Between Nation and Ummah: Navigating Iranian National Identity in Islamic Cosmopolitanism

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Abstract

National identity is a political construct that cannot be understood apart from the nation-state system underpinning international relations. The Pan-Islamism, in contrast, attempts to establish the whole Muslim nations under a united Ummah. In pre-Islamic revolution Iran, the Muslim intellectual critique of nationalism emerged in response to an ideology that sought to justify the royal regime based on Iranian nationalism. While this critique succeeded in redefining Islamic faith as integral to Iranian identity, it was itself unsettled by the broader Islamic cosmopolitanism that dominated the Muslim world for more than a century. This paper argues that Iranian identity cannot be reduced to nationalism alone; rather, it must be examined as a construct continually negotiated between the imperatives of statehood and the enduring cosmopolitan ideals of Islam. Drawing on international law, political theory, and Islamic studies, the study challenges the assumption of an inherent dichotomy between Islamic faith and historical nationalism in Iran. It further contends that the inability of contemporary Muslim intellectuals in post-evolutionary Iran to articulate a coherent interpretation of national identity has generated persistent challenges for Iran's educational, political, and legal systems. The first section examines the theoretical foundations of competing narratives of Iranian identity, including Pan-Islamism that underestimate national particularities, and those that sought to elevate nationalism as the sole basis of cultural and political legitimacy. The second section explores the implications of the Islamic cosmopolitanism narrative, which has dominated post-Islamic revolution educational policy and the legal systems of Iran. Ultimately, the paper concludes that the Iranian national spirit remains suspended between national and global poles, reflecting the unresolved tension between the demands of the nation-state and the ideals of religious cosmopolitanism. This tension continues to shape Iran's institutional and political development.

Introduction

The relationship between religion and nationality is one of the most complex issues of the modern era. In some societies, national identity is seen as inseparable from religious affiliation, while in others, religion is viewed as just one of several elements constituting national identity. This article explores the broader tension between Islam and Iranian nationality, placing it within the historical and ideological struggles of the twentieth century. Even though the vast majority of Iranians are Muslim, the Pahlavi regime sought to legitimize the monarchy by anchoring its ideological foundations in the legacy of ancient Iranian civilization, often at the expense of religious traditions. Conversely, many Muslim intellectuals emphasized the global unity of the Muslim community, arguing that nationalism undermines the broader Islamic Ummah. Consequently, both the dominant nationalist ideology of the regime and certain strands of Pan-Islamism converged on the assertion that Islam and Iranian nationality are fundamentally incompatible [1].

National identity is a political construct that cannot be understood in isolation from the nation-state system that underpins international relations. This article argues that Iranian identi-

ty cannot be reduced to nationalism alone; instead, it must be viewed as a construct that is continually negotiated between the imperatives of statehood and the enduring cosmopolitan ideals of Islam. In doing so, it challenges the assumption that Islam and Iranian nationality are inherently irreconcilable. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates international law, political theory, and Islamic studies, this study refutes the myth of a rigid dichotomy between Islamic faith and historical nationalism in Iran. The first section examines the theoretical foundations of competing narratives of Iranian identity, including Pan-Islamism that underestimate national particularities, and those that sought to elevate nationalism as the sole basis of cultural and political legitimacy [2]. The second section explores the implications of the Islamic cosmopolitanism narrative, dominating in the post-Islamic revolution for educational policy and the legal systems of Iran. Ultimately, the paper concludes that the Iranian national spirit remains suspended between national and global poles, reflecting the unresolved tension between the demands of the nation-state and the ideals of religious cosmopolitanism. This tension continues to shape Iran's institutional and political development.

Part One
The Myth of the Dichotomy of Iranian National Identity
The construction of national identity upon a selective reading of a people's past, ignoring certain historical periods or creating a dichotomy between different layers of history, is not unique to Iran. In the genealogy of modern nationalism, similar patterns can be observed in many parts of the world. For example, theorists of Hellenism and Greek nationalism faced two competing pasts in defining modern Greek identity: the legacy of ancient Greece and the Christian Byzantine tradition. Contrasting with the two essential building blocks of modern Greek identity was another historical phase: the 400-year period of Ottoman control in Greece, which Greek nationalists referred to as Turkokratia [3, 4].

Greek nationalism was, in essence, invented as a means of liberation from this "Other." Consequently, in their quest to revive ancient Greece, Greek nationalists simultaneously opposed both Orthodox Christianity and Ottoman domination. Yet historical evidence shows that in the nineteenth century, rural populations in Greece primarily identified themselves as Orthodox Christians and had little knowledge of the glories of ancient Greece. The founders of modern Greece were unfamiliar with Thucydides, Aristotle, Solon, and other figures of antiquity; their traditions extended no further than the Byzantine era. Although Greek nationalists initially succeeded in relegating Byzantium to a secondary status, the tension between Hellenism and Orthodoxy eventually led to reconciliation between the two.

A similar dynamic can be observed in Iran under the Pahlavi regime, which sought to interpret an Iranian renaissance through the "White Revolution." For the Shah, a historical narrative rooted in Aryan descent and the magnificence of the Achaemenid

Empire was particularly appealing. This fragmented narrative of national identity was not limited to Iran and Greece. Egypt provides another example. In 1922, following archaeological discoveries related to the Temple of Amun, Egyptian nationalists called for a return to Pharaonic civilization as the foundation of national identity, rejecting the notions of Arab unity as incompatible with their national self-conception. However, in subsequent decades, this wave subsided, and the concepts of Arab unity replaced it. Egypt, aspiring to lead the Arab world, believed that Arab unity would enable resistance against imperial domination. In the 1950s, Iraqi nationalism also sought to revive the ancient Mesopotamian heritage. With the rise of the Ba'ath regime, this approach continued, as Ba'athist theorists hoped that such a narrative could strengthen national identity among Iraq's diverse communities, Shi'a and Sunni, Arab and Kurd alike.

