

Abd al-Rahman al-Kawākibī and the Political Vision of Islam

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Abstract: *The paper addresses the political view of ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Ahmad al-Kawākibī (1855-1902) in the context of historical tradition and political structure of the Ottoman caliphate in the late 19th century. It looks into his critics of dictatorial rule and oppressive system of the caliphate and its call for the dismantling of the unjust and tyrannical framework. The study is based on qualitative method and documentary approach. The data obtained from reliable library material and source in the form of manuscript, dissertation, book, newspaper and magazine. The information derived is analysed using descriptive, analytical, comparative, and historical method. The finding shows that al-Kawakibi’s underlying philosophy and movement has largely influenced the Arab consciousness of the Middle East in the late 19th century, inspiring revolutionary ideas and movement in the East Mediterranean toward meaningful political liberation and the formation of nation state, bringing the spirit of nationalism and enlightenment throughout the Arab world.*

Keywords: *al-Kawakibi, Ottoman empire, dictatorship, Arab nationalism.*

Introduction

‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ahmad Bahā’i ibn Mas‘ūd al-Kawākibī (1855-1902) was an important liberation fighter in the history of the nahdah movement in the late 19th century, and one of the most influential Islamic reformist thinkers in the eastern Mediterranean. His history of struggle in the development of Pan-Arab nationalism ideology and thought is widely recognised, as Syilvia G. Haim theorises, "al-Kawakibi can be considered the first real intellectual to lay the foundations of modern Pan-Arabism." (Azyumardi Azra, 2016).

He was a Syrian author and supporter of the Pan-Arab movement, and one of the most prominent intellectuals of his time, whose most important thoughts and writings remain relevant to issues

surrounding Islamic identity and Pan-Arabism. His criticism of the Ottoman Empire eventually led the Arab community to demand sovereignty for the Arab nations, laying the foundation for Pan-Arab nationalism. His father Sayid Ahmad Bahā’i ibn Muhammad ibn Mas‘ūd al-Kawākibi (1244-1299/1829-1882) was a Mufti in Antokia. He emigrated to Halb, a Parsi village and married the daughter of that country, resulting in the al-Kawakibi lineage. His mother's name was Afifah bint Mas'ud. One of his grandfathers named Abu Muhammad Ibrahim also emigrated to Harran and was related to Abu 'Ala al-Ma'ari (362-450/973-1058). His lineage was related to Ali ibn Abi Talib. At the age of 6, his mother died, and he was raised by

his aunt Safiyyah. From his brother's mother he learnt Turkish, and Persian.

When he was 11 years old, he returned to Antokia, entered a specialised madrasa, and became a student of his maternal uncle, Said Najib al-Naquib, who was a personal tutor to the Amir of Egypt, Khedive Abbas Hilmi II. After the age of 12, he returned to Halb and studied in neighbouring schools. At that time his father was the teacher and head of the school he attended. There he learnt logic, mathematics, physics and jurisprudence, as well as the fundamentals of language and Shari'ah. At the age of 22, he entered the public sphere, the broad sphere of life, and devoted himself to community work. While in Halb, he became involved in the "Furat" newspaper, the official Arabic and Turkish newspaper, which paved the way for his involvement in politics. In the 1870s, he began to move in the press by editing the official newspaper in Aleppo, al-Furat (Euphrates River), and publishing two free newspapers, both of which were short-lived (the newspapers al-Syahba and al-I'tidal were banned by the government). According to Stephen Sheehi (2017), it was this network of akhbar (al-sahafa) that popularised him and tied him into a network of *nahda* (renaissance) activists and strugglers and intellectuals with Abduh:

"The Press, or al-sahafa, was al-Kawakibi's milieu and the means by which he maintained and expanded innumerable political and professional relations including those that led him to his patron Khedive Abbas II Hilmi Bey as well as longtime advocates and friends, Muhammad 'Abdu and Shaykh 'Ali Yusuf."

