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**Rethinking Pan-Islam
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British India: Urdu Press
1911-14**

by:

FATIMA AIZAZ

ABSTRACT

The study of pan-Islam in the context of British India is largely restricted to the Khilāfat Movement. It overlooks, or peripherally mentions, the process of the creation of a pan-Islamic discourse prior to the Khilāfat Movement, aided by technological advancements across the Muslim world from the late eighteenth century onwards. The onset of the printing press had a significant impact on the creation of this discourse since it informed the spread of Islam across a vast geographical area about the happenings in other Muslim-dominated lands. This paper explores the pan-Islamic discourse in the Urdu press between the years 1911 and 1914 and pays specific attention to three newspapers – Al-Hilāl, Hamdard, and Zamīndār. This discourse redefined the classical definition of pan-Islam, by incorporating into its fold the lived realities of colonial rule. Hence, its aim was twofold – fighting for the cause of the Ottoman Empire, and empowering Indian Muslims. In this sense, it was strongly grounded in the Indian context, while also constantly conversing with the broader political context of the Muslim world in the early twentieth century. I thus argue that this discourse relied upon a rather abstract idea of a Muslim millat, rather than on the existing, and much more concrete idea of ittihād.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fatima Aizaz has obtained her undergraduate degree in Social Sciences and Liberal Arts from the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi. Her area of study is early modern South Asian history, with a focus on identity politics during this period. One of her goals is to promote the incorporation of humanities into the school curriculum in Pakistan, in order to encourage critical thinking skills among students. She will begin a Master in South Asian Studies in Fall 2019.

NOTE ON transliteration

All non-English common nouns have been italicized and transliterated according to the standard IJMES transliteration system for Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Arabic and Persian proper nouns for people, and books have also been transliterated, as in Abul Kalām Āzād. In the case of Arabic and Persian proper nouns for places, the standard spelling has been maintained, for example, Aligarh. However, proper nouns for places have been transliterated when they were part of a book title, as in *Kānpūr kā Dardnāk Naḡārah*. In order to maintain the phonetics, Arabic words used in Persian or Urdu script have been transliterated using the IJMES system for Persian transliteration, as in *qabḡa*. Spellings in titles of books have been retained, except when the books were in Urdu, in which case the titles were transliterated, as in *Maulānā Ḥafar ‘Alī Khān: Aḡvāl va Āṡār*. Since the IJMES transliteration system does not contain transliteration method for Urdu, the Library of Congress system of transliteration was used to transliterate only those Urdu letters which are absent from Arabic and Persian, namely ٹ, ڈ, ڑ, ڙ and ے.

INTRODUCTION

The classical conception of pan-Islam was rooted in the territorial contiguity of Muslim lands.¹ The idea that all Muslim majority lands, the Balkans-to-Bengal complex² as Shahab Ahmed refers to it, should be amalgamated into a unified geographical unit, ruled and governed by the Muslims themselves, lies at the heart of the pan-Islamic ideology in the nineteenth century. This identity gained further ground with technological advancements in the Islamicate world in the nineteenth century, such as the advent of the printing press, the laying of the underwater telegraph cable, and the construction of the Hijāz Railway Project. Due to these advancements, news traveled across the Islamicate³ world at a much faster pace, keeping Islam’s spread across the world informed of the happenings in other Muslim inhabited lands.

Spread by colonial elites in the Islamicate world, the idea of nationalism also gained influence. Consequently, around the turn of the twentieth century,

1 Nikki R. Keddie, “Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism,” *The Journal Of Modern History* 41, no. 1 (1969): 18.

2 The temporal-geographical area extending from Balkans through Anatolia, Iran, and Central Asia, down and across Afghanistan and North India to the Bay of Bengal. See Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 32.

3 The phrase Islamicate world refers to the geographical area stretching from modern-day Turkey to South Asia in the West.

we see a shift arising in the way pan-Islam was envisioned by certain Muslim thinkers. While some attempted to reconcile these apparently contradictory ideologies, others attempted to discredit any potential relationship between the two ideologies. As a result, a new hybrid form of pan-Islam emerged, which relied on the abstract idea of *ukhūwwat* (brotherhood) rather than on a much more concrete idea of *ittihād e Islām* (Islamic unity), and this hybrid form was informed by anti-colonial rhetoric.

The enmeshing of anti-colonialism with a feeling of solidarity with Muslims across the world presents a complicated phenomenon – one that evades any rigid definition of pan-Islam. This rhetoric presupposed a distinction between *ḥaqq* (Truth) and *bāṭil* (Falsehood), whereby the colonial west represented the latter; simultaneously, the narrative of the crusades was also evoked when reporting about wars between Ottomans and the Christian West. In this sense, religious sentiment was used to advance an anti-colonial narrative. Moreover, changes in responses to colonial rule can also be observed. These changes can be interpreted as responses to the particular events going on at the time, such as the Italian invasion of Tripoli, the Balkan Wars, and the Kanpur Mosque incident.

Through a textual analysis of three newspapers – *Al-Hilāl*, *Hamdard*, and *Zamīndār* – this essay explores the role of Urdu newspapers in constructing such a discourse on pan-Islam. I argue that the editors of these newspapers carved out a discourse that reshaped the definition of pan-Islam in the context of colonial India. It encompassed the realities and consequences of colonial rule. It thus morphed into a more dynamic, and fluid definition that surpassed the rigid idea of pan-Islam in the classical period. These editors were thus relying on an abstract idea of *ukhūwwat* (brotherhood), rather than on a much more concrete idea of *ittihād e Islāmī* (Islamic unity). This conception of pan-Islam allowed them to take into account the conditions of the Indian Muslims,⁴ and take steps to alleviate their oppressed state. Hence, it also helped in carving out a political identity for these Muslims.