Eric Hobsbawm argues that, apart from a few historical nations such as China, Korea, Vietnam, and of course Iran and Egypt, which, had they been located in Europe, would have been considered "historic nations" [5-7]. Most territorial units that later claimed independence through nationalist movements were, in fact, the product of royal conquests. Colonized nations, he notes, adopted the same ideology from their European colonizers. Richard Cottam similarly observes that there is little doubt Iranian nationalism is a modern concept, emerging during the Iran–Russia wars of the Qajar era and reaching its peak in the Tobacco Movement under the leadership of the religious establishment, as a response to growing foreign influence. While nationalism itself is a modern phenomenon, originating in the European Renaissance as a means of creating nation-states in opposition to the universal claims of Christianity, the idea of Iranian nationality has deeper roots. During the Safavid period, Shi'ism became a central pillar of Iranian identity. It is said that the tradition of reciting the Shahnameh spread during the Safavid era and continued into the Qajar period. Yet depictions of Rustam from that time show him holding a flag inscribed with the Qur'anic verse "Nasrun min Allah wa fathun qarib." In the Battle of Chaldiran, Iranian troops were encouraged to sacrifice and defend their homeland through passion plays (Ta'ziah) and Ashura poetry. Qajar-era jihad treatises emphasized that people should be mobilized against the Russian army by reciting epic verses of Ashura and recalling the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (AS). Similarly, during the Iran–Iraq war, soldiers drew inspiration from the sacrifices of Imam Husayn's companions, producing extraordinary scenes of devotion and self-sacrifice in defense of their land. Thus, the roots of this duality must be sought elsewhere [8].

In much of the literature on Iranian history, the division of historical periods into "ancient Iran" and "Islamic Iran" is taken as self-evident. Works on Iranian nationalism also adopt this categorization, which has even manifested itself in the country's cultural institutions. As noted earlier, Greek nationalists referred to the Ottoman period as a "dark age." Despite the construction of

[1] Mozaffari, Mohammad Hossein; "Ayneh-ye Sekandar, dar Ahval-e Jame'e va Farhang-e Yunan," [Alexander's Mirror, Greece: Society and Culture]. Tehran, Iran: Nashr-e Naqde Farhang, 2019.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Zimmt Raz; Iranian Nationalism Islamic Unity and Shi'ism in Iran's regional policy in: Meir Litvak (ed.) Constructing Nationalism in Iran: From the Qajars to the Islamic Republic Routledge 2017
[4] Zia-Ebrahimi Reza; The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation Chapter 3 2016.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Hobsbawm E. J. Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme Myth Reality Cambridge University Press 1990, 137.

many mosques during four centuries of Ottoman rule, the Greek population did not convert to Islam. In contrast, the people of Iran are Muslim, yet extreme nationalists, ignoring this reality, glorified ancient Iran as an age of splendor while depicting the Islamic era as a dark age of foreign domination. In this distorted narrative of Iranian nationalism, Alexander's invasion and the destruction of the Achaemenid Empire are downplayed, just as the Mongol invasion and their rule over Iran are omitted entirely from this ideological division of history.

There is little doubt that a significant part of national identity is reflected in the ancient history and civilization of every nation, and that the teaching of historical events serves as an effective means of transmitting information about lifestyles and national values to future generations. Schools are among the most important institutions shaping both individual perspectives and collective attitudes toward national identity and global citizenship, influencing how students perceive the nation and national identity [9]. Although scholars disagree on whether the nation is a purely modern construct or a historical and natural phenomenon, there is consensus that nationalism and the sense of belonging to a nation are inherently ideological claims. Nationalism functions as an ideology that justifies the cohesion of individuals and groups with the state and homeland. Its narrative of national identity presents the illusion that all citizens share common beliefs and values, even though in reality, individuals may experience diverse attitudes and sentiments. Educational systems, shaped by the dominant ideology, seek to idealize the past and instill in students the distinctive qualities of their nation. Thus, whether national identity arises from social necessity or human need, it is ultimately the prevailing ideology that defines and legitimizes it. In this context, the Pahlavi regime attempted to construct a fabricated narrative of Iranian nationalism, grounding the legitimacy of its authoritarian monarchy in a trinity of divinity, kingship, and homeland (Khoda–Shah–Maihan). Strikingly, the Shah himself was placed at the center of this trinity, portrayed as the link between heaven and earth, while the people who in any genuine account of nationalism, constitute the foundation of nationality were excluded altogether. In contrast, alternative narratives of Iranian identity advanced by religious intellectuals, emerged in opposition to this official ideology [10].

The Myth of the Conflict Between Islam and National Identity

For Iran, national history signifies the continuity of identity from ancient Persia through the Islamic era and into the modern period. It therefore remains unclear why, under the Pahlavi regime, opposition to Islam was deemed necessary for defining and consolidating Iranian identity. The monarchy sought to replace Islamic solidarity with Iranian nationalism as the principal unifying force of society. Within this framework, Iranian history was divided into two parts: the pre-Islamic era, celebrated as a glorious age, and the Islamic era, depicted as a dark period of foreign domination lasting until the twentieth century. The Shah's "White Revolution" was thus portrayed as a kind of Iranian renaissance, claiming to restore the nation to its ancient grandeur. In the final years of the Pahlavi regime, education-

al policy emphasized the glorification of ancient Iran and the suppression of Islamic symbols [11]. Although 98 percent of Iranians were Muslim, the regime was blatantly insisting on anti-Islamic policies. As noted at the time, many individuals, under the guise of defending Iranian nationality, launched broad campaigns against Islam, insulting sacred values under the pretext of resisting Arab identity. This supposed duality of national identity was not unique to Iran. Greece presents a comparable case, as both countries are among the few in the world considered "historic nations." Although ancient Greece consisted of multiple city-states, the concept of Hellenism was evident among them. Herodotus famously emphasized: "The truth is that we are all Hellenes, sharing the same blood, speaking the same language, worshipping the same gods, and celebrating the same festivals".