Despite holding a number of public and administrative positions in Ottoman Syria, al-Kawakibi experienced chronic persecution from the authorities, leading him to finally settle in Egypt in 1898. There he continued his journalistic activities and was part of the salafist circle of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. (Ronen Raz, 1990) With the latter, he formed a close friendship.

His own life is only recorded in the obituary notes recorded by the editor of al-Manar, Rashid Rida. This note in al-Manar was used by later writers and editors of his biography. Muhammad Raghib al-Tabbakh has published the full set of al-Manar notes, correcting only a few dates, and adding a photographic portrait of al-Kawakibi, along with verses from Hafiz Ibrahim engraved on his tomb and a funeral address composed by Muhammad Sadiq al-Rafi'i. As a young man, he was very interested in literature and politics, having edited Furat, the official paper of Aleppo from 1875 to 1880. He also

edited the highly influential reformist journal, al-Manar, which was started by Rashid Rida (1865-1935). After his work as editor, Al-Kawakibi entered politics more directly, and worked for various positions in the Ottoman civil service in Aleppo. Despite his opposition to the Ottoman Empire, Al-Kawakibi wanted to serve the Arabs. During this point in his career, he became an honorary member of the board of lawyer examinations (Goldsmith, 2021).

During a two-day workshop, organized by al-Kawakibi's great-grandson, scholars addressed issues of Islamic and socio-economic reforms, identity, and the quest for 'self-revival'. Yet as, Mahir al-sharif, one of the speakers concluded, this seemed "ineffective [...] mainly because those intellectuals who are detached from governmental and educational institutions do not have a broad social foundation supported by people" (Al-Kawakibi, 2003).

Method

This research is based on a qualitative review of the type of literature documentation and literature study. The study data is obtained from historical sources and reliable documentary materials in the form of manuscripts, books, theses, newspapers and magazines. This information is researched descriptively, analytically, comparatively and

historically, to get empirical and accurate findings.

Previous writings on al-Kawākibī's thought similar to the title of this research are mostly traced from modern and contemporary works whose origins can be detected from classical sources and records in modern history. Among these is a compilation compiled by Muhammad 'Imārah, titled *Al-A'māl al-Kāmila li 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Kawākibī ma'a dirāsa 'an hayātihi wa-āthārihi* (1970) which contains a collection of his authoritative works that have been translated by Imarah. Another article is a book edited by Charles Kurzman entitled *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook* which includes a translation of *Umm al-qura* [The Mother of Cities [Mecca], 1902] from its Arabic original. Another article is a paper written by Azyumardi Azra (2016) on his radical influence on the pan-Islamist movement in the Arab world.

Itzhak Weismann's (2015) book is also referenced in relation to al-Kawakibi's thought and brief biography and its impact on modern Islamic reform movements. Hamka's (1970) work on al-Afghani also looks at his influence on al-Kawakibi in his journalistic career and his attacks on the aristocratic and clerical classes who were in cahoots with the Ottoman tyrannical

government. The thesis written by Sylvia Kedourie (1953) also reviewed al-Kawakibi's pioneering ideas on Arab-Muslim political relations and his liberal national aspirations and understanding. In short, what distinguishes these writings from the perspective of this study is their focus on al-Kawakibi's Islamic political vision and its influence in enabling the rise of the pan-Arab spirit in the context of Arab-Muslim thought and the development of the trend of pan-Islamism in the Middle East.

The aim of this study is to highlight Al-Kawākibī's political views and their widespread impact on the rise of the pan-Islamist movement in the Arab world which in turn formed a new strength and awareness of dynamic Arab-Muslim relations in the face of the expansion of outside factors and the colonisation of imperialist powers.

Results and Discussion

Problem solving is done by analysing the problem, then looking for data and information that is appropriate and can be used in this research.

Background.