Al-Hilāl was published in Calcutta between the years 1912 and 1914. It was edited by Maulānā Abul Kalām Āzād, a prominent and regular name in Muslim politics at the time. The weekly newspaper contained not just news, but also opinion pieces and regular series, such as the series on Islamic history, and the series on *Nadwat ul ‘Ulamā*.⁵ In this sense, it served more like a magazine or a periodical than a conventional newspaper. Maulānā Muḥammad ‘Alī Jauhar

4 The category Indian Muslims is far from being a monolith. Other than religion, it has varying layers of caste, class, ethnicity, and race. However, the limited scope of the research and the availability of documents hindered the unpacking of this term. Due to the reach of the newspapers to mainly the provinces of Punjab and UP, I have considered the category of Indian Muslims to be synonymous with North Indian Muslims.

5 *Nadwat ul ‘Ulamā* was an association of religious scholars founded in 1894 in Kanpur. The main aim of this association was to bring about educational reforms. For this purpose, a *Dār ul ‘Ulūm* (educational institute) was founded at Lucknow in 1898.

began publishing *Hamdard* in 1913. This was the Urdu counterpart of *The Comrade*, which was begun in 1911 in Delhi. This was done in order to reach a larger audience since *The Comrade* could only be read by a small section of the Muslim population – the English literate elite. The newspaper was a two-page daily that started as a newsletter about the Balkan Wars. However, in just a year's time, it had been expanded to four pages and had begun to include opinion pieces along with the news. *Zamīndār* was published from Lahore from 1911 onwards, with Maulānā Ṣafar 'Alī Khān at its helm. This was also a daily, spanning five pages in length.

The first section of this paper explores the existing scholarly understandings of pan-Islam and then attempts to problematize these definitions by elaborating on the difference between *ittiḥād* (unity) and *millat* (brotherhood). The second section attempts to historicize pan-Islam in the Indian context through analyzing the impact of technological advancements, particularly the printing press on religious identity in South Asia. The third section attempts to locate the pan-Islamic discourse in early twentieth-century North India through analyzing the differences in the editors' responses to colonial rule. The fourth and final section analyzes how a particular incident became the site around which centered this discourse of *millat*. This incident played a pivotal role in carving the pan-Islamic discourse in the three newspapers. It became the site around which centered not just Indian Muslim agitation against colonial oppression, but also their attachment and support for the rest of the Muslim world. The theme of land was crucial in establishing this symbol.

ITTIḤĀD, MILLAT AND PREVIOUS UNDERSTANDINGS OF PAN-ISLAM

Jacob Landau argues in his book, *Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, that the pan-Islamic ideology and movements have had one or all of the following premises for the achievement of unity and union within the Islamic world: the need for a strong central authority to lead the Islamic world, rallying of the entire Muslim world to the cause, obedience of Muslims everywhere to the leader, total solidarity for the cause, readiness for common action and, the establishment of a state.⁶ However, such definitions tend to limit the scope of pan-Islam to simply a transnational project dissociated from the social and political context of local territories. There is a need to redefine and rethink the idea of pan-Islam, particularly in the twentieth century. With the

⁶ Jacob Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5.

advent of colonialism, and subsequently nation-states, the realization of a political unity became merely an aspiration and an ideal state. With numerous localized problems, it did not make sense for Indian Muslims to rally for the cause of a foreign power. In the following pages, I problematize this rigid definition of pan-Islam and argued for a reconsideration of its implications.

The discourse generated in pre-WWI British India reflects that while attempting to connect with Muslims outside India, Muslim thinkers were also addressing problems at home. The local, colonial context and the aim of empowering Indian Muslims were as important as building a connection with the wider Islamic world. Hence, they built a network which surpassed borders and simultaneously was rooted in its Indian context. Due to limitations of research, I have focused more on the latter part of this argument and zoom in on the years between 1911 and 1914 due to two reasons: the Urdu press experienced a surge during this period, and these years set the foundation for the forthcoming Khilāfat Movement. This paper will thus be focusing on exploring and analyzing this network within North India⁷ and Bengal, the two Muslim majority areas in British India where the three newspaper sources were published.⁸ The region of North India is particularly important because it had always served as the seat of power, and consequently was the hub of the Muslim intellectual elite. The centers of knowledge production such as the Deoband seminary, *Nadwat ul 'Ulamā*, and Aligarh Muslim University were situated here. This meant that scholars from across the Islamic world visited this place because of its status as a political and intellectual center of India.