At the time of independence from the Ottoman Empire, 97 percent of Greeks were Orthodox Christians; however, many Greek intellectuals insisted on a "Greek Renaissance" and a return to antiquity. Greek nationalism, which underpinned independence, initially emphasized ancient Greece while disregarding the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. Following the establishment of the modern Greek state in 1827, laws were enacted to protect cultural heritage and archaeology, reinforcing the claim that modern Greece was a revival of ancient Greece, with no cultural continuity with Byzantium or Ottoman rule. Some intellectuals even argued that Macedonia had not been part of ancient Greece but rather a foreign conqueror [12-15]. Yet, over time, rival groups managed to reconcile elements of Hellenism and Orthodoxy. Since the majority of the Greek population were peasants and religiously bound to the Orthodox Church, grounding nationalism solely in ancient Greece without reference to Orthodoxy would have failed. Consequently, the Greek constitution emphasized the link between Hellenism and Orthodox Christianity. Yet this "nationalized Orthodoxy" had to be stripped of its universal claims to embody Hellenism within the framework of the nation-state.

Although reconciliation between pagan antiquity and Byzantine Orthodoxy was not easily achieved, nationalist ideology eventually succeeded in articulating Greek identity through the concept of "Hellenic Orthodoxy." The synthesis of ancient Hellenic elements with Byzantine Christianity firmly established Greek national identity within Orthodoxy [16, 17]. Article 16 (2) of the 1952 Constitution states: "schooling aims at the moral and intellectual education and the development of the national consciousness of the youth on the basis of the ideological principles of the Greek-Christian civilization." At the same time, the four centuries of Ottoman rule functioned as the "Other," reinforcing and consolidating Greek nationality. Greek sources and oral traditions widely recount that Greece lost its independence in 1460 with the Ottoman conquest, entering a period of enslavement that lasted for four centuries. This period is remembered in Greek historiography as Turkokratia, the "dark age" of Greek history. Thus, Greece is considered to have been independent only in antiquity and in the modern era [18].

[7] *Cottam Richard W. Nationalism in Iran: Updated Through 1978 University of Pittsburgh Press 1979, 12-13.*
[8] *Ghoroyani, Farnaz va Adham, Dargham; "Naqsh-e Khair va Shar dar Shakhsiyat-haye Asar-e Hossein Qollar Aghasi" [The Role of Virtue and Vice in Figures in Hossein Qollar Aghasi's Works]. Majalleh-ye Elm va Pazhoohesh Negareh, 1393, Shomareh 30, 11.*
[9] *Mozaffari, Mohammad Hossein; 2019. 1–3*

It is in light of such examples that Ali Shariati argued that a return to pre-Islamic Iran and the severing of historical continuity was artificial and unfavorable. As he explained: "That ancient Achaemenid self of ours is a self that historians, sociologists, scholars, and archaeologists can discover, read, and understand. But our people do not feel it as their own selves. The heroes, figures, geniuses, glories, and myths of that era have no life, movement, or heartbeat among our people… Our pre-Islamic self is visible only to specialists in museums and libraries; the masses remember nothing of it".

The Myth of the Conflict Between Nationality and Islam
Studies of nationalism show that after World War II, nationalism emerged in many regions of the world as an ideology of liberation from colonial domination [19]. Western colonial powers themselves had previously used nationalism as a tool to dismantle the powerful Ottoman Empire. In contrast, with the decline of Pan-Arabism in the Arab world, Islam came to be seen not only as a liberating force against foreign colonialism but also as a source of resistance against domestic authoritarian regimes. The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran challenged the ideology of monarchical nationalism and, by returning to religion as a means of liberation from oppressive regimes dependent on the West, pushed nationalist movements in the region into retreat.

The idea of Pan-Islamism and the aspiration for solidarity have, for the past two centuries, served as a rival paradigm to Westernization. They have kept alive a spark of hope among Muslim nations, inspiring them in their struggles against Western colonialism and underdevelopment. Consequently, interpretations of nationalism in the Muslim world must be understood within this historical context of anti-colonial and independence movements. Mutahhari notes that Nationalist sentiment, while capable of producing positive effects in achieving independence for some nations, has often led to division and fragmentation in Muslim societies [20-23]. For centuries, Muslim peoples have already passed through this stage and entered a higher one: Islam itself has long provided unity based on shared belief and ideology. Even in the twentieth century, Islam demonstrated its decisive role in anti-colonial struggles, proving that it could serve as a powerful force of resistance and cohesion. Nationalism in the Western world and within the cradle of Christianity emerged as a powerful secular force. Religious bonds could no longer serve to unite the majority of people with the state, and nationalism filled this vacuum in European societies. He further noted, "This wave rose in recent centuries in Europe. Perhaps it was natural there, since no doctrine existed that could unite the diverse nations of Europe into a higher human unit".

