND MADANI'S INSISTENCE ON SECULAR NATIONALISM?

According to all reports, he was a profoundly devout individual. Madani faced accusations of being a Hindu sympathizer, a sell-out, and a hypocrite due to his opposition to the establishment of an Islamic state. What were the driving factors and logical reasoning behind Madani's actions? In the subsequent part, I examine Madani's political ideology within the broader context of Indian political thinking during the twentieth century. I specifically concentrate on Madani's concept of composite nationalism. In my view, Madani's evolving anti-imperialist stance led him to conclude that countering the British had to be approached inside the framework of British ideology, which Madani principally identified as liberalism. Consequently, a critical assessment of British colonialism has to be framed within a liberal framework. In order to ensure uniformity, this critique had to likewise embrace secular nationalism. Therefore, Madani's support for composite nationalism was not motivated by a desire for secular nationalism alone. Instead, he saw this support as a means to fight against imperialism, prioritizing anti-imperialism over any potential worries about a Hindu-dominated majority.

MADANI'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Madani's main political drive was rooted in his opposition to imperialism, as previously stated. During his time of incarceration in Malta under British rule, he formulated his political beliefs. He belonged to an intellectual lineage that accepted the Hindu majority but harbored significant concerns about the British presence. Madani's initial publications primarily consisted of anti-British polemics, whereby he critically examined the impact of British colonialism on India's economy, productivity, and the broader Muslim politics worldwide. These initial works demonstrate a strong dedication to removing the British presence, but they do not engage with the subsequent intricate inquiries over the nature of independence that would arise in later years. Within this segment, I utilize Madani's papers, novels, memoirs, and letters to reconstruct his subsequent, more developed political ideology. Madani's critics frequently alleged that he displayed inconsistency in his opposition to British control while simultaneously embracing Hindu governance. Madani's perspectives can be regarded as coherent, provided that we examine his involvement with liberalism. I contend that Madani embraced liberal concepts as a means to scrutinize British imperialism using liberal frameworks. Moreover, his liberal examination of imperialism drove him to endorse composite nationalism as well. Consequently, his dedication to secular nationalism was occasionally lacking in complete enthusiasm. In his book, *Composite Nationalism and Islam*, Maulana explains its bearings as:

By composite nationalism I mean here 'nationalism', the foundation of which was laid down by Prophet Mohammad (SAAS) in Madina. That is to say, the people of India as Indians, as a nation united (despite religious and cultural diversity), should become one solid nation and should wage war against the alien power that has usurped their natural rights. It is incumbent upon every Indian to fight against such a barbaric regime and throw off the shackles of slavery. It is important not to interfere in another's religion – rather all nations (communities) living in India is free to practice their religion, life by its moral values and act according to their religious traditions. While

maintaining peace and tranquility, they should propagate their ideology, follow their culture, promote civilization and protect their personal law. Neither should a minority interfere in the personal affairs of other minorities or the majority, nor should the majority strive to assimilate the minority into itself. This is what the Indian National Congress has been striving to achieve ever since its inception. In its first session in 1885, it outlined its main objectives in the following words; To unite the divergent and conflicting elements – that form the Indian populace and turn them into one nation.

MADANI'S STANCE ON ANTI-IMPERIALISM IS CHARACTERIZED BY HIS LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE

Current research in the field of political theory on empire has focused on analyzing the interconnected nature of liberalism and imperialism. Political thought historians have analyzed the ways in which influential liberals, in a somewhat unexpected manner, endorsed imperialism. This endorsement was facilitated by the presence of a prevailing narrative of progress and a teleological perspective on history. Although liberal intellectuals advocate for democracy and self-government, these ideas often inadvertently contribute to imperial domination. Indeed, eminent liberal intellectuals like John Stuart Mill offered crucial rationale that supported Britain's hegemony over India. Simultaneously, historians have observed the manner in which the principles of liberalism were frequently embraced and employed by individuals and groups that were engaged in resistance against imperialism. Put simply, liberal principles were present and underwent changes throughout time and in different locations. These ideas could be employed to scrutinize imperialism, just as they could be employed to endorse it. Consequently, liberal anti-imperialism emerged autonomously in South Asia, North Africa, and Latin America.