I argue that, in doing so, these Indian Muslims were relying on an idea of *millat* rather than *ittiḥād*. Some terms which have been widely used by thinkers in the Muslim world, and commonly translated as pan-Islam, are *al waḥda al Islāmīyyah*, *Ittiḥād e Islāmī* and *Ittiḥād al-Muslimīn*. The important words in these terms are *waḥda* and *ittiḥād*, both of which are derived from the same Arabic root, *waḥada*, meaning unity.⁹ It remained and still remains an open question whether this unity is social or political. Despite these debates, it remains a much more concrete term than *millat* or *ukhūwwat*. The former denotes a community of any religion, while the latter refers to a sentiment of brotherhood.¹⁰ Due to its vague nature, the term *millat* allows for a more inclusive approach. While allowing

7 This term broadly refers to the United Provinces and Punjab.

8 Focusing on two areas does not discount the fact that Indian Muslims present in Istanbul, London, Bombay, Delhi, Lucknow, and Calcutta, among other cities, had set up local organizations which rallied for the cause of the Ottoman Empire, but also attempted to represent and alleviate the problems of the Indian Muslims. Probably the most prominent people in this regard were Sayyid Amir Ali, an Indian lawyer settled in Britain; Mushir Ḥusain Kidwā'i, a London-based newspaper editor who also financed the Anglo-Ottoman Society; and Khwāja Kamāluddīn, an Ahmedi Muslim who set up the Woking Muslim Mission in Woking, London. See Khizar Humayun Ansari, "Making Transnational Connections: Muslim Networks in Early 20th Century Britain," in *Islam in Inter-War Europe* (London: Hurst and Company, 2008), 31-63.

9 *Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: 3rd Edition* (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976), 1054.

10 *Feroz ul Lughāt: 27th Edition* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 2011), 650.

greater coherence to the discourse of a transnational community of Muslims – the *Ummah* – it is not distanced from the local context. On the contrary, the implication of unity and oneness in the term *ittiḥād* lends ambiguity to the political motives at play.

The discussion on merely the meaning of the term pan-Islam is laden with numerous interpretations. The Ottoman Sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II (1842-1918; r. 1876-1909) is usually credited with spearheading the pan-Islamic project.¹¹ Contrary to his ancestors, he inherited a much weaker empire which was simultaneously experiencing internal turmoil and invasions from European powers. While the Ottomans were in combat with the Russians on the eastern side of the border, the French were planning their conquest of Tunisia. The British had already occupied Egypt in 1882. Meanwhile, the empire was still reeling from the internal strife that had engulfed parts of the empire during the 1850s and 1860s, the most notably the civil war in modern-day Lebanon. The eastern part of the empire had also erupted in a rebellion which was crushed by violent means, resulting in events like the atrocities in Armenia and Macedonia. Hence, the empire was in a fragile state when ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ascended to the throne. It was only natural that he sought to gain legitimacy from his subjects and from the rest of the Muslim world and to somehow establish his power and secure his empire from disintegration. Landau and Browne argue that one way to do this was to further the idea of Islamic unity, with the Ottoman Sultan as the figurehead of the Muslim world.¹² Once it was established upon the European powers that the Sultan wielded influence over all Muslims – even those living within the European colonies – the Sultan could limit the threat of invasions.

It can be argued that pan-Islam was nothing more than a political tool for ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd to ensure the sustenance of the crumbling Ottoman Empire. The fact that pan-Islam as an ideology gained popularity only in non-Ottoman territories serves to illustrate the political and realist motives behind the propagation of this ideology.¹³ ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd used pan-Islam to further his pan-Ottoman objectives.¹⁴ By securing loyalty from his subjects in the name of Islam, he tried to establish Ottoman supremacy again. Loyalty to the Ottoman sultan became synonymous with loyalty to the religion of Islam. Hence, he attempted to assume the title of *Khalīfah*, replacing the age-old title of Sultan, which was used by his ancestors. This change in title was a clear attempt at gaining legitimacy from the wider Muslim world.

It can further be argued that Hamidian pan-Islamism also had realist underpinnings. The Ottoman treasury was almost empty, and it was becoming increasingly expensive to maintain such a large empire, let alone invest heavily

11 Landau, *Politics of Pan-Islam*, 10.

12 Landau, *Politics of Pan-Islam*, 23.

13 Landau, *Politics of Pan-Islam*, 69.

14 M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, “‘Abd al-Ḥamīd,” *Princeton Encyclopedia*, 10.

in the army to ensure the protection of the empire's borders.¹⁵ With consecutive wars and internal turmoil, the increased burden had been placed on the Ottoman army. The most immediate answer to this financial problem was to seek help from within and without the empire. Since the Sultan had a policy of detachment from the Great Powers,¹⁶ it seemed most plausible to reach out to Ottoman sympathizers in and outside the empire. Consequently, donations poured in from not just within the empire, but also from other parts of the Muslim world. As early as the Russo-Turkish War, Indian Muslims were donating large sums of money to the Ottoman Empire; over one million Indian rupees were collected by different organizations in India.¹⁷

With Istanbul as the center, vigorous pan-Islamic propaganda began, strongly supported by the printing press.¹⁸ The boom in the number of printing presses, during the reign of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, reflects the importance of the printing press in the dissemination of this ideology. Intellectuals – most notably Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī – aided 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's aims. They contributed regularly to the numerous periodicals and churned out pan-Islamic content in large numbers. This was further aided by the developments in communications and technology. Despite restricted funds, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd invested heavily in infrastructure. As a consequence, telegraph lines were laid connecting the provinces to the Ottoman center, numerous printing presses were set up, and the Ḥijāz Railway Project begun. Nevertheless, a number of periodicals and pamphlets were published from Istanbul and distributed across the empire.¹⁹ They were evenly distributed among the pilgrims visiting Mecca for Hajj. Through this, it was ensured that the message reached all quarters of the Muslim world. It must be noted, however, that this was the need of the hour. The Ottoman Empire, which had posed a threat to the British and French empires for three centuries, was now struggling to maintain its territorial integrity. At such a moment, it seemed only pertinent that the Sultan attempted to find common ground among Muslims from diverse cultures and countries.