Inspired by this model, Indian Muslims pursued separation from India, leading to the independence of Pakistan and the mass population exchanges based on religion, one of the greatest human tragedies of the twentieth century. Yet soon after, Bangladesh separated from Pakistan under the banner of nationalism, demonstrating that religious solidarity alone could not preserve political unity among Muslim populations [24]. For this reason, the paradigm of Islamic unity has often regarded nationalism as detrimental to the solidarity of the Muslim world: "The truth is that nationalism has created a major problem for Islam in the modern age. Beyond the fact that it contradicts Islamic teachings, since in Islam all people are equal, it has become a serious obstacle to Muslim unity".

This perspective was further developed by Ali Muhammad Naqvi, a Muslim scholar from India, in his book Islam and Nationalism. Building on similar arguments, he emphasized, drawing on the thought of Muhammad Iqbal, that Islam and nationalism are two distinct and independent ideologies, and that it is impossible for an individual to be both a Muslim and a nationalist simultaneously.

Yet what is often overlooked in this approach is the reality that the international relations are fundamentally based on the nation-state system. Today, all Muslim states have accepted the UN Charter and are members of the United Nations. Although in recent decades regional organizations have been established to promote political and economic cooperation among Muslim states, these initiatives have not aimed to abolish nation-state system. On the contrary, Francis Fukuyama argues that the nation will remain the central axis of identity, even if more nations form political and economic organizations for shared interests.

A defining feature of the modern political system lies in the relationship between the individual and the state. Modern consciousness has instilled in people the awareness that they face a powerful and dominant institution, something largely unknown in earlier eras [25]. The state is a legal entity that exercises sovereignty over a defined territory and its inhabitants through legal systems and governmental structures. In other words, the modern individual no longer sacrifices for tribe, clan, or religion, but rather for the nation. Social and religious bonds have been transcended, and loyalty is directed primarily toward the state. Whereas in the past individuals were identified as Christians, in the modern era, they are recognized as French or German. This reality is most clearly reflected in the stateless persons and refugees, who are denied membership in a nation by modernity itself.

For Muslims residing in non-Islamic countries, this dynamic manifests differently. Although they are members of the broader Islamic Ummah, they must still obtain visas to enter any Islamic country [26]. For this reason, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran does not interpret the concept of a unified Ummah and Islamic nation as a denial of nationality. Rather, Article 11 calls upon the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, while remaining a member of the United Nations and the global community, to base its general policies on alliance and solidarity among Muslim nations. As commanded by the blessed verse [of the Holy Quran] "Indeed, this Ummah of yours is one Ummah and I am Your Lord, so worship Me" [21:92], all Muslims are one Ummah and it is the duty of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to base its general policy upon the of making alliances and unifying Muslim nations and to make constant efforts to realize the political, economic and cultural unity of the Muslim world [27].

[10] Theiss-Morse, Elizabeth; Who Counts as an American? : The Boundaries of National Identity, Cambridge, 2009, PP. 3-8.
[11] Elder, Catriona; Being Australian: Narratives of national identity, 2007, 25.
[12] Mozaffari, Mohammad Hossein; 2019., p. 20

There is no doubt that the humanistic teachings of Islam emphasize the common origin of the human family and the equality of all people. Islam abolished the privileges that were prevalent in pre-Islamic tribal society, where social structures were based on distinctions of lineage, ancestry, and tribal affiliation. Although the Qur'an affirms that humanity shares a single origin, this unity does not imply the denial of differences among peoples or the erasure of distinctions between nations. In fact, it acknowledges both the principle of equality and the unity of the human family, while at the same time recognizing the existence of diversity among nations. Yet it immediately stresses that such differences do not constitute grounds for false privileges or illusory claims to superiority [28].

"O' mankind! Indeed, we created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another" (Chapter 39, 13). From the perspective of Islamic teachings, just as the unity of the human family, a Qur'anic concept, does not refute the establishment of a single Islamic Ummah, the formation of the Ummah should not be construed as conflicting with nation-states. Likewise, national identity should not be narrated in such a way that it denies ethnic, linguistic, or religious diversity [29]. Ayatollah Subhani supports this distinction between nationalism and nationality, rejecting the view of those who, by appealing to Qur'anic verses, argue for the negation of nationality. He emphasizes that the Qur'an itself acknowledges differences among peoples and nations as natural, arising from divine will and providence.

Nevertheless, some contemporary Muslim thinkers have applied the modern concept of nation to the Qur'anic notion of the "nation of Abraham" (millat-e- Ibrāhīm), thereby arriving at a rejection of the nation-state system. For example, Davari Ardakani argues that nationalism regards geographical borders as fundamental, intending to create distinct national units, whereas Islam gives primacy to belief and seeks global human unity on the basis of ideology. He rightly rejects the duality or multiplicity of Iranian nationality, considering national identity to be identical with religious identity [30]. Yet, similar to Mutahari, he interprets the modern concept of nation in terms of the Ummah, asserting: "In reality, Ummah and nation are not separate; they are two aspects of the same reality. If one considers the beliefs and religious laws of a community, it is called a nation (millat), and the people who hold these beliefs are called an Ummah."

Although Article 11 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran called for the state's general policy to be based on alliance and unity among Muslim nations, such an alliance was never intended to negate existing borders or abolish nation-states. Nevertheless, authoritarian regimes in the region perceived this vision as a threat to their national security and sought to resist it. As a result, the promise of Islamic solidarity, which had been envisioned as the foundation of an Islamic coalition, in practice inspired movements that, in the absence of democratic mechanisms, turned to militant struggle against oppressive regimes. The failure of peaceful resistance in many parts of the Muslim world led to the radicalization of struggles and the emergence of groups that sought to achieve the ideal of Muslim unity and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate through force and jihad. In contrast to Iranian scholars who envisioned Islamic solidarity in terms of alliances among Muslim nations, jihadist movements invoked the classical doctrine of Islamic international law, which divided the world into dār al-Islām and dār al-ḥarb, thereby rejecting the legitimacy of the nation-state system. Salafi writers went further, denouncing nationality as deviation from true Islam and rejecting the United Nations Charter and its principles. However, with the rise of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its declaration of a caliphate, all Muslim countries distanced themselves from it. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in particular, regarded ISIS's caliphate as an immediate threat to its national security. Today, with the defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, it appears that nationality and nation-states have gained renewed importance, while the dream of Islamic unity has, for the foreseeable future, receded into the background of the Muslim world's horizon [31].