In the context of South Asia, the prevailing historical account of liberalism identifies Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) as the primary figure who established or at least had a significant impact on the development of liberalism. Roy, who served as a Mughal ambassador in England for a short period, promoted the abolition of sati and actively backed numerous revolutions during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. During the nineteenth century, Indian political philosophy witnessed the emergence of liberalism as a prominent ideology. Indian liberals extensively studied European liberal thinking and skillfully applied it to suit the specific circumstances of their own country. In Bengal, the adoption of the Lockean tradition by peasants gave rise to liberal views of property, which simultaneously supported and criticized global capitalism. By the close of the nineteenth century, liberalism had gained significant popularity in India, and several key figures in the Congress party, such as Nehru and Mahadev Govind Ranade, actively advocated for its principles. Madani, who resided in Delhi, Bengal, Arabia, and Malta at different periods, unquestionably encountered liberalism, both from fellow Indian nationalists and British colonial officials.

In his later publications, Madani focused on the contradictions he identified within British liberalism. He expressed in his correspondence with friends that Indians should be entitled to the same rights as any other nation. He emphasized the importance of fostering a strong national identity among Indians, stating that the entire world looked down upon them equally due to colonization. Therefore, he believed that all Indians should unite and work together to enhance their status. Madani underscored

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the importance of Indians being regarded as individuals with rights in the context of classical liberalism.

Additionally, he censured the British Empire for failing to uphold its own principles about equitable treatment of the populace. Madani expressed in a particular passage that Britain, because of its historical assertions of freedom and other global factors, as well as previous commitments and statements, was incapable of suppressing the Congress movement. In essence, Madani recognized the limitations that Britain encountered: the very ideology that justified and facilitated its control also hindered it from exceeding certain boundaries. Madani urged appealing to Britain based on its inherent principles, by invoking the "inherent rights" that are universally available to all individuals as a fundamental aspect of being human.

Madani saw the need for universal natural rights that would be applicable to everyone, irrespective of their religious or ethnic distinctions. Hence, Madani recognized that a condemnation of British imperialism in such terms inherently benefited not only Hindus and followers of other religions, but also Indian Muslims, as advocating for the natural rights of Indian Muslims would imply advocating for the rights of all Indians. Madani did not see this to be an issue. Instead, he viewed it as his duty to provide support to Hindus in their shared fight for independence.

Madani perceived the divisions between Hindus and Muslims as an artificial construct instigated by the British. Madani consistently emphasized in many writings and letters that the interaction between the two theological factions had predominantly been characterized by harmony prior to the era of colonialism. The British deliberately pitted the two parties against each other, recognizing that this tactic would divert their attention from safeguarding their own rights. Moreover, it would potentially compel them to collaborate with the British due to apprehension that the opposing side was already doing so and gaining preferential treatment from the British. Madani was cognizant of the League's regular correspondence with British authorities, and he expressed strong condemnation of this act as a betrayal of the nationalist agenda.

Madani expounded on different facets of rights in his numerous letters and essays, as he sought to advocate for natural rights. Madani advocated for the equal democratic rights of all Indians, asserting that they should have the same access to civic and political liberties as British citizens in their own country. He wrote another paper where he justified economic rights and accused the British of causing the impoverishment of a previously prosperous nation. Madani argued that British dominance over India's resources undermined India's sovereignty. During the time when India was considered "constitutionally free," its freedom was actually a mockery since it still relied on the British for guidance in all aspects of its internal and external affairs. True freedom, on the other hand, can only be achieved when the state is completely independent from any form of foreign interference, whether it be direct or indirect.

Madani opposed British imperialism by employing classical liberal concepts such as individual rights, state sovereignty, and freedom. Madani's quest for independence was not primarily focused on preserving the Muslim identity against a different majority, but rather on safeguarding the Muslim identity against forceful foreign rule. Madani continued his relationship with Congress, while disregarding the

League as being influenced by the British. The sole course of action was to champion absolute Indian independence, which was hindered by internal conflicts among various colonized factions.

