10.

The Early Antiestablishment Response to the Western Challenge

What then of the opposition to acccommodationists and the pro-establishmentarians? First, it must be emphasized that the Muslim world never lacked individuals with the courage and the conviction to resist alien domination by force of arms. Abd al-Qadir's sustained and heroic resistance to the French in Algeria (1832–1847), the Mujahidin movement in Muslim India led by Sayyid Ahmad Brelvi and Shah Ismail Shahid in the 1830s, the Indian Mutiny of 1857–1858,[1] the rising of the Sudanese Mahdi and the creation of the Mahdist state (1881–1898), the Urabi Pasha revolt in Egypt (1879–1882), the two nineteenth-century British-Afghan wars and early twentieth-century resistance to imperial pressures by the Somali leader Muhammad Abdullah Hasan (dubbed the "mad mullah" by the British) are only the more important or better-known examples. Others, great and small, could be cited.

Even established governments, although obliged by bitter experience to accept that diplomacy might gain more (or lose less) than war, never completely abandoned the military option. This was shown in the Ottoman actions leading to and during the Crimean War and the "Eastern Crisis" of the 1870s ending in war against Russia.

On balance, however, the military options could not change the strategic configuration based on Europe's overwhelming military and technological dominance. That many of the sustained and, for a time, successful military actions against Western imperialism took place in remote hinterland areas less inviting to Western economic interests and more conducive to guerrilla tactics puts limits on their significance in the larger tableau of developments.

All of the examples of outright armed resistance to European domination were undergirded by a strong Muslim religious message, and in most cases one or more individuals from the ranks of the ulama or the Sufi brotherhood leadership can be pinpointed. A striking example was the early nineteenth-century fatwa of one Shah Abdul Aziz ruling that India under British rule was *Dar al-Harb*. Accordingly, Muslims must either drive the British out (jihad) or emigrate to Muslim territory (hijra). This call was picked up by Sayyid Ahmad Brelvi and Shah Ismail Shahid, whose movement bore the significant name of Mujahidin.

What then about the role of the Muslim "clergy" in other forms of resistance to the Westernizers and the accommodationists? One general theme to be noted is that even the more politically quietist ulama began to perceive the threat to their interests as the Westernizers made serious inroads into their virtual monopoly over formal education. The ulama response tended to take the form of holding out for the autonomy of their own educational institutions even if they could not stem the tide of new, essentially Westernizing, schools growing up around them. The Westernizers, in turn, often found it expedient to found new institutions circumventing thereby the old religious establishment. For example, the ulama's resistance to "reform" at al-Azhar led to the creation in 1872 of the Dar al-'Ulum as a teachers college to train those bound for service in the governmental schools. With a teaching college, a national library (founded the same year, 1872), a network of governmental schools, plus other such institutions as the first secular law school (1886) the Egyptian government was simply bypassing those ulama who dug in their heels against change.[2] An equivalent tactic was used in Istanbul.

The Ottomans paid lip service to the ulama and championed Islam but continued to create Westernizing, government-controlled educational institutions. By 1847, for example, the Ottoman government had a separate ministry for education. This grew out of the 1845 Council of Public Instruction, the announcement of which included the following pious statement: "The first of the necessities of this life is to know the duties and obligations which religion imposes on man." These comforting words for the ulama papered over a continuing reduction of their educational role. The ulama in this period also became clearly distinguished in dress from other Ottoman officials, being permitted to keep to their robes and turban after all others were obliged to don the European-style Nizami uniforms.[3]

The ulama potential for encouraging or at least legitimating political protest remained, however, intact. Two prominent examples in the period before the First World War took place in Iran. The national boycott against

the shah's having granted a British subject monopoly control over the production and sale of tobacco throughout the country was largely sparked and sustained by ulama leadership. A more nuanced example of ulama political leadership came during the 1906–1909 period when a number of eminent ulama joined ranks with secular leaders in pushing for a constitutional monarchy. Certain of the ulama were, however, lined up in favor of absolutism, and others who had been constitutionalists later had second thoughts.