Motahhari acknowledged that nationality (mellīyat) could carry a positive connotation. Yet the historical circumstances of his time in Iran placed him in confrontation with monarchical nationalism, which denied the Islamic identity of the Iranian people. For this reason, while recognizing the constructive effects of nationality, he regarded the prevailing nationalism of his era as a form of chauvinism. Beyond national borders, Motahhari sympathized with the Islamic awakening movements, envisioning the liberation of Muslim nations from both internal despotism and external colonialism through the ideology of Islamic nationality and Islamic internationalism. As he wrote: "This vision and this sense of pain are today advancing and expanding, and Islamic nationality is once again being born. A nationality that transcends conventional and inherited borders, encompassing all Muslims and even all free and monotheistic human beings. A nationality that denies and rejects the sovereignty of any tribe, class, or family."

Thus, while acknowledging that the international system based on nation-states had divided the Islamic community into independent Muslim nations, Motahhari emphasized the possibility of faith-based solidarity among them [32, 33]. He briefly outlined how such solidarity could be achieved: "As we know, the Islamic community is composed of different nations, and in the past Islam created from these diverse nations a single entity called the Islamic community… which shared a common thought, a common ideal, and common sentiments, with a powerful solidarity prevailing among them." It was argued that Muslim nations could, while preserving their national identity and safeguarding territorial integrity, establish forms of political conver-

[13] Zimmt Raz; Iranian Nationalism Islamic Unity and Shi'ism in Iran's regional policy in: Meir Litvak (ed.) Constructing Nationalism in Iran: From the Qajars to the Islamic Republic Routlege 2017, 130.

[14] Motahari, Morteza; "Khadamat-e Motaghabel-e Islam va Iran," [The Mutual Contributions of Iran and Islam]. Tehran, Iran: Daftar-e Intesharat-e Islami, 1981, 37.

[15] Flensted-Jensen, Pernille; Further Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis, 2000, 10.

[16] Ghoroyani, Farnaz va Adham, Dargham; "Naqsh-e Khair va Shar dar Shakhsiyat-haye Asar-e Hossein Qollar Aghasi," Majalleh-ye Elm va Pazhoohesh Negareh, 1393, Shomareh 30.

[17] Stephanidēs, Giannēs D. Stirring the Greek Nation: Political Culture, Irredentism and Anti-Americanism in Post-War Greece, 1945-1967, p. 62.

[18] Victor Roudometof and Roland Robertson; Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy: The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans, Praeger (2001) p. 102.

gence and cultural and economic solidarity among themselves [34]. Such a vision of unity would have been unambiguous if it had been limited to cooperation among nation-states. Yet the idea was also advanced that this new form of nationality could serve as an alternative to the nation-state system itself. Thinkers such as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī, Muḥammad Iqbāl, and Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī were considered pioneers of this new vision of unity grounded in tawḥīd and Islam, laying the foundations of a "new nationality of monotheism."

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the principle of human equality in Islam does not conflict with the positive concept of nationality or with national unity [35]. While the Qurʾanic term millah, as in millat Ibrāhīm, is used to denote religion, the term waṭan (homeland), which refers to one of the essential elements of nationality, appears in the well-known saying attributed to the Prophet: "Love of homeland is part of faith." Although this narration is not found in the primary hadith sources and love of homeland is not intrinsically tied to faith, it nonetheless reflects the reality that patriotism is not incompatible with belief. Muslim poets and mystics like Rumi have long invoked this saying: "If you travel to Rome or to Khutan, Love of homeland will never leave your heart."

At times, Muslim scholars offered mystical interpretations of this prophetic saying, applying it to the "heavenly homeland." Yet such esoteric readings do not contradict the apparent meaning of the narration. As Shaykh Bahāʾī expressed: "This homeland is not Egypt, Iraq, or Syria; This homeland is a city without a name. For all worldly homelands are transient, And how could the 'Best of Creation' praise the world?".

Shaped by the historical conditions of his era, Motahhari sought to highlight the dangers of extreme nationalism, emphasizing the unity of the human family, human fraternity, and the concept of the single Islamic Ummah. As a result, the central question of his work, the relationship between Islam and Iranian nationality, was not fully addressed. It would have been more appropriate to stress that the principle of human equality in Islam does not conflict with nationality and other cultural identities. In the tribal society of the Qurʾanic era, social structure was based on illusory tribal privileges. These false distinctions were condemned in Islamic tradition, and the Qurʾan explicitly invalidated such claims to superiority [36].

O mankind! Be wary of your Lord who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and from the two of them scattered numerous men and women. Be wary of Allah, in whose Name you adjure one another and [of severing ties with] blood relations (Chapter 4: 1). However, human equality, the unity of the human family, and the rejection of illusory privileges based on lineage or race do not mean the denial of differences among peoples or the diversity of nations. On the contrary, the Qurʾan acknowledges ethnic and linguistic diversity, regarding it as one of the signs of the Almighty:

Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference in your languages and colors. There are indeed signs in that for those who know (Chapter 30: 22).