COMPOSITE NATIONALISM REFERS TO A FORM OF NATIONALISM THAT ENCOMPASSES MULTIPLE CULTURAL, ETHNIC, AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES WITHIN A NATION

Madani's endorsement of secular nationalism sparked disagreement among Indian Muslims, particularly on the extent of Muslims' involvement in the emerging nation. The League campaigners expressed their struggle in negotiating with Congress, despite Congress's requirement for the Muslim representation. They raised concerns about the future scenario after independence, when the Muslim minority would no longer be deemed necessary. Without a doubt, there would be a complete absence of representation for the faith. The atmosphere got extremely strained in 1938, when the highly influential Iqbal published a poem opposing Madani. The poem was a direct response to Madani's lecture, in which he eloquently maintained the concept of secular Indian nationalism and emphasized that nations are founded on geographical factors rather than religious ones. Iqbal derided Madani for his lack of knowledge of the faith and drew a parallel between Madani and Abu Lahab, a prominent adversary of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community in Makkah.

Madani delved into the problem of nationalism, particularly from his standpoint as a Muslim theologian, in response to the escalating tensions and misconceptions. Madani supported the concept of *muttahida qawmiyyat*, often known as composite nationalism, as completely aligned with the principles of Islam. Composite nationalism refers to the concept of several religious factions coming together as a one nation, with each group acknowledging and respecting the autonomy of others to practice their own distinct way of life, while also committing to collaborate on political affairs. Madani explicitly referred to the Constitution of Madinah, a historical agreement between Jews and Muslims in seventh-century Madinah, as a precursor for this form of nationalism. This incident exemplified the Prophet's endorsement of the principle that "all factions should be considered as a unified entity." Muslims have a responsibility to assist and back Jews who are part of the covenant. Madani believed that this agreement demonstrated that Muslims might unite with Hindus as a one country without any doctrinal limitations. Madni writes:

Unlike Hindus and Zoroastrians who completely destroy the dead body, either turning the corpse into ashes by placing upon a pyre and later throwing it into the rivers or by placing it on the Tower of Silence for birds to consume it, only Muslims bury the dead body into graves, unlike them, even after death, a Muslim remains attached to the Soil. Their graves remain intact. And as per Muslim belief, on the Day of Judgment, it is from these graves that they would be resurrected into yet another life. Though the dead body of Muslims placed beneath the earth also gets partially destroyed, it is from the remaining particles that their new existence would come into being. Thereby, Muslims physical domiciliary to the land would remain till the doom's day.

In opposition to Iqbal and other proponents of the idea that there was a deficiency in knowledge, Madani substantiated his claim by distinguishing between two concepts of community: a *qawm* and a *milla*. Madani argued that, according to

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scripture and classical Arabic dictionaries, a qawm referred to a group of people defined by their geographical location, similar to a contemporary nation-state. On the other hand, a milla was specifically associated with religious affiliation. His views were taken seriously by Dr. S. M. Iqbal, a great poet and thinker of the 20th century Muslim world, and raised many controversies among the Muslim elite in India.

In one of his poems, he strongly criticizes the stand of Madani that Millat (community) in Islam is constituted by nation (watan). Thus, from Deoband, Hussain Ahmad proves somewhat strange singing out high on the pulpit That Millat is based on land (watan). What does he know of the stance of the Arab Messenger, on whom be peace? Bring yourself close to Mustafa, for his alone is faith complete If you cannot approach him You're just an Abu Lahab! Maulana Madani also wrote in Muttahida Qaumiyat aur Islam under the title of—The Reality of My Delhi Speech and Spreading of the News of Composite Nationalism] wherein he clarifies his stand about nationalism: As Allama learnt from my replies to some of my friends' letters, I had no intention of advising any one on nationalism and I had used no such words in the statement I had issued in Delhi. I was simply talking about the great loss and sufferings that the British government has inflicted upon all Indians, especially Muslims. I also mentioned the fact that in our times the country makes a nation. And that all Indians, whether be Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Zoroastrian, are looked down upon everywhere abroad. Since they all belong to this country, they are regarded as one qawm. Their prestige and honor are no better than that of slaves; they are treated shabbily and their legitimate demands are ignored. Indians are not only discriminated abroad regarding their citizenship rights, but are also discriminated against vis-à-vis their human rights. All their protests fall on deaf ears. This is, in my view, an effect of slavery.