Two incidents elsewhere illustrate the extent of ulama involvement in politics. In 1913 the municipal council in Kanpur (Cawnpore), India sought to demolish the ablutions area of a mosque to make room for a new road. The local ulama countered with a fatwa stating that destroying the ablutions area was tantamount to destroying the mosque itself. In a scenario duplicated often in modern times in various parts of the Muslim world, crowd protests at the mosque became a riot put down by police with loss of life. The incident was only brought to an end by the decisive action of the British viceroy, Lord Hardinge, who personally went to Kanpur and reversed the municipality decision.[4]

Earlier in Tunisia in 1857 Muhammad Bey had been forced by European pressure to issue the *'Ahd al-Aman* (Fundamental Pact), providing for European-style legal guarantees similar to those the Ottoman sultan had earlier introduced in 1839. The ulama, asked to give their legal opinion, produced fatwas that made no effort to reconcile the 'Ahd al-Aman with Islamic law. Instead, they hewed strictly to the most literal interpretations of Islamic law, which meant, in effect, a categorical rejection of these Westernizing reforms. At the same time, however, the ulama passed the buck back to the bey, concluding that he had the right to decide as he saw fit.[5]

These two incidents separated by more than a half-century in time and roughly four thousand miles in space epitomize ulama involvement in the political arena. With very few exceptions the ulama opposed the alien borrowings from Europe and expressed that opposition when it seemed safe to do so. Yet, their age-old fear of *fitna* and reluctance to confront government usually induced them to hold back whenever that seemed prudent. They would speak out to protect narrowly Islamic interests (e.g., the integrity of mosques or of the *Shari'ah*, even if the latter was increasingly marginalized by state-made law.) They were disinclined to challenge political leadership directly. Indeed, many cases of such apparent confrontations involved, on examination, little more than ulama post facto legitimation of actions taken by those within the political and military classes. This was essentially the case in the fatwa deposing the reformist Sultan Selim III in 1807 and in the

events leading to the deposition within a year of his successor, Mustafa IV, to be replaced by Sultan Mahmud II. The most important ulama supported the deposition of Selim III, but it was military action by the Janissary auxiliaries that made the difference. The quite formal role of ulama in such political struggles was well indicated when the successful rebel against Sultan Mustafa IV, Bayrakdar, summoned the *Shaykh al-Islam* and leading ulama, obliged them to support the restitution of Selim III, and sent the Shaykh al-Islam to work this out with Sultan Mustafa IV. Mustafa IV then had Selim III assassinated and tried to do the same with the young Mahmud (for then Mustafa expected to be secure as the only surviving male in the Ottoman line), who escaped just in time.[6]

Much the same can be said for the deposition of Sultan Abdulhamid II 102 years later in 1909. A fatwa was obtained, even though most of the ulama and certainly the many students in the religious schools supported Abdulhamid II. Indeed, the religious students had been instrumental in Sultan Abdulhamid II's short-lived regaining of autocratic power in 1908–1909.

That the ulama were honored to the extent that they remained "above politics" is illustrated by the famous Bakri family, which had provided the principal imams of the Zaytuna Mosque in Tunis for over 190 year and presided as well over a famous Tunisian *zawiyya*. One Abu al-Ghaith al-Bakri, however, forsook a religious career and became a governmental concessions farmer. He received the following rebuke from the chief minister, "We used to rise to greet you out of respect for your ancestors, but since you were not satisfied to follow in their way preferring instead governmental positions you must become as other men of government . . . without any other distinction."[7]

This, at least, was the general situation governing the political participation of those ulama in the capital cities or those areas under effective government control. In the hinterland, where governmental writ could be quietly circumvented, ignored, or even resisted, a less inhibited Muslim leadership could be found not just from the ulama but from Sufi leaders or, for that matter, individuals with no Islamic religious specialization. There, the centuries-old pattern of religio-political challenges from the periphery against the political center, as Ibn Khaldun had highlighted centuries earlier, prevailed. Such movements long predated the modern age of Western domination (the earliest go back to the early years of Islam in the seventh century, e.g., the Kharijites) and could be found at one place of another throughout the vast Muslim world in every century thereafter. Interesting modern examples in Islamic Africa taking place before the period of outright

Western colonial rule are the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate by Uthman dan Fodio (1754–1817) and the jihad movement of Hajj Umar Tal (1794–1865). Other movements important in shaping later Muslim thought and action that arose before the West had assumed its hegemonic role were the Wahhabiyya in eighteenth-century Arabia and even the earlier Naqshbandiyya Sufi order arising in the eastern reaches of Islam. It would be anachronistic to views such movements as responding to alien infidel intrusions.

