

## The Rise of Europe and Colonialism In Muslim Countries In The Case of Egypt and India

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**Abstract** : This writing aims to explore the rise of Europe and Colonialism in Muslim countries, focusing on the cases of Egypt and India. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the European resurgence and Colonialism in Muslim countries such as Egypt and India, with the hope that it can serve as a valuable lesson to avoid repetition in the future. The method employed is qualitative research based on library research, where all data sources are obtained from books, journals, and other scholarly articles closely related to the discussed topic. All data is inventoried, content is analyzed, and then compiled into a report. The findings reveal that the occurrence of colonialism in Egypt and India is attributed to the poor conditions of the society in those regions, encompassing economic, political, social, and religious aspects.

**Keywords** : Awakening, Europe, Colonialism, Muslim Countries

**Abstrak** : Tulisan ini ingin melihat kebangkitan Eropa dan Kolonialisme di Negara Muslim Pada Kasus Mesir dan India. Dengan tujuan ingin mengetahui lebih mendalam tentang kebangkitan eropa dan Kolonialisme di Negara Muslim Mesir dan India. Dengan harapan dapat menjadi Pelajaran berharga untuk tidak terulang Kembali di masa depan. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif berbasis library research. Dimana seluruh sumber data di dapatkan dari buku, jurnal, serta artikel ilmiah lainnya yang berhubungan erat dengan topik yang dibahas. Seluruh data diinventarisasi, dan dianalisis isinya, serta dijadikan dalam bentuk laporan. Hasilnya bahwa terjadinya kolonialisme di negara Mesri dan India diakibatkan karena buruknya kondisi masyarakat di daerah tersebut, baik secara ekonomi, politik, sosial maupun agama.

**Kata Kunci** : Kebangkitan, Eropa, Kolonialisme, Negara Muslim

### INTRODUCTION

Since Europe adopted the "Islamic civilization" and successfully emerged from decline through the spirit of the Renaissance, a new chapter in the global

civilization began, where Europe, once considered a marginalized power, became a major force, even a significant rival to the Islamic world (Saipullah, S., Aditiya, A. R., & Yanor, Y., 2023).

The rise of Europe initially faced numerous challenges, especially from the Islamic kingdoms that were difficult to conquer, particularly the Ottoman Empire centered in Turkey. Therefore, to avoid direct conflicts with these powers, Europe had no choice but to venture across the vast oceans. Militarily, until the year 1700 AD, the Ottoman Empire and Western Europe were evenly matched (Kadercan, B., 2013).

Later, Western Europe learned to develop navigation methods, enabling them to sail across the Atlantic and other oceans. This eventually led Christopher Columbus to discover the Americas in 1492, followed by Vasco da Gama finding the Cape of Good Hope in 1498. These discoveries boosted the growth of trade routes, resulting in European domination of global trade (Toteu, et.al, 2010).

Thus began the expansion into new territories for trade and spice exploration, without the pretext of colonialism and imperialism; instead, it was purely for trade. When reaching these regions, they made trade agreements with local rulers to establish warehouses and trading posts. To secure these bases, they sometimes sent forces to protect them from looting. As trade strengthened, these areas gradually became colonies, leading to the emergence of ideas for control through colonization and imperialism. On the other hand, the Vatican's call to spread the influence of the Gospel in conquered areas reinforced the motto of colonialism: Gold, Glory, and Gospel. Authorized nations for such actions included France, England, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain (Palupi, 2014).

The spirit of the Door of Ijtihad opened the way for the resurgence of the Islamic community from decline. From here, the desire for independence from European colonialism and a high awareness to study science and technology emerged, aiming to compete with Western powers. In this paper, the author will discuss the conditions of the Muslim communities in Egypt and India when

colonized by European powers, exploring the dialectics of the scholars there and their contributions to the Islamic world.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Colonialism in Egypt**

Egypt, from the beginning, has always been a focal point for rulers in the Islamic world, starting from Umar Ibn Khattab appointing Amr Ibn Ash, followed by the establishment of the Ibn Tulun Dynasty, the Fatimid Dynasty, to the Ottoman Turkish Dynasty. This situation continued when Napoleon Bonaparte of France conquered Egypt in 1798.