Having said this, the definitions of the term have been restrictive in nature, and have excluded local colonial contexts. There is a need to reconsider pan-Islam in the twentieth century, in which the empowerment of local Muslims was a pivotal aspect, thus also carving out an identity for them. On the whole, its aims can be categorized into two broad categories – fighting for the cause of the Ottoman Empire, and empowering and liberating the Muslims of India and the rest of the world.

15 Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Abd al-Ḥamīd," 10.

16 The term Great Powers was used to refer to the seven major powers of the world at the time. These included the Ottoman Empire, Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy.

17 Michael Christopher Low, "Empire and the Hajj: Pilgrims, Plagues, and Pan-Islam under British Surveillance, 1865–1908", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40, no. 02 (2008): 279.

18 Landau, *Politics of Pan-Islam*, 68.

19 Landau, *Politics of Pan-Islam*, 68.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS, THE ONSET OF PRINT AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS

By the end of the nineteenth century, Ottoman power was visibly declining, and the British and French were making inroads into the once stronghold of the Ottomans. The Europeans brought with them Enlightenment ideals and a coherent communications network. Michael Feener argues in his article, *New Networks and New Knowledge*, that the technological advancements of the nineteenth century allowed for the development of transnational connections and a more rapid exchange of ideas.²⁰ The development of the mass-producing printing press, steamship, railroads and the underwater telegraph cable in India, connected the region to other parts of the world, most notably the Ottoman Empire. Though the printing press had existed in Ottoman territories prior to the nineteenth century, they were owned by Jews and Christians.²¹ It was only around 1850 that there was a boom in the number of Muslim owned printing presses in the Ottoman Empire.²² This rapid increase meant that books, newspapers, and magazines were being produced in large quantities.

This was complemented by the development of an underwater telegraph cable connecting Britain with its Eastern colonies. Consequently, the traveling time of news from one end of the empire to the other was significantly reduced. This facilitated more rapid dissemination of the news from one end to the other. Hence, Muslims in India became more connected with the rest of the world and the Islamic world because they knew of the events occurring in these places.

Finally, the development of steamship and railroads significantly reduced the traveling time and made travel easier. The Ḥijāz Railway Project in the late-nineteenth century particularly connected Muslims from different geographical regions. The extension of these means of transportation to Muslim territories meant that Muslims were increasingly traveling to other parts of the world and interacting with other people. Moreover, with the steamship and the Ḥijāz Railway, traveling to Ottoman territories and to the Holy Cities became much easier for Muslims.

Consequently, there was a flow and exchange of ideas and people across the Muslim world. This flow was extremely important because it aided the creation of a transnational network of Muslim scholars and intellectuals across borders. This network visibly transcended territorial borders. As a result, there was not just a movement of people, but also of knowledge, and—more

20 Michael Feener, "New Networks and New Knowledge: Migrations, Communications and the Refiguration of the Muslim Community in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 6*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 41.

21 Feener, "New Networks and New Knowledge," 44.

22 Feener, "New Networks and New Knowledge," 45.

specifically—of the printed word. The colonial masters, hence, formed a crucial bridge between Muslims in different territories. Universities and educational institutes in the European and the Ottoman territories played an integral part in the flow of ideas. With colonization, increasing numbers of people from India were traveling to Britain to study in universities like Cambridge and Oxford, where they interacted with people from diverse regions. Similarly, Muslims from across the Islamic world traveled to centers of Islamic learning, most notably Egypt, Baghdad, and Qom. The editors of the newspapers under analysis were also alumni of these institutes. While ‘Alī was educated at Oxford, Āzād was a graduate of the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. This phenomenon was particularly true for Āzād since he was born and raised in Mecca and frequently traveled to other areas in the Islamic world. It can thus be argued that these technological developments imported by the British allowed for a more rapid and easy movement of ideas and people through the development of advanced communication technologies. This resulted in an exchange of ideas, people, texts – all of which can be grouped into the category of knowledge.

In the Islamic world, there had always been knowledge networks, but they were based more on oral transmission than written.²³ The printing press resulted in mass production of the written word. This, coupled with the laying of the underwater telegraph cable, gave birth to a rapid rise in newspapers, which were printed in large quantities and transported to other parts of the world. Thus, newspapers and magazines published in the Ottoman Empire and Britain were sent to India, and vice versa.

Francis Robinson, in his essay *Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print*, discusses the way print impacted religious change in the subcontinent. He argues that North India, in particular, the United Provinces (UP), became the site of the print revolution.²⁴ By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were 69 Urdu newspapers in UP with a circulation of more than 23,000.²⁵ The number of newspapers had almost doubled within the first decade of the century with circulation numbers reaching more than 75,000.²⁶ These figures serve to augment Robinson’s argument that the mass printing of Urdu newspapers and periodicals resulted in transforming the ways Muslims conceptualized themselves. This is partly because they were now more aware of happenings in other parts of the Islamic world, particularly the Ottoman Empire. This news was disseminated through numerous newspapers and periodicals published during this period.

The news of the Crimean War, the Balkan Wars, the Italian invasion of

23 Francis Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print,” *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 01 (1993): 234-235.

24 Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change,” 233.

25 Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 78.