Al-Kawākibī was born in 1854 (1271 AH) or 1855 (some say 1848, others 1853) in Aleppo in northern Syria. His father was a scholar who had prosecuted in

Damascus and served as Grand Judge in Aleppo, and was a great orator. As a judge he tended to decide disputes by agreements reached between the contesting parties. He was born into a family rooted in centuries of scholarship, devotion and service. The young Abdurrahman lost his mother when he was five years old, and was brought up three years later in Antioch by his brother's mother, Safiyah, who was fluent in Turkish, in addition to mastering Arabic, and had gone to school when the majority of the community at large was still shackled to illiteracy. He returned to Aleppo when he was nine years old, where he was enrolled in the Kawakibiyah Madrasah, which his father had organised. He studied Arabic, Turkish and Persian, in addition to religious education with a brilliant command of Arabic.

Al-Kawakibi was a voracious reader, devouring whatever his hands could reach, which means he attended various works translated from European languages, and he emphasised in his studies mathematical and physical knowledge. Through the age of 20, he has made tremendous efforts with the breadth of his education.

In addition to all this, he had a serious personality and refined intellectual power, in addition to the pleasure of serving

the circle of scholars and poetic figures. The second period of the nineteenth century during which Al-Kawakibi lived was a period of continuous decline throughout the Islamic world. Most Islamic territories were in a state of weakness, ruled by dictators who were passionate about accumulating wealth, with no concern for the people. Ignorance and illiteracy were a daily reality. Injustice prevails. Internal struggles are often ignited. The educated few knew little of the true character and nature of Islam.

For this reason, they depend on and cling to the West, calling for the adoption and absorption of the Western way of life. The image of Islam is limited, in the minds of most humans, to a few dilapidated and ignorant ritual practices, superstitions and perverted practices.

Only a small number of educated human beings have come forward to campaign for a return to Islam in its pure image and purity. The most prominent of this group was Abdurrahman Al-Kawakibi, who was outspoken in his criticism of the rampant injustices under the increasingly corrupt Ottoman rule, which had led to a situation of total backwardness.

At the age of 22, Al-Kawakibi was appointed as the unofficial editor of the royal newspaper, *Furat*, which was published in Arabic and Turkish between

1867 and 1911. After a year, he was appointed as its official editor. A year or so later; that is, in 1878, Al-Kawakibi published the first free Arabic periodical newspaper, called *Al-Shahbaa*, which showed the great authorship talent of its publisher and editor.

However, Al-Kawakibi quickly went on the offensive, demanding comprehensive reforms in public life and showing revolt against autocratic laws and criticising the royal police in particular. Only fifteen issues were published and the press was directed to close by the government. Al-Kawakibi then issued a third press, *Al-I'tidal*, in both Arabic and Turkish, promoting freedom and justice, but again his press was banned and suppressed.

Al-Kawakibi has held various appointments in the government. At the age of 25, he was an honorary member of the education and finance ministry, and was later appointed as an honorary member of the guaman's audit institution. Then he was appointed as the manager of the royal printing department in Aleppo, and later as an expert in the commercial court. In all his positions, Al-Kawakibi attracted admiration and respect for his diligence and efficiency.

He mobilised reforms wherever he worked and tried to remove anything that hindered the smooth running of the work or that impeded the public interest (maslahah). At the same time, he wrote various articles in newspapers circulated in Istanbul and Beirut. The government was displeased with his writings and planned trouble for him. This led to his resignation from royal duties in 1886, where he began his work as a lawyer.

He returned to royal service at the age of 40, holding several portfolios. Once again he was exemplary in his work, loved by his colleagues and the public. His popularity always caused irritation to the government, which tried to suppress his activities. He continued to advocate and demand reform, putting injustice at the centre of his criticism. Because of this, the government continued to hinder and complicate his movements. Eventually, he decided to set himself aside, travelling to Egypt in 1900.

In Egypt, Al-Kawakibi was recognised by the intelligentsia and soon managed to establish a close relationship with Sheikh Ali Yusuf, editor of the famous newspaper Al-Muayyad. He began to publish articles on despotic governments, which were later published in a book entitled *Taba'i Al-Istibdad*, or the character

of dictatorship. Another book he wrote followed under the title *Umm al-Qura*. Both were quite influential.