Other opposition movements, however, were clearly resisting the alien West. These would include several in what was in the process of becoming British India:

- Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (1786–1831) led the Pathan resistance to the British until he was killed in battle.
- One Titu Mir (1782–1831), a Calcutta wrestler—and thus an interesting example of a leader with no specialized religious training, emerged to lead a movement whose followers wore distinctive dress and ate only with other members of the brotherhood. Titu Mir had been influenced by Barelwi and he, too, died fighting in an uprising.
- Hajj Shari'at Allah (1764–1840, an alternative birthdate of 1781 is given) founded the Fara'idi movement of Bengal. Continued by his even more militant son, Dudu Miyan (1819–1862), this movement emphasized that India under British rule was no longer a Muslim land but was *Dar al-Harb*. This movement declined after the British authorities arrested Dudu Miyan in 1847.

In what is now Indonesia three very serious armed religious movements challenged Dutch rule:

- In Sumatra at the beginning of the nineteenth century three scholars returning from pilgrimage to Mecca began a campaign of preaching puritanical religious reform. Known as the Padri movement (the *kaum puteh*, or "those in white," since the followers wore white robes as in Arabia) this movement opposing what was seen as unorthodox Islamic practice held out against the Dutch, in cooperation with some of the local political elite, until 1837.
- In Java the son of a local sultan, Dipa Negara, led a resistance movement, supported by the ulama, against the Dutch for five years, from 1825 to 1830.
- Much later in the century the Dutch attempt to establish direct control over the sultanate of Atjeh (Acheh) provoked an extended war

lasting from 1873 until 1908 in which resistance to colonialism was led by the ulama.

In Central Asia and Northern Africa resistance to foreign control was often led by different Sufi orders. Pride of place in opposing Russian colonialist incursions into the Muslim regions of Asia go to the Naqshbandiyya order and especially to a certain Imam Shamil who led a three-decade-long resistance to the Russians until his final defeat in 1859. Undergirding this movement was a disciplined and puritanical religious calling. Another Sufi order of importance in this area was the Qadriyya. Later, the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadriyya together provided the backbone of one more great revolt against Russian rule in the years 1877–1879. Other revolts broke out from time to time, one as late as during the First World War, but before that time there had begun to emerge a more accommodationist tendency personified in the career of Ismail Gasprinski (1851–1914), who championed a program of introducing modern techniques and thought to the Muslims of Russia while seeking to achieve sociopolitical strength through unity. Thus, the term *Jadidism* (from the Arabic for "new") to label this movement.

In North Africa Algeria's Abd al-Qadir, who held off the French from 1832 until his surrender in 1847, was from a family of Qadriyya brotherhood leaders. Muhammad b. Ali al-Sanusi (1787–1859) founded the Sanusiyya brotherhood that provided a matrix for both sociopolitical strengthening and a deepening of Islamization in North and Central Africa. Later, as European penetration into these areas grew, the Sanusiyya brotherhood often was involved in resistance to the invader. This was especially the case in what is now modern Libya. Following the Italian invasion beginning in 1911 the Sanusiyya brotherhood led resistance in Cyrenaica (the eastern region of Libya) for more than two decades until finally subjugated by Mussolini's Fascist regime.

The Sudan in the last two decades of the nineteenth century offered a major example of short-term success in rolling back foreign intervention and establishing an indigenous state and government free of outside control. This was the work of the radical religio-political movement created by Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi (1848–1885). He, too, had Sufi roots. In fact, an important step in his personal religious itinerary was his bitter disappointment in discovering that his chosen Sufi shaykh was too lax. He later claimed to have received a special mandate from God and, acting on that claim, sought to create a renewed holy community.