The overall condition of Egyptian society before falling into the hands of Napoleon was quite distressing. According to Badri Yatim, this was due to two factors. First, the weakening of Islamic strength in various aspects – social, political, economic, cultural, scientific, and even religious – post the Crusades. Second, continuous wars haunted the society because Egypt became a center of contention between powerful Islamic states and the West, diverting attention from development.

Additionally, religious thinking dominated by Ash'ari theology led to stagnation in intellectual pursuits. The strong aversion to philosophy, influenced by al-Ghazali's criticism, hindered progress in scientific fields, as it was believed that everything had already been settled and any issues could be represented by scholars adhering to the established schools of thought such as Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanafi, and Hanbali. This is evident in the lack of scholarly activities at Al-Azhar University (Assegaf, 2020).

The proliferation of religious ideologies within Sufi orders shifted the Egyptian mindset towards the afterlife rather than worldly concerns. This focus on the afterlife led to a lack of motivation among Muslims to resist injustice around them. Napoleon took advantage of this situation to conquer Egypt as a colony.

Napoleon's initial policies in Egypt included implementing a Republic governance system, where leaders were chosen through parliament and had to adhere to laws made by the parliament. The second policy was egalitarianism, emphasizing equality between rulers and the governed, with active participation of the community in governance. To realize this, Napoleon established a state body consisting of scholars from Cairo and other regions, tasked with creating laws, maintaining public order, and acting as intermediaries between French rulers and the Egyptian people.

The fall of Egypt and Napoleon's policies faced resistance from the Islamic world under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1765-1849), who joined forces with the Ottoman Turks led by Salim III (1789-1807) and successfully expelled the French from Egyptian soil. The departure of the French created political instability in Egypt, with the Mamluks, who were pursued during Napoleon's rule, returning to power and ready to confront the Ottoman Turks, who wanted Egypt to be part of their territory. Faced with this situation, Muhammad Ali Pasha manipulated and played off the Ottoman Turks against the Mamluk dynasty, ultimately establishing a sovereign Egypt in 1805 (Aravik, et.al, 2020).

Muhammad Ali Pasha, despite ruling in a somewhat dictatorial manner, made significant changes in education by establishing military, technical, medical, pharmacy, mining, agricultural, and translation schools. The curriculum was overhauled to meet contemporary needs, mandating the study of European languages. These initiatives were new to Egypt, and the population welcomed them enthusiastically. Many intellectuals were sent to Europe to learn languages, translation, and European civilization. Upon their return, they contributed their knowledge, marking the early resurgence of Egypt (Hassan, 2023).

However, this revival was short-lived due to English colonialism and imperialism. British colonization sparked deep-seated resentment among the Egyptian people because of economic policies that did not favor them and neglect of the education sector. To expel the British from Egypt, intellectuals were divided

into two groups: Egyptian nationalists (secular) and Egyptian modernists. (Lapidus, 2014).

According to Egyptian nationalists, unity, patriotic spirit, aversion to foreign rule, the establishment of a constitutional government, and Western-style education were essential to resist British colonization. They emphasized freedom as a fundamental principle, including freedom from foreign domination, freedom from state control, and recognition of the civil and political rights of citizens.

On the other hand, the modernist camp led by Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida believed that the decline of the Muslim community was due to abandoning true Islamic teachings and adopting foreign doctrines. They called for a return to genuine Islamic teachings, moral purification, elevation of character, sacrifice for the community's welfare, transforming autocratic governance into democratic governance, and achieving unity for the community to progress according to the demands of the times.

Al-Afghani stressed the importance of solidarity among Muslims based on religious bonds, not ethnic or racial ties. He advocated for Muslim rulers, regardless of their origin, as long as they upheld religious laws, to be accepted by other Muslim ethnic or racial groups as long as they adhered to religious laws (Haryati, 2022). This concept later became known as Islamic unity or Pan-Islamism, uniting Muslims worldwide into an unparalleled force.