In the introduction to his first book, *The Nature of Dictatorship* (*Taba'i al-Istibdad wa-Masari al-Isti'bad*), Al-Kawakibi said it was not directed at any monarch or dictator. He just wanted to alert his people to the cause of their malaise, by which "they will realise that they should not blame anyone other than themselves. They should not blame foreigners or fate. I just hope that those who care about the fate of their nation will rise up and do something to change the situation before it is too late."

Al-Kawakibi states that he borrowed some of his ideas from other writers. It is clear that Al-Kawakibi was influenced by Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu, although he could not read the works of all these authors except in translation.

In his book, Al-Kawakibi clearly outlines that accountability is important for a government not to turn into a dictator. This was demonstrated in the earliest Islamic kingdoms, and in the British administrative system. He accepts that dictatorship in politics is often the result of religious dictatorship, but he rejects the notion that Islam permits despotic rule. On the contrary, Islam "combines wisdom and

solid solutions. It obliterated jahiliyyah beliefs and laid the foundation for political freedom." He believed that dictatorship and education go in different directions and directions. All dictators are in a quandary if the people are growing sensitive and reproachful. Instead, they try to perpetuate and keep the people in ignorance.

In addition, dictatorships paralyse the national economy and promote social decay, thus destroying ethical values.

His other book, *Umm al-Qura* (Mother of Towns) was innovative in its conception and structure. Al-Kawakibi presented it in the form of a minute meeting of an imagined conference attended by representatives from twenty-two Islamic countries. The theme chosen for the conference was "identifying the causes of the backwardness of the *Muslim Ummah*, its symptoms and how to overcome them and steps to restore the position of the *Muslim Ummah*."

The first three days of this envisaged conference began with the first topic, discussing the causes of the weakness of the Muslim Ummah and the methods to overcome and deal with it. The second topic the conference discussed was the "true definition of Islam." Three main points were mentioned here: 1) the belief that the Prophet Muhammad has delivered his

message completely and completely, without missing a single thing; 2) nothing can be added to what the Prophet has delivered to us; and 3) Muslims are free to organise their worldly lives as they wish, provided they do not violate any of the fundamental principles of Islam.

The council recognised no less than eighty-six reasons for the weakness of the Muslim Ummah, some of which were side and branch factors. It set up a unit dedicated to reforming the condition of the Muslim Ummah. One of the main objectives of this unit was to promote the widespread role of education throughout the Islamic world, promote the promotion of science and art. And the main conclusions of the conference were as follows:

The Muslim Ummah is in chronic lethargy; the antidote to this phenomenon is quite impossible; the germ that causes this disease is ignorance; the only antidote is by means of education and encouraging young people to work to achieve a better status; there is an urgent need to galvanise educational associations; this task must be accomplished through the combined co-operation of all those who can contribute and mobilise efforts towards it especially the scholars and groups of people who have deep understanding and wisdom.

Al-Kawakibi was a genuine proponent of freedom and education as the only way forward for Islamic society. He died in 1902, at the young age of 48.

Political Vision

"The greatest disaster is our loss of freedom...freedom to speak out and publish, freedom to carry out scientific research..." ('Abd al-Rahmān al-Kawākibī, *Umm al-Qurā*, 1975: 154).