Muhammad Ahmad exemplifies that figure found throughout the cen-

turies in Muslim history—a mahdi, or leader of a messianic movement with apocalyptic overtones.[8] After Muhammad Ahmad's death following his crowning success in capturing Khartoum, his successor presided over the Mahdist state until it went down in defeat before the armies of the Anglo-Egyptian reconquest, culminating in the famous 1898 Battle of Omdurman.[9]

Such millenarian movements that presume to add to existing scriptures and prophethood are viewed with extreme caution if not downright disapproval by the religiously orthodox in all three sister Semitic religions, and none more so than Islam with its doctrines of the Qur'an as the literal word of God and Muhammad as the "seal of prophecy." Accordingly, when the millenarian forces do not win their Armageddon and the world does not come to an end such movements try to work their way back toward orthodoxy. Within a generation after the Mahdist state had been overthrown and the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium established the Ansar (as the Mahdi's followers were called) were on their way to becoming, in effect, yet another brotherhood in a plurality of Sufi orders.

These many movements of resistance to the foreign infidel—whether led by mahdis, puritanical preachers, sufi leaders, ulama, or even the religiously unlearned—can be fitted into the following schema:

- Several were quite localized. Others extended over significant area (as the Sanusiyya in Africa or the Naqshbandiyya in Asia). All, however, either met ultimate defeat in battle or survived only by accepting the fait accompli of colonial domination. Indeed, the entire Muslim world eventually fell under outright European colonial rule with only the following exceptions: Iran and the Anatolian portion of the Ottoman Empire that became the Republic of Turkey escaped being taken over by a single European power largely because the deadlocked power balances within the European state system preserved their tenuous independence. Even so, Iran was twice in this century divided up and partially occupied by British and Russian forces—from 1907 through the period of the First World War and then again during World War II. Only remote Afghanistan and much, but not all, of the Arabian Peninsula can be added to this small list of Muslim lands escaping outright European colonial rule. All other Muslim peoples lost their independence to the alien infidel.
- As the different efforts at physical resistance failed throughout the Muslim world, the stock of those Muslim leaders preaching accommodation with the outsider intruders and learning their ways rose.

The idea that Muslims were being colonized because they were "colonizable" (the expression adopted years later by Algeria's Malek Bennabi) came to the fore. Muslims, it was argued, needed to put their own house in order, get back to the basic values of their religion, accept the painful task of learning from the arrogant dominator, and work for the day when Islamic society could again stand on its own.

- Yet the allure of outright resistance here and now never died out. Appeals to prudence, preparation, and long-term planning could be seen to make sense, but the Muslim heart was stirred by bolder action. Accordingly, any hand raised against infidel domination was assured of at least quiet, unspoken approval, and if that resistance showed signs of achieving success this subdued support could be swiftly activated into a powerful mass movement throughout the Muslim world. Thereafter, the dying embers of overt resistance to the infidel so quickly kindled by signs of success would just as quickly subside when the armed resistance proved to be yet another disappointing mirage.[10]

These developments in the vast Muslim world from Morocco to the Indies were not taking place in isolation and must be integrated into ongoing global history. Among the changes affecting Muslim peoples, just as the rest of the world, were the creation of stronger, more centralized states and the steady spread of the made-in-Europe concept of nationalism. Added to these were the many inventions and technological improvements that made all parts of the world more accessible and eroded the possibility for certain peoples to opt out of global politics.

And the nineteenth century brought increased literacy. The literacy rate remained quite modest throughout the "third world" (to use today's term) in comparison with the explosion of schooling and rising literacy rates during the last half of the twentieth century), but it was sufficient to challenge the old monopoly of knowledge held by religious elites and government officials. Hand in hand with increased literacy and Western-style schooling emerged a radically different image of language and literature. The older concept of a "higher" language used by the religious and governing elite alongside a value-less patois spoken by the common people began to fade. In its place evolved the idea of a language purified of foreign words, stripped of obfuscating tropes, and made representative of the robust genius of the people.

All these factors moved Muslims, just as the rest of the world, in the direction of increased politicization. More people were becoming politically involved. Different categories of people were becoming politically involved.