26 Robinson, *Separatism among...*, 78.

Libya, and other important events in the Ottoman history, reached India within a day. This was a marked rise in the pace at which news traveled previously. Moreover, the postal system also allowed the circulation of newspapers, magazines, and periodicals beyond borders. All this resulted in new imaginings of being Muslim. Robinson argues that one of these changes was a “broadening Islamic vision to embrace a large part of the Muslim community in the world at large.”²⁷ 1857 had marked a disjuncture in the way Muslims thought of themselves. In the absence of the Mughal²⁸ emperor, who was the symbol of Muslim grandeur, there was a need to trace legitimacy from another source which symbolized Muslim power. In the early part of the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire emerged as the site in which rested Muslim power. This was more so because it had been losing its territories to the more powerful European empires. Italy conquered Libya in 1911, the French conquered Morocco in the same year, Eastern Europe was lost in the Balkan Wars of 1911-1914 and, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia had already been conquered by the British and French respectively in the 1880s. Hence, there was an increased disillusionment with the European colonial powers and the feeling that the West was “encroach[ing]” upon Muslim lands, was a shared one.²⁹ As a result, there was a rise in the pan-Islamic sentiment which is evident by the boom of newspapers, periodicals, magazines, and societies producing pan-Islamic content.

Hence, I take Robinson’s argument forward by situating it in the specific socio-political and historical context of early-twentieth-century India. He only briefly touches upon the subject of print facilitating the spread of pan-Islamic ideas. Through a textual analysis of three of the most popular Urdu newspapers, this is evaluated in greater detail and depth in this paper. The next section attempts to locate the development of this hybrid pan-Islam in the three newspapers identified above. The following analysis of these newspapers explores how each of the three editors opposed colonial rule in a different manner, yet ensured that they relied on happenings across the Muslim world and connected the plight of Muslims across the world with the plight of Muslims in India. In this sense, they were also attempting to rouse the Indian Muslims to speak up against the injustice of colonial rule.

27 Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change,” 243.

28, The Mughal Empire was founded by *Zahīr al-Dīn Bābur* in 1526, with the victory of the Battle of Panipat. *Bābur* was a matrilineal descendant of the Mongol Chingiz Khān. At its height, the empire encompassed most of the areas that come under the modern-day states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The Empire continued to exist until 1857, after which the British colonial rule took over the whole Indian subcontinent. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 366-367; Taymiya R. Zaman, “Mughals (1526-1857),” *Princeton Encyclopedia*.

29 Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change,” 243.

DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO COLONIAL RULE

There are differences among the editors' perceptions of colonial rule. While *Zamīndār* and *Hamdard* gradually began expressing anti-colonial sentiments, *Al-Hilāl* was vehemently anti-colonial from the beginning. A contributing factor to this may be the editors' backgrounds; Zafar and 'Alī were Aligarh students, while Āzād was a revolutionary who had engaged in revolutionary activity in Calcutta.³⁰ Despite their differences, each of them indulged in some anti-colonial rhetoric which gained in strength. As the Ottoman Empire experienced more invasions and subsequent loss of territories to European colonial powers, the anti-British sentiment in India increased. The British, in particular, were blamed for two actions – inaction at the fate being meted out to Turkey, and oppressive attitude against Indian Muslims. While the former was channeled through reporting of the Italian invasion of Tripoli, the Balkan Wars and the Russian invasion of Mashhad, the latter was channeled through the reporting on Kanpur Mosque incident.

The Aligarh background seems to inform the narrative of both Zafar and 'Alī. Zafar particularly seems to have a more lenient stance towards the British. The title page of *Zamīndār* (Figure 1) is representative of this thought. Underneath an image of the British crown is a verse calling for faithfulness towards the British government.³¹ Even while criticizing British policies and actions, his tone remains imploring compared to Āzād's excoriating tone. On the occasion of the Russian attack on Mashhad in Iran, Zafar literally beseeched the government to take action against the Russian atrocities.³² He pleaded to his *meherbān* (merciful) and *inṣāf pasand* (just) government to consider the feelings of its Muslim subjects and intervene on their behalf.³³

Though the choice of words, on the surface, seems to be sycophantic, resentment towards the British and the colonizers, can be sensed. By comparing the Russian attack on Mashhad to the Karbalā incident,³⁴ Zafar was clearly establishing that the Russians were *bāṭil* (Falsehood), while Muslims were *ḥaqq*

30 Rajat Ray, "Revolutionaries, Pan-Islamists, and Bolsheviks: Maulānā Abul Kalam Azad and the Political Underworld in Calcutta, 1905-1925," 105. In Mushirul Hasan ed. *Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1985).

31 *Tum khair khwāh daulat e bartāniyah raho*
Samjheñ janāb qaiṣar e hind apnā jāñ niṣār
 Remain a well-wisher of the British Empire
 The monarch must think of you as loyal

32 See *Zamīndār*, 12 July 1912.

33 *Zamīndār*, 12 July 1912

34 The Battle of Karbala (680 A.D) was fought between Hussayn (grandson of Prophet Muhammad), and Mu'aw-iyā (caliph of the time). In Islamic tradition, the battle is remembered for the sacrifice of Hussayn and his followers for the Truth. This battle has become the symbol of the opposition between *ḥaqq* (Truth) and *bāṭil* (Falsehood). It is further seen as the prototype of resistance to oppression and political injustice. See Phil Dorrol, "Holy Places", *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 221-222; Rainer Brunner, "Karbala," *Princeton Encyclopedia*, 293.

(Truth).³⁵ Moreover, this was not just a war of territory, but also of ideology and morality. The use of the word *inṣāf pasand* (just) suggests that there was some violation of *inṣāf* (justice). It was only because they felt that the British would not live up to their promise of upholding justice, that they emphasized their demands through the invocation of the word *inṣāf pasand*.