Impressed by the reform ideas of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897) and Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), al-Kawākibī supported Arab independence and an elected Arab caliph with limited powers as the basis for an Islamic revival. He was a Syrian Islamic revivalist and advocate of an Arab caliph and a pioneer of the nationalist cause, where "this group of new intellectuals helped generate the Arab renaissance (al-nahda) and would later become known as Modernist Salafists." (Itzhak Weismann, 2015) This fact is also reinforced and analysed by Tibi who states that al-Kawakibi can be seen as a pioneer of Arab nationalism. (Azyumardi Azra, 2016) The spirit of his struggle in defending the oppressed and getting rid of injustice attracted widespread attention from the poor and destitute, who dubbed him Abū al-Du'afā', "the father of the weak". His fame resulted from his two works published in

his later years (he died in 1902), *Umm al-Qura* ("The Mother of Villages" [Mecca]) and *Tabā'i' al-istibdād wa masāri' al-isti'bād* ("The Nature of Despotism and the Harm of Enslavement" - The Nature of Dictatorship and the Harm of Enslavement) which was a manifesto against Ottoman despotism.

He also advocated the purification of the original Islam, claiming that deviations and foreign concepts such as mysticism, fatalism, schism and blind taklid had led to ignorance and submission to frozen clerics and despotic governments that suppressed freedom, encouraged false religion, and undermined the moral, social, educational and financial systems of Muslims, as demonstrated by the Ottoman Empire.

According to Azyumardi Azra (2016) "Al-Kawākibī was the first person who without the slightest ambiguity declared himself an Arab leader against the Turks. However, al-Kawakibi himself was not radical enough in his attack on the Turks, as he never proposed the establishment of a state of joint Arab and Ottoman Turkish rule with an Arab caliph as the religious and cultural leader."

The history of her struggles and classical teachings are recorded in her two influential works *Ummul Qura* and *Tabā'i' al-istibdād wa masāri' al-isti'bād*. It is

considered a manifesto against tyranny, or a celebration of the Prophetic ideal. Considered a classic in contemporary Arab political thought, where some of his views were inspired by the Italian author Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803). His strong and significant opposition in challenging tyranny and refuting the depravity and barriers of despotism is expressed by Ronen Raz in interpreting al-Kawakibi's thoughts: 'They were a challenge not only to the Ottomans, who were struggling to hold the crumbling empire together, but also to other Arab intellectuals, including those in Kawakibi's close milieu, who were contemplating questions of identity and political authority vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. (These traits were a challenge not only to the Ottomans, who were trying to defend the crumbling empire, but also to Arab intellectuals, including those in Kawakibi's close milieu, who were contemplating questions of identity and political authority vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire).

Due to the oppression of the authorities, he was forced to keep his identity secret in the book where he disguised his name as "Al-Rahhala (Kāf)" (Traveller K.) for *Tabā'i' al-istibdād* and "al-Sayyid al-Furati" for *Ummul Qura*.

Al-Kawākibī is also said to have two other works, *Al-'Adzamatul li Allah* and *Sahā'if Quraysh*. He was also allegedly said to have written an account of his voyages to Asian and African countries, but it was lost.

The idealism formulated in his two influential books and his strong aspirations in inspiring *nahdhah* *harakat* and intellectuals are noted by Komaruddin Hidayat, Ahmad Gaus A.F. (2005) "al-Kawakibi, for example, is a second-generation *nahdhah* intellectual who specifically studies political thought."

According to al-Kawākibī, Islam was born democratic, but it has been turned into an instrument of absolutism (totalitarian rule). This drift will continue until the Day of Judgement, so Muslims accept the political method based on the principle of deliberation. Namely, political policies taken from the deliberation of *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*, to carry out the public interest.

Impressed with the dynamic and progressive rational philosophy of al-Afghani and Abduh, he tried to bring in the modern influences and ideals championed in renewing thought and fuelling the rise of the *ummah*, as revealed by Charles Kurzman (2002) in his book *Modernist Islam 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*: "Al-Kawakibi's thought was influenced by his

contemporaries Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh, among others. His historical significance in the Islamic modernist trend of thought lay in his elaboration of an Arab pan-Islamism intended to reform the decaying Muslim world, privileging Arabs over non-Arabs and advocating the establishment of an Arab caliphate."

(Al-Kawakibi's thought was influenced by his contemporary Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh, among others. His historical significance in the trend of Islamic modernist thought lies in his elaboration of Arab pan-Islamism which aimed to reform the repressive Islamic world, favouring Arabs over non-Arabs and supporting the establishment of an Arab caliph).