It is at this very point that the distinction between establishment and antiestablishments forces dissolves. The efforts of both, however diametrically different in other respects, fostered and favored increased politicization. The blurring of distinction between the two groups is well represented in a movement that appealed to Muslims and caused concern to the West from roughly the 1870s until the First World War. This was Pan-Islam, a movement personified in the career of a quintessentially antiestablishment figure, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, but given political muscle when adopted as a program by the principal establishment leader in the late nineteenth-century Muslim world, Ottoman sultan Abdulhamid II. Not confined to a single country, Pan-Islam reached across state borders to impact on all parts of the Muslim world. In a way, Pan-Islam prefigured the internationalized political Islam characterizing today's world.

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–1897) was a very complex man who deliberately veiled his activities in mystery and misrepresentation. Born in Iran and raised as a Shi'i Muslim, he claimed to be a Sunni of Afghan origin (thus, al-Afghani) in order to better reach the Sunni Muslim majority in preaching Muslim political unity against Western imperialism. His activities either took him to or heavily involved him with politics in the Ottoman Empire, Iran, British India, Egypt, the Sudan, and Afghanistan, and the influence of his writings—his mystique—extended to all Muslim countries. Appraisals of him to this day vary wildly. To some he was a charlatan. To others he was an inspired diagnostician of the Muslim plight who prescribed the needed strong medicine of unity and political activism.[11] A good way, perhaps, to take the measure of the man is to see him as a Muslim Ernesto (Che) Guevera (1928–1967). Both were intellectuals and writers while being very much political activists. Both ranged over a vast cultural area (Latin America for Che, the Muslim world for al-Afghani) well beyond their homeland (Argentina and Iran). Both had great charisma enhanced during and after their lives by a continuing mystery concerning the mundane details of their activities. Both became virtual cult figures. This comparison serves also to underscore the extent to which al-Afghani was a very modern man working in an increasingly politicized Muslim world. Indeed, a major part of his legacy has been to activate ever greater numbers of Muslims hitherto inclined to eschew government and politics. "One reason Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, the leading ideologist of Pan-Islam, has had such a continuing vogue in the Muslim world is that he drew not only upon traditional Islamic loyalties, but also on nascent anti-imperialist and protonationalist sentiments that have not lost their pertinence even today."[12]

Pan-Islam was not, however, the creation of one man. It can most readi-

ly be placed in context if we return to the idea of an ongoing dialectic between those Muslims advocating accommodation with the West as opposed to other Muslims pushing for resistance. It has been suggested that each failure of Muslim armed resistance to Western penetration made the less "heroic" tactic of buying time through accommodation in order to learn from the West seem more realistic. This process, however, was cylical, not linear. Accommodationism could also be discredited when governments following that tactic faced nothing but setbacks.

No Muslim state had worked longer to accommodate the European state system and use the time bought to Westernize fundamental political institutions than the Ottoman Empire. The last third of the nineteenth century, however, brought the Ottomans nothing but grief. The peace that Russia imposed on the Ottomans after the 1877–1878 war entailed major losses both in the Balkans and the eastern reaches of the empire, giving up an estimated one-fifth of its total population, roughly half of whom were Muslims.[13] Another blow at this time was Britain's gaining de facto control over the island of Cyprus. This was the condition that Britain, hitherto the principal supporter of the Ottoman Empire, imposed in return for diplomatic support at the 1878 Congress of Berlin. An even more shocking setback was the British occupation of Egypt (still juridically part of the Ottoman Empire) in 1882. That loss had followed hard on the previous year's French conquest of Tunisia.

Somewhat earlier, Russian conquests deep into Muslim Central Asia in the 1860s and 1870s left a vulnerable corridor of Muslim governments (Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Afghanistan) confronting these two expanding European empires, Russia and Britain.

This fateful epoch from the early 1860s to the early 1880s thus added several million Muslims to the number already living under alien rule. At the same time, losses in the largely Christian Balkans gave the Ottoman Empire an overwhelming Muslim majority, and the loyalty of the remaining Christian subjects was suspect. Under such circumstances the ideology of Ottomanism or a political loyalty to the Ottoman state linking together those of different religions, languages, and ethnicity appeared increasingly irrelevant. Since the alien infidel was bent on both "liberating" all non-Muslims and dominating all Muslims, then clearly the overarching existential reality was a common Muslimness.