The idea of the British as the maintainers of peace in the world is represented in a cartoon strip published in *Zamīndār* (Figure 2). With the caption “*uṭh aye Bartānvī shér amn ke qā’im karāné ko*” (Rise, O British lion, to install peace), the cartoon portrays a lion fast asleep. In the background is a depiction of the war between Italy and Turkey. While the Muslim World is blowing a trumpet in the lion’s ears, the Muslim League is tugging at its tail. Despite this, the lion refuses to wake up. The text below the image translates as follows:

Muslim World: O lion! Why are you dozing off? Get up!
 Stop this bloodshed! Install peace!
 British (to itself): They think that I am dozing off, but I am
 just ignoring. Some blow the trumpet, some tug at my
 tail, but I will not open my eyes until the time is suitable.
 That suitable time is very near.

The image and the text below reflect the feelings of resentment toward the British. While portraying them as maintainers of peace in the world, and in effect implying them as rulers of the world, this image also suggests that the British are deliberately letting the conflict of Italy and Turkey continue. The text below the image explicitly states that the British lion is not “dozing”; instead, it is deliberately turning its eyes away from the conflict until it deems the time is suitable for intervention. It is suggested that the involvement of another Christian power in this conflict is hampering the British to intervene on behalf of the Muslims.

As opposed to Āzād, who was critical of the Muslim League, Zafar seems to be in favor of it. In the cartoon, the Muslim League is representative of Indian Muslims. As opposed to Āzād’s critical tone, Zafar’s tone hints of disappointment. The repeated publishing of the verse calling for loyalty, and the mention of British as maintainers of peace, reflect that he expected the British to meet the Muslim demands. This could be because along with being an Aligarh alumnus, Zafar was also a founding member of the Muslim League. The objectives of both organizations were to forward feelings of loyalty toward their rulers – the British.

35 The distinction between *ḥaqq* (Truth) and *bāṭil* (Falsehood) holds a central position in Islamic discourse. The debate on the connotations of the two words has assumed an important position in Islamic political theory. One of these connotations is that *ḥaqq* is Islam, while *bāṭil* is any other religion. Another implication of *bāṭil* is injustice while raising voice against that is considered *ḥaqq*.

However, at the British's repeated failure of living up to these expectations, he seemed to be disappointed. Consequently, by 1921, the newspaper had completely abandoned any pro-British expressions it previously had.

Muḥammad 'Alī adopted a slightly different tone in *Hamdard*. Compared to Ṣafar, 'Alī was diplomatic and tried to reason out his request. Since Muslims constituted a significant proportion of the population in the British Empire, any British action that hurt the sentiments of these Muslims, was bound to have a detrimental impact on the security situation in India.³⁶ Hence, it was only reasonable for the British to consider Indian Muslim sentiments while conducting diplomatic relations with both the Ottoman Empire and other empires containing Muslim subjects.³⁷ In this sense, 'Alī was also navigating in a pan-Islamic narrative. However, he also understood that simply considering Muslim sentiments was not possible in diplomatic relations which are much more complex. He did not expect, nor demand, the British government to maintain cordial relations with other governments even if they were detrimental to the British crown.³⁸ Rather, he only demanded the British to lend an ear to the concerns raised by Indian Muslims as they had listened to the concerns of the people in Britain. 'Alī was, therefore, trying to negotiate some degree of political standing for the Muslims. As long as the British remained the protectors of Muslims, it was a moral and legal duty of Indian Muslims to remain faithful to the British crown.³⁹

Āzād, on the contrary, openly criticized the British government and its policies, both in India and abroad. During the Balkan Wars and the Italian invasion of Tripoli, *Al-Hilāl* consistently maintained a critical tone for the British because of their inaction towards the situation. The revolutionary climate in Calcutta may have contributed significantly to Āzād's bold and unfazed expression of discontent with colonial rule and its policies. He criticized the Aligarh school because of their inactive approach towards these issues. Though a proponent of the Aligarh University and the Muslim University for which 'Alī was collecting funds at the time, he felt that a much more active approach was needed when dealing with British policies. By themselves, social acts—such as setting up a university—could not fulfill the task of securing rights for Muslims and securing Ottoman claims over the lands threatened by colonial advances.⁴⁰ More active acts, such as “agitation”,⁴¹ were needed if the British were to be opposed. For Āzād, the protests against the demolition of a portion of the Kanpur Mosque epitomized the protest tradition in India, and set a precedent for future protests and dissent.⁴²

Even among these editors, there were differences in responses to

36 See *Hamdard*, 14 March 1913.

37 See *Hamdard*, 14 March 1913.

38 *Hamdard*, 14 March 1913.

39 *Hamdard*, 14 March 1913.

40 Speech delivered at a session of *Ittihād e Islāmī* in Calcutta, on 24 October 1914. Comp. *Khuṭbāt e Azad* (Lahore: Zahid Bashir Printers, no date), 27-29.

41 See *Al-Hilāl*, 5 November 1913.

42 See *Al-Hilāl*, 5 November 1913.

colonial rule. While Zafar had a pleading attitude towards the British, 'Alī was significantly more diplomatic. Āzād was the most outspoken in his criticism. These differences were reflected in the newspapers they published. These differences can be attributed to the backgrounds of these authors – while Zafar and 'Alī had traces of their Aligarh training, Āzād demonstrated his experience with revolutionaries and secret societies in Calcutta. Nevertheless, all three of them engaged in some degree of opposition to British policies and actions. Their response to the demolition of a portion of a mosque in Kanpur reflects the different way(s) in which each editor engaged in opposition to British colonial rule, and simultaneously also attempted to fight for the cause of the Muslims. For these editors, this incident manifested British injustice. By virtue of this, the Kanpur Mosque incident became the thread that connected Muslims across the world because all of them appeared to be experiencing injustice at the hands of European colonial powers. The next section explores and analyzes this incident in greater depth.