As noted earlier, Motahhari also recognized the positive aspects of nationality. Yet he was so deeply concerned about the detrimental effects of monarchical nationalism, the distorted identity that undermined Islamic values, that much of his effort was devoted to refuting this confused narrative. Perhaps his devotion to the grand ideal of Islamic unity and his immersion in the vision of spiritual and human fraternity left little room for elaborating on the constructive dimensions of nationality. As he wrote: "It is a settled matter that in Islam, nationality and ethnicity, in the sense commonly used today, have no validity. Rather, Islam looks upon all nations and peoples of the world with the same eye. From the beginning, the Islamic call was never confined to a particular nation or tribe. Instead, this religion has always sought, by various means, to uproot nationalism and tribal pride from the foundations."

It must be acknowledged that such interpretations of nationality and Islamic unity were not limited to Motahhari or other Iranian Muslim scholars. With the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate, Sunni political doctrine faced a profound theoretical crisis, and many Muslim thinkers of that era dreamed of Islamic unity and the revival of the caliphate. At the same time, however, the rise of nationalism began to reshape Muslim outlooks in ways that often conflicted with Islam's universal mission. Muḥammad Iqbāl, himself a prominent figure in India's freedom movement, articulated a broader paradigm of Islamic solidarity, one capable of transcending inherited boundaries and offering a spiritual foundation for genuine political unity: Therefore, the construction of a polity on national lines, if it means a displacement of the Islamic principle of solidarity, is simply unthinkable to a Muslim. This is a matter which at the present moment directly concerns the Muslims of India. "Man," says Renan, "is enslaved neither by his race, nor by his religion, nor by the course of rivers, nor by the direction of mountain ranges. Professor Azra emphasizes that with the rise of nationalism in Indonesia during the early decades of the twentieth century, many leaders of Islamic organizations also participated in the nationalist movement. Basyuni Imran, a scholar from Sambas in West Kalimantan, corresponded with the renowned Egyptian thinker Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, asking his opinion on whether nationalism was compatible with Islam. Riḍā's detailed response, published in al-Manār, argued, drawing on the well-known prophetic narration, that nationalism was acceptable within Islam. Consequently, during Indonesia's nationalist struggles, the majority of scholars regarded nationalism as consistent with Islamic teachings.

Part Two
Consequences of the Dichotomy of Iranian National Identity
The Pan-Islamism that was pursued since the time of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Sultan Abdulhamid as a rival approach to counter colonial interference in Muslim nations was understood by many Muslims within the framework of the doctrine of the Islamic caliphate. In Sunni doctrine, belief in the imāmah al-kubrā and khilāfah al-ʿuẓmā was a foundational principle. Yet

[19] Mozaffari, Mohammad Hossein; 2019, p. 20.
[20] Maura Ellyn, Maura Mc Ginnis; Greece: A Primary Source Cultural Guide, New York 2004, p. 8.
[21] Hercules Millas; History Textbooks in Greece and Turkey History Workshop No. 31 (Spring 1991) 21-23.
[22] Shariati, Ali; "Bazgasht be Khishtan" [Returning to the Self-]. N.A.

with the dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate and the failure of several attempts to revive it, this core doctrine fell into decline. As all Muslim states have adopted the Charter of the United Nations, the caliphate doctrine was, until the rise of ISIS, effectively subdued by the nation-state system. When ISIS declared its "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria, Muslim countries not only refused allegiance but many even allied with non-Muslim states to suppress it [37]. The widespread political, economic, and cultural divergences among Muslim nations have made the formation of Islamic unity impossible, rendering alternative visions of the caliphate, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, ineffectual. Thus, in the hypothetical contest between nation-building and Ummah-building forces, nationality remains dominant and overpowering. Samuel Huntington argued that in the flow of ethnic, national, and global identities, the distribution of identities in the Muslim world takes the shape of a horseshoe: sub-identities such as family, tribal, and ethnic commitments are stronger and prevail over both national and Islamic identity.

In the second part of this article, we will explore the challenges posed by Pan-Islam discourse to the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly within its educational and legal frameworks, focusing on the practical implications. We will demonstrate how conceptual ambiguities and theoretical inconsistencies have led to lasting repercussions. Specifically, the concept of national identity has been diminished, overshadowed by the notion of Ummah, while the ideal of the Islamic Ummah has struggled to take tangible form. Consequently, the national spirit remains caught in a liminal space between two fluid entities. The unfulfilled discourse surrounding the Islamic Ummah has not only failed to articulate its positive aspects but has also underestimated the importance of national identity, resulting in significant challenges across various dimensions of social and political life in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Consequences of Fragmented Identity for the Educational System

The educational system in every country seeks to instill in students the distinctive qualities of their nation through the teaching of history, thereby shaping national identity. Strengthening and consolidating national identity is among the primary goals of educational and cultural policy, and history textbooks play a crucial role in this process. By narrating the nation's continuity and historical development from ancient times to the present, history education provides students with a sense of belonging to a collective past. The main purpose of teaching history is to enable the younger generation to connect with their past, to feel their individuality within the framework of a nation, and to become familiar with national values. However, exaggeration of historical events or reliance on myths and legends can foster negative attitudes and hostility toward other nations. History textbooks aim not only to familiarize students with the nation's past but also to help them identify the essential elements of national identity. National symbols and past achievements are meant to penetrate their consciousness and shape their sense of national belonging. Yet national identity should not be built on the enmity of other nations. In today's interconnected world, it must also cultivate solidarity and human fraternity. Accordingly, curricula should teach children that in the age of globalization, while they learn about their nation's symbols and achievements, they must also acquire a spirit of cooperation with other nations, thereby preparing `them for global citizenship. Thus, emphasis on national identity should not be framed in such a way that, in an era of globalization and extensive communication, it reinforces historical animosities or jeopardizes friendly relations among nations.