Such in essence was the ideology that al-Afghani and others advanced. It remained only for Sultan Abdulhamid to make it state policy. Appeals to the Ottoman sultan for help from Muslims as far away as India and the Indies indicated the possibilities for such a policy. Also at hand was the title of

Abdulhamid as caliph—that most venerable of Islamic political offices. Little matter that the title had had slight political relevance for centuries. Indeed, to many of the learned Sunni Muslims the true caliphate had been confined to the original four rightly guided caliphs who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad. Thereafer, leadership was believed to have degenerated into *mulk*, or kingship.

A hectoring Europe had actually managed to stimulate the idea that the Ottoman sultan, in his capacity of caliph, exercised a certain religous leadership over Muslims wherever they might live. A critical development leading to this end is seen to have been the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarja ending the decisive Russian defeat of the Ottomans. Its terms granted Russia the right to intervene in support of Orthodox Christians who were Ottoman subjects. At the same time, the Muslims of the northern Black Sea area, having been wrested from Ottoman control, were deemed independent, but they were to remain somehow linked to the Ottoman sultan "in his capacity of Grand Caliph."[14]

Thus, the Ottoman sultan, as caliph, was to be seen as Muslim pope or patriarch with transnational responsibilities. Such was the implication of these vaguely written treaty articles. The idea was given substance thereafter throughout the nineteenth century as European powers competed to support their Christian compatriots (did not the Crimean War grow out of a European dispute over the control of the Christian holy places in Bethlehem and Jerusalem?). Simple logic demanded that the "right" of European states to intervene on behalf of Christians beyond their borders meant that a Muslim ruler, especially one claiming the title of caliph, should have a similar right.

Given this context and the pleas for Muslim unity advanced not just by Afghani but also many others, including the Young Ottomans and beleagured Muslims in India and the Indies, it is understandable that Sultan Abdulhamid would come forward to champion Pan-Islam. Even the internal situation in the Ottoman Empire predisposed him so to act. Pan-Islam offered an effective way to outflank those latter-day men of the Tanzimat—those liberal constitutionalist Westernizers within the governmental elite.[15] He could, instead, build his autocracy on a solid foundaton of religious legitimacy.

The tit-for-tat logic of a Muslim ruler supporting Muslims wherever they be just as Christian rulers support Christians is unanswerable. Indeed, the Ottoman sultan as caliph (and thus the Muslim equivalent of pope or patriarch in European eyes) would seem to have an even stronger case for intervention beyond his borders in support of Muslims than a Russian tsar,

Austro-Hungarian emperor, or, certainly, a French president. Perhaps Queen Victoria as "Defender of the Faith" and head of the Anglican Church might claim equivalent status,[16] but the number of Anglicans or even all Protestants then living in Muslim lands was small in any case. Neither logic nor religious office made a difference. No Muslim ruler, including the strongest—Sultan Abdulhamid—had adequate power to intervene in support of Muslims elsewhere. Rulers of several European states did have the power to intervene in support of Christians, and they continued to do so.

Even so, the threat of Muslim unity disturbed those European powers—Britain, France, Holland, and Russia—exercising imperial control over millions of Muslims in Africa and Asia. They watched warily as Sultan Abdulhamid, in a brilliant political stroke, initiated the building of the Hijaz Railway starting at Damascus and planned to reach the holy cities of Mecca and Madina. That Pan-Islam would have found favor among Muslims is readily understandable, but in the absence of effective countervailing power to stem Europe's steady encroachment such support would remain largely one of sentiment, not active political commitment. When the Young Turk regime rashly brought the Ottoman Empire into the First World War on the side of the Central Powers, the sultan acting as caliph declared a jihad. The impact on Muslims in general or, more important, on Muslim troops serving in Allied colonial armies was virtually nil. Muslims would understandably wish to see the last important independent Muslim state survive and thrive, but they could discern as well that, under the circumstances, a wait-and-see attitude made more sense.