KANPUR MOSQUE INCIDENT

The Kanpur Mosque incident became an important event around which Indian Muslim agitation was centered in the years immediately preceding the First World War. The newspapers under question also capitalized on this event and sketched their anti-colonial stance in relation to the Kanpur Mosque incident. This also served to sharpen the distinction between *ḥaqḥ* (Truth) and *bāṭil* (Falsehood) in the context of India, whereby the British were explicitly declared *bāṭil*, against whom *jihād* (Holy War) became incumbent.

The incident began with the demolition of a portion of a mosque situated in Machli Bazar in Kanpur. Specifically, the courtyard of the mosque was demolished in order to widen the adjacent road. It must be noted, however, that previous plans for the realignment of the road, dating back to 1908, had also included the demolition of two temples in the area. Moreover, the *mutawallī*⁴³ of the mosque had appeared before the Land Acquisition officer, where formal documentation made the acquisition of the courtyard legal. The demolition was not carried out immediately but announced later in 1912 by Sir James Meston, the Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces (UP). Following this announcement, numerous Muslim scholars issued *fatwas* declaring the courtyard to be a part of

43 Manager or custodian of *waqf* property (charitable endowment). The *mutawallī* is chosen by the founder of the *waqf* and is responsible for the administration of *waqf* property in the best interest of beneficiaries. The *mutawallī*'s first duty is the preservation of property, then maximization of revenues for beneficiaries. See The Oxford Dictionary of Islam (Accessed online at <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1666>)

the mosque, and hence a sacred and inviolable space.⁴⁴

The British government, nevertheless, continued with the plan. It was argued that the courtyard contained the ablution space of the mosque, and was therefore not a part of the mosque proper. Hence, the removal was justified. Following the demolition, protests were organized in the city. On August 3, 1913, a mass protest took place in the city's 'īdgāh,⁴⁵ after which the protestors marched towards the mosque and began to rebuild the desecrated portion. In order to disperse the group, the police opened fire, resulting in the death of 20-30 people.⁴⁶ However, the government was criticized for understating the casualties. Āzād, in particular, was very critical of the government and argued that it was impossible that so few casualties occurred when the police had fired rounds of ammunition consecutively for ten minutes.⁴⁷

As they reported on these events, the newspapers constructed an anti-colonial narrative centered on the Kanpur Mosque Incident. Āzād called for *jihād* (Holy War), while 'Alī engaged in active politics through representing Kanpur Muslims in front of the British government in London. Zafar criticized the British in a harsh tone. The Muslim League also passed resolutions condemning the act but requested that the editors assist in restoring calm among the Muslims.⁴⁸ This may be the reason why 'Alī refrained from publishing anything in the newspaper until July when it was made clear to him that the mosque would be demolished. The three newspapers led the agitation and were considered trouble mongers by the British.⁴⁹ Consequently, all three of them were forced to forfeit their securities and cease publication. After orders for Zafar's imprisonment were released, he fled to London.⁵⁰

LAND

The reference to land is pervasive in the narrative developed around the Kanpur Mosque incident. Āzād persistently used the word *zamīn* (land) when discussing the conflict. He describes the conflict as a case of forceful capture of

44 Spencer Lavan, "The Kanpur Mosque Incident of 1913: The North Indian Muslim Press and Its Reaction to Community Crisis," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42, no. 2 (1974): 274.

45 A congregation place to perform biannual Eid prayers.

46 Sir James Meston to the Private Secretary of the Viceroy, 3 August 1913. Cf. Lavan, "Kanpur Mosque Incident," 263.

47 Abul Kalam Azad, *Kānpūr kā Dardnāk Nazārah* in Abul Kalam Azad, *Mazāmīn e Azad* (Lahore: Book Talk, 2008), 50.

48 Minutes of the meeting of Punjab Muslim League Executive Committee held on 8 October 1913. Published in the *Civil and Military Gazette*. Cf. Lavan, "Kanpur Mosque Incident," 277.

49 Lavan, "The Kanpur Mosque Incident," 275.

50 Nazir Husain Zaidi, *Maulānā Zafar 'Alī Khān: Aḥvāl va Āsār* (Lahore: Majlis e Taraqqi e Adab, 1986), 105.

the land which belonged to Muslims.⁵¹ The British had forcefully seized (*qabza*) the land that was the property (*milkīyat*) of the Muslims. The choice of these words is particularly noteworthy. The simultaneous use of both words has legal ramifications since there is a connotation of ownership and property. While the violation of this property becomes a crime at the hands of the British government, it also reflects that this mosque was seen as Muslim property much like the Ottoman Empire was seen as Muslim property.

In this instance, the Kanpur Mosque became a metaphor for Muslim land. It became the space that represented Muslim land in British India, and the demolition of a portion of that space came to represent the encroachment on Muslim land at the hands of the colonial powers. Āzād uses the words *zamīn* (land) and *takht* (throne) for both the Muslim empires and for the mosque.⁵² While the mosque represents the *takht* of God's power, the Muslim lands represent the *takht* of government. Hence, in this instance, the mosque came to represent the spiritual power of the Muslims, and the Ottoman lands came to represent the temporal power of the Muslims. Both needed to be protected from foreign invasions. However, as Āzād argues, failing to protect spiritual power was a graver concern than failing to protect temporal power.⁵³ A similar narrative was also evident in the reporting of the Italian invasion of Tripoli. The association of the words *ḍākhū* (robber) and *qābiḥ* (occupier) with Italy, again signified the violation of land that was considered Muslim property.