School textbooks, therefore, may significantly shape negative stereotypes through unfavorable and inaccurate depiction of the "Other" communities or through the omission of the Other's history and culture. Moreover, highlighting conflictual eras between the communities and nations; and ignoring peaceful periods of coexistence among them, might exacerbate mutual understanding among nations. The rise of nation-states in the previous century highlighted how history textbooks often glorified the ruling party and disparaged other groups. After the Second World War, history education became a sensitive topic, and it has been acknowledged that history instruction, particularly via textbooks, played a role in fostering the nationalistic and xenophobic feelings that contributed to the wartime disasters.

While the ethnocentric approach in the history textbooks in pre-Islamic revolution Iran promoted national identity, it had disseminated a hostile attitude through school textbooks, with lasting consequences for the broader public culture. On the contrary, emphasis on Islamic solidarity and human brotherhood, without paying proper attention to strengthening elements of national identity, may lead to a fluid identity vulnerable to absorption into dominant external cultures. After the Islamic revolution in Iran, the authors of secondary school history textbooks have articulated clear cognitive, attitudinal, and skill-based goals. Cognitively, they stress "deepening familiarity with the most important political and social developments of Iran and the world, with emphasis on Iranian history; deepening familiarity with the most important cultural and civilizational developments of Iran and the world, with emphasis on Iranian history; and deepening familiarity with colonialism and global imperialism and their impact on Iran's contemporary history." In terms of

[23] Litvak, Meir (ed.); *Constructing Nationalism in Iran: From the Qajars to the Islamic Republic*, Routlege, 2017, p.3.

[24] Motahhari, 1982: 35

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Naqvi, Ali Mohammad; "*Islam va Melli-garaei*" [Islam and Nationalism]. Daftar-e Nashr-e Farhang-e Eslami, 1364, 134-135.

[28] Fukuyama, Francis; "*The End of History and the Last Man*", Free Press, 1992, p.244.

[29] Moosa, Ebrahim; *The Dilemma of Islamic Rights Schemes*; Vol.15, Journal of Law and Religion, 2000-2001, p.190.

[30] Yasuaki Onuma; *Towards an Inter-civilizational Approach to Human Rights* Vol.7 Asian Year Book of International Law 1997, 30.

[31] Sobhani, Jafar (Ayatollah); "*Eslam va Nazariyeh-ye Jahanvaṭani*" [Islam and the Theory of Cosmopolitanism]. Noor e Elm, Vol. 2, No. 2: 25.

[32] Davari Ardakani, Reza; "*Nasionalism, Hakemiyat-e Melli va Esteqlaal*" [Nationalism, National Sovereignty and Independence]. Nashr-e Porsesh, 1364, 21.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Al-Ulayani, Ali bin Nafi'a; "*Ahmiyat-al-Jihad fi al-Nashr al-Da'wa Al-Islami*" [The Significance of Jihad in the Dissemination of Islamic Da'awa].1985, 455-459.

[35] Motahhari, Morteza; 1982. P. 29.

[36] Ibid.

attitudes and values, there is a notable emphasis on "increasing interest in the study of history, particularly the history of Iran and the world." The skill-based objectives include "developing the ability to analyze significant historical events and fostering a practical sensitivity toward the country's territorial integrity as well as national and religious values". However, despite these clearly articulated goals, the history textbooks fall short of achieving them. For example, the fourth-grade social studies textbook in Iran exhibits a lack of depth in meeting these objectives when compared to similar textbooks from other nations. It dedicates merely two chapters to Iranian history, offering only a cursory mention of Alexander's invasion, which decimated the first great empire of the world, summarized in just a few sentences: "He was the king of Greece and Macedonia and sought to conquer the entire world".

Consequences of Fragmented Identity for the Legal System

The ethnocentric approach to Iranian identity under the previous regime was not confined to cultural policy; its effects have persisted in the country's legal system to this day. For example, Iranian nationality law is based on the principle of jus sanguinis (bloodline). According to Article 976 (2) of the Iranian Civil Code, "Those whose fathers are Iranian are considered Iranian, whether born in Iran or abroad." As a result, a person may be legally Iranian by descent from an Iranian father, even if they have no meaningful or enduring connection to the land, state, or nation. This issue repeatedly arose before the Iran–U.S. Claims Tribunal, where nationality became a decisive factor in determining jurisdiction. In the previous regime, many Iranians who had acquired U.S. citizenship continued to benefit from their Iranian nationality by receiving state facilities, establishing companies, or owning property in Iran, the rights denied to foreign nationals under Iranian law. After the Islamic Revolution, these individuals relocated to the United States and, in disputes before the Iran–U.S. Claims Tribunal, brought claims against Iran as U.S. nationals. In such cases, different chambers of the Tribunal invoked the concept of "dominant and effective nationality" to recognize their claims against Iran.

Similarly, Article 976 (6) stipulates that "Any foreign woman who marries an Iranian man is considered Iranian," and she may immediately obtain an Iranian passport. Yet in practice, such women may have no substantive ties to Iran. Conversely, many individuals born in Iran over the past decades to Afghan parents, or to Afghan fathers and Iranian mothers, have lived their entire lives in Iran without any connection to Afghanistan, yet remain excluded from Iranian nationality. As a result, they face various social deprivations. In today's world of extensive international relations, nationality laws based on descent, such as the 1929 Iranian Nationality Act and related provisions on foreign ownership of immovable property, are inadequate to address the complex challenges of contemporary Iranian society.