Consequently, each community had multiple subdivisions, and prophets from previous periods coexisted with disbelieving communities. There were no restrictions on collaborating with other religions; each may preserve its distinctiveness while making contributions to the broader collective. Collaboration was indeed essential to accomplish shared objectives of Hindus and Muslims. Moreover, for Madani, this was the sole structure that could logically ensue from a liberal critique of British imperialism. In order for Indian Muslims to assert their desire for independence by appealing to natural rights, they needed to establish their citizenship on the basis of natural rights rather than religion. Assuming that were true, advocating for an independent state would not only divert attention from the opposition to imperialism, but it would also undermine the effectiveness of the criticism against imperialism.

Madani's proposition of composite nationalism was met with some resistance, particularly among the 'ulama. Although some nationalist activists embraced the idea of composite nationalism as a response to the increasing separatist movement, a significant number of the 'ulama expressed discontent with Madani's assertions. Zafar Ahmad 'Uthmani, one of Thanwi's most prominent followers, composed a distinctive critique. 'Uthmani argued in his critique of Madani's work that composite nationalism could only be justified in cases where Muslims constituted the majority. In situations such as India, where Muslims constituted a minority, the concept of composite nationalism would result in the gradual integration of Muslims into the predominant culture, leading to a decline in Muslim beliefs and rituals over time.

Moreover, 'Uthmani contended that the Constitution of Madinah could not be used as a valid basis for secular Indian nationalism. He pointed out that in Madinah, Muslims had complete political and legal authority, whereas in India, they did not possess the same level of control. 'Uthmani consequently aligned himself with Thanawi and several other orthodox scholars to champion the establishment of an independent nation. Following the partition, many of these scholars migrated to Pakistan, in contrast to Madani, who chose to stay in India.

Madani remains skeptical: Muslims have lived in India as a minority for centuries, and their religious beliefs have remained unaffected. Each religious minority has the ability to coexist independently from other minorities and without being compelled by the majority. According to Madani, if the discussion revolved around preserving the belief system, the top priority would be to remove the British presence. The faith of the new generation attending English schools was being impacted. Madani argued that composite nationalism was rational even from a religious standpoint, as it eliminated the most imminent danger to the faith. Composite nationalism, according to Madani, was the sole means by which the British could be compelled to leave India. He believed that any notions of separatism were imperialist tactics similar to the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire through divide and rule strategies.

CONCLUSION

Madani experienced a growing sense of isolation in the final stages of his life. A notable faction of his fellow 'ulama abandoned him to back the cause of Pakistan. He faced opposition from modernists, Islamists, and League campaigners who accused him of betraying Islam. Additionally, Hindu nationalist groups began to view him with heightened suspicion. However, he held the prominent position of being the primary representative of a significant historical faction, which is now mostly disregarded: religious scholars who actively advocated for secular nationalism prior to the independence of India. As a result of Madani's influence, a significant portion of religious scholars continued to endorse a unified India and chose to stay in India even after the division. Madani's concepts of composite nationalism gained renewed significance following independence, as it became evident that a substantial Muslim population would continue to reside in the country. The ideas helped provide a theological basis through which Indian Muslims could politically engage, and the Darul Uloom of Deoband became an important symbol for cooperation between Hindus and Muslims.

This essay has posited Husain Ahmad Madani as a significant figure in modern Indian political thought and especially within South Asian Muslim debates. For historians of South Asia, Madani serves a counterpoint to standard narratives of Indian nationalism, and provides useful connections between South Asian Muslim thought and other anti-imperial burgeoning thinkers in the Muslim world such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh. For historians of political thought, Madani provides another data point to what Christopher Bayly called the "global liberal constitutional moment." Finally, for political theorists, Madani's discussions on multicultural nationalism provide insight into issues of political belonging and difference today, and provide especially useful material to think about the contentious and ongoing question of Islam's compatibility with liberal citizenship.



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