This incident and the response towards it presents a highly interesting phenomenon. It is indicative of the disjuncture from classical pan-Islam, and its mutation into a more hybrid pan-Islam, whereby a local incident of injustice at the hands of colonial power was used to connect Muslims elsewhere suffering the same dilemma. It was thus a means to vie for some political agency for Muslims in India while staying rooted to the cause of Muslims across the world—particularly those in colonial territories. The newspapers used this incident to rally and organize anti-colonial protests, but they also used the mosque as a site that represented Muslim land and, indirectly, power. Moreover, they used the incident to connect themselves to Muslims in other parts of the world, particularly those experiencing foreign intervention. In a heart-rending article written in the aftermath of the Kanpur Mosque incident, Āzād wrote that the earth was 'thirsty' for Muslim blood, which was shed on the lands of Tripoli, Mashhad, and the Balkans. Now that India had also witnessed this bloodshed, Indian Muslims and those Muslims were—at least on an emotional plane—connected.⁵⁴ Now that they had experienced similar oppression at the hands of colonial power, they could better empathize with their Muslim brethren.

51 See *Al-Hilāl*, 5 November 1913.

52 See *Al-Hilāl*, 5 November 1913.

53 *Al-Hilāl*, 5 November 1913.

54 Azad, *Kānpūr kā Dardnāk Nazārah*, 49.

CONCLUSION

The advent of the printing press in the Islamic world played a significant role in the creation of a pan-Islamic identity. Its arrival in the Indian subcontinent allowed Indian Muslims easier access to news of incidents and events in other parts of the Islamic world. The very printing press that aided the creation of a transnational identity also made possible its localization. In the Indian context, incidents in the larger Muslim world were not only used to connect Indian Muslims to other Muslims on an emotional level, but also to fight for the political agency for Indian Muslims. In this sense, this pan-Islamic narrative was strongly rooted in the Indian social and political context, while simultaneously borrowing from events in the wider Muslim world.

This meant a constant negotiation with the colonial rulers in India, the response to whom changed over time. From beseeching to reasoning to outright opposition, the response to colonial rule varied over time. The Kanpur Mosque incident proved to be a watershed moment because it made loyalists, like Zafar, criticize the government in harsh words. It was also significant because it assisted in the shaping of the political identity and discourse of Muslims. Through agitation against—and negotiation with—the British authorities, Muslims vented out their opinion on the issue.

In doing so, they redefined the notion of pan-Islam. The aim was to empower and emancipate Muslims around the world, and through the content produced in their newspapers, *Al-Farīq*, *Zafar*, and *Āzād* were doing exactly this – empowering Muslims to speak against the injustice against their worship place. This violation connected Indian Muslims to the Muslims in other regions, simply by virtue of being a violation of Muslim property and sacred space. Moreover, the British reaction to the protest, and the subsequent killing of unarmed Muslims, firmly established the connection between Muslims of the world – all of them were facing oppression and violation of land at the hands of colonial powers. This violation was not just a legal crime, but also threatened their identity. The strong opposition to such acts suggested that the loss of land was tantamount to a loss of their religious identity – that of belonging to the faith of Islam – which was a significant element of these editors' identity, and the kind of identity they aspired to build among their Muslim readers.

APPENDIX

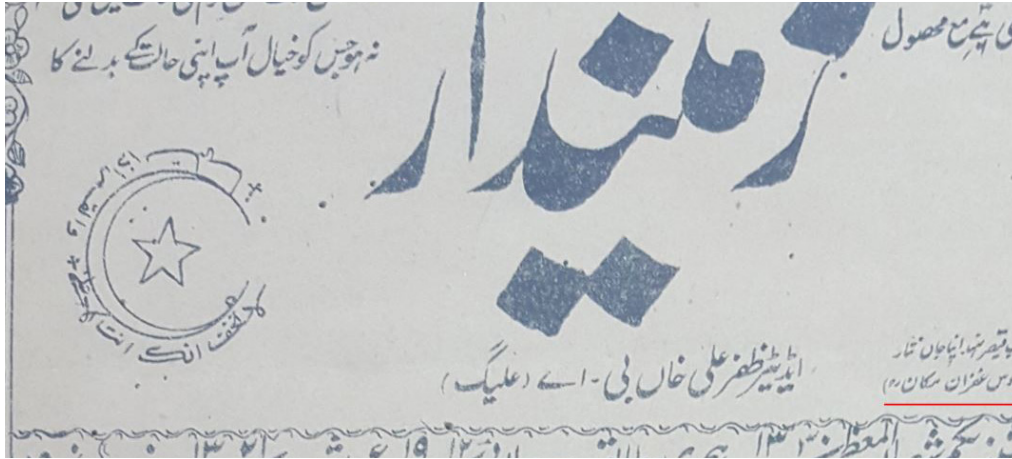


Figure 1: Title page of Zamindar till 1912. The verse calling for faithfulness towards British is at the bottom right, marked in red.

Figure 2: This image depicts a dozing lion, above which is written *Bartanwi Sher* (British Lion). A turbaned Muslim, depicting the Muslim world, is blowing a trumpet in the lion's ears, while an Indian Muslim depicting Muslim League, is tugging at the lion's tail. Despite this, the lion refuses to wake up. (Source: *Zamīndār*, 01 December, 1911)