Muhammad Abduh addressed the decline of the Muslim community by highlighting the need for educational reforms, bringing back the study of philosophy and logic that was previously excluded at Al-Azhar University. He criticized the dualism in education applied by scholars, arguing that it produced religious scholars with no knowledge of modern sciences and secular experts with little religious knowledge (Sabir & Susilo, 2018). Abduh called for a shift from rote memorization to understanding and reasoning and reintroduced the method of *Munazharah* to encourage a more thoughtful approach to learning.

In the religious realm, Abduh believed that the conservative mindset was responsible for the decline of the Muslim community. This conservative mindset resisted change and rejected innovation. Muslims clung rigidly to traditions, such as excessive reverence for scholars or Sufi leaders, blind obedience to scholars, imitation of past scholars, blind trust in fate, and complete submission to destiny. Abduh argued that to overcome these challenges, the conservative mindset needed to be eliminated from Islam. Additionally, blind imitation of scholars should not be defended but fought against because it led to the stagnation and lack of progress of the Muslim community (Baraz, 2010).

Furthermore, Abduh responded to those influenced by Europe and its criticisms of Islam, stating that Islam's excellence lies in its faith and the historical interpretation of God's message. Those Muslims in a lower position had abandoned true Islamic teachings, leading to their diminished status (Rahmena, 1998). Abduh asserted that Islam did not endorse religious authority in the sense that:

- 1) Islam did not grant power to individuals or groups to act on behalf of religion or based on a mandate from religion or God.
- 2) Islam did not justify interference by any ruler, even a religious one, in the lives and religious affairs of others.
- 3) Islam did not recognize the right of anyone to impose their understanding, opinions, or interpretations of religion on others (Adam, 2017).

Abduh stated that one of the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings was to erode religious authority completely. After Allah and His Messenger, no one has the power over the beliefs and faith of others. No Muslim, regardless of their position, has the right or authority over another Muslim, no matter how low their status, except for the right to provide warnings and guidance (Haddad, (2020).

The concepts of al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh were not always accepted by Egyptian society, especially the government and status quo ulama who collaborated with the colonialists. This can be seen from the rejection of the Persian Shah, Nasiruddin Syah, against Afghani regarding the British issue and Sultan

Abdul Hamid II, the ruler of the Ottoman Turks, who restricted al-Afghani's movements. And Abduh was "expelled" from Egypt because he did not agree with the government. Even at a later stage, Ali Abd al-Raziq's ideas, which stated that Islam did not need a political system as known to Muslims, were more popular than the ideas of al-Afghani and Abduh (Raziq, 1952).

## **2. Colonialism in India**

The condition of Muslims in India before the arrival of the British was marked by the emergence of the Hindu-Islam phenomenon as part of religious syncretism, a result of Sufi teachings that flourished in the country. This was compounded by the decline of the Mughal dynasty, one of the three influential post-Abbasid dynasties after the fall of the Abbasid Dynasty in Baghdad, leading to the dissolution of unity among the Muslim community.

The arrival of the British in India began with trade relations known as "the East India Company." However, this relationship evolved into British colonialism in India as the Mughal kingdom declined. The East India Company (EIC) resorted to military force against the Mughal kingdom, forcing Shah Alam (1761-1806 CE) to make a peace treaty, ceding Oudh, Bengal, and Orissa to the British (Novita, 2022).

After the death of Shah Alam, the throne was passed on to Akbar II (1806-1837 CE). During his reign, Akbar II granted concessions to the EIC to expand its business in the Indian subcontinent, as desired by the British, on the condition that the company guaranteed the life of the king and his family. Thus, India fell into British hands, even though the king's position and title were retained. Akbar II's successor, Bahadur Shah, revoked the terms of the agreement made by Akbar, leading to a political crisis in the region. Additionally, there were uprisings by the people due to harsh and oppressive taxation, leading to the famous Indian Rebellion of 1857 (Zamzam & Aravik, 2019).

The rebel resistance was quelled as the British received support from some local Hindu and Muslim rulers. The British then harshly punished the rebels, and in 1858, King Bahadur Shah was expelled from the palace, bringing an end to Mughal rule in India.