The influence of the views and ideas of reform inspired by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh has been explored in *Ummul Qura*, which analyses the causes of the decline of a nation. He explained several factors that led to the destruction of the nation, including the ruler who no longer cared about the people and the people, so that the rights of the people were lost. He also articulated the notion of *jabriyyah* (human compulsion) which was thought to be the cause of the backwardness and backwardness of the people from

pursuing civilisation and progress. The impression of his philosophy and emphasis on the importance of education on al-Kawakibi was also expressed by Joseph G. Rahme where "'Abduh's emphasis on internal reform, especially on the reform of education, was appropriated by one of his numerous disciples, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1854-1902)." (Joseph G. Rahme, 1999). ['Abduh's emphasis on internal reform, especially the reform of education, was appropriated by one of his numerous disciples, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1854-1902)].

In upholding the *khittah* of the struggle of Abduh and Rashid Rida, al-Kawakibi has maintained the belief and ideology and philosophy of renewal that was fought for, where "He (Rashid Rida) agreed with his colleague, Abd. Al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, that one of the causes that led to the decline of Muslims was fatalism (*akidah al-Jabbar*). And then one of the reasons that led European societies to progress was the dynamic understanding found among them." (Ris'an Rusli, 2018).

In raising awareness and possibilities in opposing the Ottoman regime, "the Islamic mind began to rise again" (Ahmad Azhar Basyir, 1993) which has galvanised and awakened the spirit of a powerful struggle where the ideology and

movement of "Muhammad Iqbal, Abdurrahman Al-Kawakibi, and others can be seen as figures and pioneers recorded in the "blueprint" of the history of Islamic Philosophy." (Ahmad Azhar Basyir, 1993)

Falsafah

"Sleep on, and you are hailed as the softest nation in the world. Your blood is sucked and your flesh is devoured so that only the skin remains. Who doesn't praise cows and buffaloes?

People can make them work, and eat their flesh. But if they know their rights, people will call them arrogant, because they don't want to be oppressed.

Your language is praised as refined throughout the world, and polite as well. That's because you reprimand others in kromo and they reprimand you in ngoko.

If you turn around, you will be considered insolent!"

It is unnatural to see the land of the spilt blood as a cash cow that is fed only because of its milk.

It is out of place to think of this country as a place where people come only to take, to deprive you of the fruits of your labour!"

(H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, 1916)

Al-Kawakibi's writings brought about the philosophy and ideologies of

national struggle and thought that were decisive. His trilogy *Umm al-Qura* is considered the first to discuss the rise of Arab nationalism and the concept of Arabism as observed by Ronen Raz (1996): "Kawakibi's was the first discussion of Arabism by a Muslim Arab, and was to a large extent less religious in its tone than the writings produced by contemporary Muslim writers. His ideas can be seen as a critical link between the cultural revival in the Arab Middle East, religious literary and scholarly, and the translation of the cultural ideas and achievements into political claims, platforms and organisations." (Al-Kawakibi's treatise is the first discussion of Arabism by an Arab Muslim, and is largely less religious in tone than the writing produced by contemporary Muslim authors. His ideas can be seen as a critical link between the cultural renaissance in the Arab Middle East, religious pride and scholarship, and the translation of cultural ideas and achievements into political claims, platforms and organisations).

In upholding the ideals of renewal and liberation, he strongly criticised the depravity and deterioration of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which was in decline. *Tabā'i' al-istibdād* explains that the tyrannical style of government is contrary

to the spirit of humanity, and hinders individual freedom and self-development. His fundamental ideas and criticisms of the Ottoman tyranny were recorded by Adonis who formulated al-Kawakibi's critique of the decline and chaos of Muslim thought in his book *Archaeology of the History of Arab-Islamic Thought*: "Why is it down? "What is the best means to rise"? it is from these two questions that al-Kawakibi stands, and it is around these two issues that his thought moves ... (Adonis, 2015: 117).