It is well known that concerns over foreign economic influence and domination were the basis for the enactment of restrictive nationality and property laws in Iran. Yet today, many countries actively invite foreigners to purchase property and obtain residency in a "second homeland," thereby attracting foreign investment. In this respect, the principles of Islamic solidarity and human fraternity have not succeeded in overcoming the ethnocentric orientation of Iranian law. By contrast, the preamble to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran moves beyond the concept of the Islamic Ummah and emphasizes the formation of a unified global community. It calls for the continuation of struggles to liberate oppressed and deprived peoples throughout the world, situating Iran's constitutional vision within a broader framework of international solidarity and justice.

Taking into account the Islamic content of the Iranian Revolution, which was a movement for the victory of all the Mustadha'fīn (oppressed people) over the Mustakbirīn (arrogant powers), the Constitution lays the foundation for the continuation of the Revolution at home and abroad, and in particular strives for the development of international relations with other Islamic and popular movements to pave the way for the formation of a single global Ummah (in accordance with the verse from the Holy Quran: "Indeed this Ummah of yours is one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship Me"[21:92]) and to consolidate the struggle for the salvation of all the deprived and oppressed nations of the world.

Moreover, there are specific provisions in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran that might be perceived as incongruent with Iranian nationality. For example, Article 109, which outlines the qualifications of the Leader, refers only to scholarly and moral attributes. Although the Leader serves as the command-

[37] Ibid. 28.

[38] Qummi, op. cit. 688

[39] Masnavi; Book II, verse 2630.

[40] Sheikh Baha'i; "Masnavi-ye Nan va Halva", NA, 11

[41] Motahhari, 1982, p. 49.

[42] Azra, Azyumardi; Indonesia, Islam, and Democracy: Dynamics in a Global Context, 2006, 8-9.

[43] Muhammad Iqbal; 'Muslim India within India', Allalahad Address (1930, 29 December 1930, 25th Session of the All-India Muslim League, Allahabad, India: found at: https://speakola.com/political/muhammad-iqbal-allalahad-1930

[44] Azra Azyumardi; Indonesian wasatiyyah Islam Political and Civil Society, a paper presented in the 7th World Peace Forum Jakarta 14-16 August2018.

[45] Huntington Samuel P. Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity 2004, 16.

[46] Soltan Zadeh, Maryam, "History Education and the Construction of National Identity in Iran" (2012), pp. 1-2. FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 601.

[47] Mozaffari, Mohammad Hossein; 2019, p. 49.

[48] Ibid

[49] Georges Sami Adwan and Riad Nasser, "Portrayal of the 'Other' in Israeli and Palestinian Schoolbooks" (paper presented at the ISHD Conference, 2009)

[50] Pingel, Falk; UNESCO guidebook on textbook research and textbook revision, Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, 2010, p. 8.

[51] Mozaffari, Mohammad Hossein; 2019, p. 49.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Niaki, Jafar; "Mamnu'iyat-e Estemlak-e Amval-e Gheyre Manqool Tavasot-e Beganeh-ha dar Hoquq-e Iran"[The Prohibition of Obtaining Non- Moveable Properties by Foreigners in the Legal System of Iran]. Majalleh-ye Hoquqi-ye Beynolmelali, 1377, 221-297.

[55] Aghahosseini, Mohsen; "Barresi-ye Mawaz' va Noghteh-nazarhaye Jomhouri-ye Islami-ye Iran va Amrika dar Parvandeh A/18""; [A review of the views and Positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the US on the Case A/18]. Majalleh-ye Hoquqi-ye Beynolmelali, 1364, 72-49.

er-in-chief of the armed forces and holds authority over vital matters, such as declaring war and peace, Iranian nationality is not stipulated as a requirement. Similarly, Article 9 of the Constitution states: "In the Islamic Republic of Iran, freedom, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the country are inseparable, and safeguarding them is the duty of the government and all citizens." It appears that the authors intended to emphasize the interdependence of "freedom and independence" with "national unity and territorial integrity." However, the omission of the word national from this formulation has created ambiguity in its meaning.

By contrast, Article 100, concerning local councils, explicitly stresses adherence to the principles of national unity, territorial integrity, and the Islamic Republic. Likewise, Article 26, regarding the activities of political parties and associations, refers to the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, Islamic norms, and the foundations of the Islamic Republic. Therefore, while the principle of national unity is explicitly mentioned in these later articles, its inclusion in Article 9 could have resolved the ambiguity surrounding the phrase "unity and territorial integrity."

Conclusion

The central concern of the critics of nationalism during the previous regime was the refutation of monarchical nationalism and the rejection of fragmented national identity. While Muslim scholars in the Post- revolutionary Iran succeeded in dismantling the ideology of royal nationalism, they left unfinished the constructive dimension of the matter, namely, the articulation of a coherent national identity, and instead the nonsense terminology of a "monotheistic nationality." This incomplete narrative of Iranian identity, echoed in the works of contemporary thinkers, has left the national spirit suspended between the dual frameworks of national and global identity. The inability of Iranian Muslim intellectuals to complete this narrative and their neglect in providing a clear interpretation of national identity, have created significant challenges for Iran's educational, political, and legal systems.

The principle of human fraternity and Islamic unity, as articulated in Islam, does not inherently conflict with concepts of nationality or national unity. Just as the unity of the human family, a concept found in the Qur'an, does not contradict the existence of a singular Islamic Ummah, the establishment of the Ummah should not be viewed as opposing the existence of Muslim nation-states or the alliances formed between them. Similarly, national unity should not be framed in a manner that dismisses ethnic, linguistic, or religious identities [38]. The lack of a clear analysis regarding Islamic unity or the Ummah, and its relationship with nation-states, poses significant challenges to achieving the ideal of Islamic solidarity and fostering amicable relations among nations.

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