The idea of reform was initiated by an aristocrat named Nawab Abdul Latif, who founded the Muhammad Library Society in Calcutta. This organization discussed various issues, including politics, society, and religion, while aligning its ideas and standards with Western concepts. The most prominent figure in this movement was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898). However, before him, Ahmad Shah Waliullah bin Abd al-Rahman al-Dahlawi (1703-1762) had proposed the idea of replacing the monarchical governance system with the system developed by the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

During the outbreak of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, Sayyid Ahmad Khan opposed the uprising, supporting the British and believing that the British still had significant strength in India. After the event, Ahmad Khan resisted the rebellion, urging Muslims to participate. At the same time, he requested the British government to shift from a policy of oppression to a policy of protection toward the rebels. Sayyid Ahmad Khan's cooperative stance can be interpreted from various perspectives. On one hand, he wanted to prevent the killing of Muslims, and on the other hand, he saw that it was not yet time for a rebellion as British dominance over India remained strong, and any rebellion would be futile.

During his visit to England, Sayyid Ahmad Khan was surprised and advised the Indian population to accept British rule to acquire Western culture. Consequently, Sayyid Ahmad Khan began formulating the idea of establishing a college where Western culture would be taught alongside Islamic teachings. Five years later, this idea materialized with the opening of the Muhammad Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, which was pro-British (Belmekki, 2007). The goal was to make the Muslims of India valuable and useful to the British government. He urged Muslims to allow their sons to enter schools with a Western model, assuring

them that it was not contradictory to Islamic teachings. Because of his strong pro-British stance, Sayyid Ahmad Khan faced attacks from conservative scholars and was even declared a heretic. The mufti of Madinah issued a fatwa declaring his blood permissible (Watt, 2002).

In the political realm, Sayyid Ahmad Khan always collaborated with British imperialism, serving as a member of the General Council and government commissions. He continued to cultivate the loyalty of the middle-class Muslim population in Northern India. In the social sphere, Ahmad Khan advocated for his country to emulate European culture. Consequently, he strongly criticized conservative individuals who rejected change and religious patterns. For example, he stated that Islam sanctioned slavery or rejected the notion that Islam justified aggression in jihad. All these actions were undertaken to liberate Islam and its people from the crumbling traditional society, which they were now determined to defend with all their strength.

In the religious sphere, Sayyid Ahmad Khan absorbed Western culture and nationalism into his thinking. His thoughts were not confined by Islamic jurisprudence and hadiths; everything had to be measured with rational criticism. As a result, he rejected anything contradictory to logic and the laws of nature. According to him, Islam was the true religion because it aligned with nature.

Sayyid Khan's ideas were not supported by the peasant community, as they did not understand the ideas he advocated in rural areas. Additionally, he was rejected by scholars who taught religion in Persian because Ahmad Khan's reforms, especially his emphasis on English, threatened their ideological and economic status (Ahmad, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

From the above exposition, it can be concluded that fundamentally, the occurrence of colonialism in the countries of Egypt and India was caused by the poor conditions of the societies in those regions, encompassing economic, political,

social, and religious aspects. The fall of Egypt to Napoleon and its subsequent expulsion by Muhammad Ali Pasha and Sultan Salim III demonstrated that when the Islamic community is united, any enemy can be defeated. However, this unity was no longer evident when Egypt fell into British hands, leading Jamaluddin Al-Afghani to propose the idea of al-Jami'ah al-Islamiyah or Pan-Islamism (the unity of the Islamic community worldwide). On the other hand, Abduh chose the path of educational and religious reform, as he saw the potential of education to drive out colonialism. The confrontational stance against the British government was a general response from the Islamic community in Egypt.

In India, the situation was not much different from Egypt; the subjugation of India to British rule was more due to the decline of the Mughal dynasty. However, the attitude displayed by the Indian populace was highly cooperative with the British administration. This is evident from the ideas proposed by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, even though the underlying goal was for the Muslim community to catch up by imitating the West and adopting all the advancements of the colonizers.

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