The deterioration and depravity of the authoritarian system and base are strongly criticised where: "the downturn is a "disease"...its root is "political arbitrariness"...al-Kawakibi's belief in the root and its establishment is an absolute and perfect belief. This is because the stability of the roots is the only factor that can preserve "the greatness of religion throughout the centuries". From this, al-Kawakibi has the belief that the disease of decline can be eradicated and it is possible to be raised to the path of progress. (Adonis, 2015: 117).

Political ideology

The outline of the struggle he was galvanised in opposing the depravity and arbitrariness of this ruler has been formulated by Hamka in his book *My*

Memories in Malaya (2019: 109) "A famous Islamic thinker at the end of the 19th century named Sayyid Abdul Rahman al-Kawakibi wrote in his book called *Thabai'l al-Istibdad* and *Ummul Qura* that in the time he lived during the time of the kings of the Uthmaniyyah Banu, many people who used the title *ulama'* were an obstacle to progress. He was in league with the kings to fool the ummah."

Ummul Qura tried to express the idea of Ummah unity and the importance of reform and Pan-Islamic ideologies. This idea was brought up in a fictitious conference held in Mecca during the 1899 Hajj season, where a Palestinian representative from the second session proposed that the backwardness of the Muslim Ummah in all fields of life was due to the deterioration of the political system of the ruling government.

The political system, which was initially democratic in the era of the caliphs, changed to dynastic rule (*muluk*), which initially still respected the basic principles of religion, but later became absolute power and an iron fingernail system.

In this case al-Kawakibi asserts that the government can fall into dictatorship: "when the holders of executive power are not accountable to the holders of legislative power, and the holders of legislative power

are not accountable to the people, the people who know how to supervise and are capable of judgement."

The state of Islamic countries that are scattered with separate territories according to him can be united and bound, whose elements consist of 3 parts: (1) Religious ties with the existence of a single caliph as a symbol of unity of religious spirit and a symbol of politics and government of the Islamic world (2) political ties manifested through the institution of a consultation whose members are represented from all over the Islamic world, which becomes a forum for discussion and regulation of political policies between the Islamic world (3) scientific ties with the formation of a joint establishment belonging to the Islamic world that works to provide education for the younger generation. Because, according to al-Kawakibi, the source of all diseases and the decline of the Islamic world is rampant acute ignorance (*al-jahl al-mutlaq*). (Zulbaida, 2017)

According to him, a just state is one that gives individuals the freedom to determine their goals and serve their fellow communities, and this is the true form of the Islamic state that existed at the beginning of Islamic history (Zulbaida, 2017). Al-Kawakibi stresses that the problem does not

lie in Islam rather it exists in the political agenda of some Muslims who manipulate religion. In this light, he highlights the lack of religious education and the necessity of knowledge. Al-Kawakibi finds the second principal cause of *al-futoor al-'am* to be political and manifested in the state hegemony over resources and the political sphere as well as the absence of any type of 'freedom of expression'. In his words "freedom is the most precious thing for any human being, when freedom is absent, apathy will prevail". He argues that the socio-economic injustice among different stratum of society has a fatal catalyst for nation building (Al-Furati, 1931).

This attempt to realise Islamic unity (*Jami'ah Islamiyah*) anticipates the establishment of harmonious relations between the Islamic world with its own secretariat. This does not imply a state based on religion, but rather a strong, cohesive, just relationship among Muslims, who are not necessarily under one authority. This is expressed by al-Kawakibi as *ummah*, which in addition to referring to the Qur'an, also contains diverse meanings, interpreted in modern literature, with the meaning of forming a common history, language, world, economic life, soul and civilisation, and a congregation that has relationships and inner bonds (*ukhwah*).

Political Tyranny

The severity of the struggle that was upheld in defending the freedom of the Muslims from the grip of tyranny and the undermining of this despotic ideology was formulated by Hamka in his speech "The Influence of the Teachings and Thoughts of Al Ustadz Al Imam Sheikh Muhammad Abduh in Indonesia" which revealed the influence of the theology of thought trained by modern fighters in incarnating the spirit of change and renewal and Islamic revival in the archipelago, "And I do not exceed the truth if I say that Sayid Djamaluddin Al-Afghany and Sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh, and Sayid Rasyid Ridha, plus Sayid 'Abdur Rahman El-Kawakibi and Al-Amir Syakib Arselan and others have contributed not a little share in the awakening of the Indonesian nation and awakening the spirit of Islam, so that a progressive Islamic ideology was formed, as part of the Indonesian national struggle."

The struggle spearheaded by al-Kawakibi in the face of injustice and extortion by these dictators was formulated by Hamka in his book "Said Djamaluddin Al-Afghany: Pioneer of Muslim Awakening" (1970: 63) which reveals the impression of his radical and decisive struggle in igniting and awakening awareness and powerful opposition to the

depravity of this oppression politics, "The disease of submitting the neck to be slaughtered by the ruler, accepting fate as a destiny that has been written in Luh Mahfuz, and a very bad motto, namely "The best of the fortunate is the persecuted", is not merely an Egyptian disease in the middle of Qurun 19. It is a disease that is prevalent throughout the Islamic world. Another builder of modern Islamic thought, Said Abdurahman Al-Kawakibi, has discussed this disease in his book "Thaba i'ul Istibdad" (The prophets of the dictatorship). This is what he said: SABAR as you interpret it, does it bring you pride? Are you rewarded for such patience? By Allah you have miscalculated.

If that is how you give the meaning of patience, you will gain nothing but slavery while living and humiliation while dying. For it is only others who can use you for their lives and you yourself get nothing from life. In fact, all the heritage left by your ancestors will be destroyed and there will be no legacy that you will be proud of to future generations.

You complain about being poor, when the only reason is that you are lazy. You want to improve your lot, when you are deceiving your neighbours. And you do not realise that the one you are deceiving is yourself. You patiently accept a life of

poverty, then you call such a life, a simple life.

You neglect to improve your fate, then you call it tawakkal! If your life has been fiddled with by the Lalim, why then do you let them fiddle with the matter of death? While you also want to leave death to their provisions. Would it not be better for you to choose how to die well? Not to die at the whim of the oppressor. Has their injustice deprived you of your own will as far as death is concerned?

In another part he said:so stupid are you. When the tyrant oppresses you, you laugh and praise him because he is strong. He takes away your wealth and you thank him for not taking your life. All kinds of cunning tactics are used by the tyrant, you feel proud because he is "smart". If he squanders state property as he pleases, you praise him because he is generous. If one of you is killed unjustly, you still praise him because the carcass of the murdered is not fastened, a sign that he is still merciful to his people."

Thus Said Abdurrahman Al-Kawakibi wrote about the injustice of the radja-radja and the corruption of the people at that time. Not in Egypt alone, but all over. (Hamka, 1970: 64). Reconstruction that is mobilised to raise the dignity of the struggle and

inspire freedom and true understanding of renewal.

Conclusion

In his opposition to government oppression and bureaucracy, al-Kawakibi has brought about important reforms in galvanising the spirit of pan-Islamism and nationalist movements and upholding modern aspirations against the rule of the Arab caliphs, which provided strong opposition to the Uthmanid empire, and the Ottoman Turkish royal sultanate, which eventually tried to suppress and end his political history. With his turmoil that challenged the social values he was fighting for, al-Kawakibi rose up to challenge the injustice and deterioration of the outdated system of oppressive iron fist and refuted the injustice that continued to grip and dumb down the ummah on a dilapidated and unjust basis. This history of his bitter struggle against tyrannical power is very impressive, in our endeavour to defend his philosophy of struggle and fight for reformism and intellectual awakening and continue the vision of struggle and nahdah that he established.

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