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Al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism: Merging Politics and Religion for Sovereignty and Progressiveness of Modern Muslims

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Al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism: Merging Politics and Religion for Sovereignty and Progressiveness of Modern Muslims.

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Abstract

This research aims to comprehensively examine Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism as a theoretical and practical framework for restoring the political independence and intellectual dignity of the Muslim ummah in the modern era. Against the backdrop of the Islamic world's decline due to Western domination and absolutist practices, Al-Afghani proposed Pan-Islamism as an essential strategy to consolidate the political power of Muslims and revitalize their civilization. The method employed is a qualitative library study, analyzing primary and secondary literature to explore Al-Afghani's central ideas, their contemporary relevance, and implications for anti-colonial resistance. The findings indicate that Al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism is not merely a call for political unity but also a foundation for religiously-based educational reform, the rejection of secularism, and the adoption of rationality and modern science. He urged Muslims to return to pure Islamic teachings, abandon fatalism, and selectively utilize Western science and technology for resurgence. Recommendations for academic advancement include curriculum reform in Islamic educational institutions, integrating religious spirituality with scientific rationality and contemporary technology, aligning with the view that modernizing Islamic educational institutions is imperative to face modern challenges.

Keywords: Pan-Islamism; Anti-Colonialism; Jamaluddin Al-Afghani; Islamic Renewal/Reform; Political Unity; Islamic Modernity.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara komprehensif pemikiran Pan-Islamisme Jamaluddin Al-Afghani sebagai sebuah kerangka teoritis dan praksis dalam mengembalikan kemandirian politik serta martabat intelektual umat Islam di era modern. Dengan latar belakang kemunduran dunia Islam akibat dominasi Barat dan praktik absolutisme, Al-Afghani mengemukakan Pan-Islamisme sebagai strategi esensial untuk mengonsolidasikan kekuatan politik umat Islam dan merevitalisasi peradaban mereka. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi kepustakaan kualitatif, menganalisis literatur primer dan sekunder untuk menggali ide-ide sentral Al-Afghani, relevansinya dalam konteks kontemporer, dan implikasinya terhadap resistensi anti-kolonial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Pan-Islamisme Al-Afghani bukan hanya seruan untuk persatuan politik, melainkan juga fondasi untuk reformasi pendidikan berbasis agama, penolakan pemisahan agama dan politik, serta adopsi rasionalitas dan ilmu pengetahuan modern. Ia mendorong umat Islam untuk kembali pada ajaran murni, meninggalkan fatalisme, dan memanfaatkan sains serta teknologi Barat secara selektif untuk kebangkitan. Rekomendasi bagi kemajuan keilmuan adalah reformasi kurikulum institusi pendidikan Islam, mengintegrasikan spiritualitas keagamaan dengan rasionalitas ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi kontemporer, sejalan dengan pandangan bahwa modernisasi lembaga pendidikan Islam adalah keniscayaan untuk menghadapi zaman.

Kata Kunci: Pan-Islamisme; Anti-Kolonialisme; Jamaluddin Al-Afghani; Pembaharuan Islam; Persatuan Politik; Modernitas Islam

PENDAHULUAN

When discussing renewal in Islam or renewal of the understanding of Islam, several questions arise: which aspects of Islam need to be renewed, given that Islam itself is a teaching revealed by Allah SWT through His Messenger to serve as a guide for the organisation of human life, both individually and collectively, so that people may achieve a peaceful and prosperous life.



One Muslim thinker who attempted to answer the above question was Jamaludin Al-Afghani (Nasbi, 2019). His brilliant and pioneering thinking made him a key figure in responding to the challenges of modernity to the Islamic world. He was a figure who brought fresh ideas to the Islamic world. At the time of his emergence, the Islamic world was experiencing decline in various aspects of life (economic, social, political, military and scientific). This decline was largely due to the deviant behaviour of Muslim rulers, which in turn allowed Western domination over Islamic territories (N. Zahra & Fatimah, 2023). The decline of the Islamic world was marked by a lack of scientific development, as a result of the stagnation of rational thinking among Muslims, and a significant weakening of the economy and military, which led to political colonisation by Western powers in the 19th century AD (A. A. Zahra et al., 2025). On the other hand, Western countries were actively developing philosophy, science, and technology, enabling them to begin dominating the world, including the Islamic world.

After experiencing a period of colonialism and decline in the previous century, the Islamic world began to realise its weaknesses at the beginning of the 19th century. This awareness emerged after contact between the Islamic world and the modern Western world (Nasution, 1991). This contact gave rise to a new way of thinking among Muslims, to return to using rational thinking methods in understanding Islamic teachings that had long been abandoned, so that Islamic teachings could once again become the spirit for the advancement of the Islamic world in the future.

The background to the reforms carried out by modern Islamic thinkers in Egypt included: 1) The need for reform due to the backwardness and lagging behind of Egyptian society in relation to the progress of the Western world, as well as the contamination of Islamic teachings by superstition, myth and heresy at that time; and 2) The economic, political, and religious motivations of Western nations in colonising Islamic countries. In this case, it is often referred to as Gold, which is the spirit of seeking huge profits. Glory, which is the spirit of achieving glory in the field of power. And Gospel, which is the spirit of spreading Christian teachings in colonised societies (Asmuni, 1998, p. 33). The dominance of Western thought, which ignored the contributions of Islamic civilisation in the past, exacerbated this decline, requiring Muslims to revitalise rational-empirical scientific traditions in order to achieve progress in science and technology (Gojali et al., 2024; Nasrullah, 2012). In response to this challenge, the idea of Islamising science emerged as an effort to harmonise ethical and religious values with modern science, along with a re-examination of Islamic thought in the early 20th century (Muhibuddin, 2022). This reform movement aimed to restore Islam to its golden age, when Islamic science and civilisation reached their peak, and contact with the West marked the progress of Islam, not its decline (Karo, 2017; Sirait, 2024). This phenomenon prompted thinkers to seek transformative solutions, including Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, who saw Pan-Islamism as an essential strategy for consolidating the political power of Muslims in the face of colonial expansionism (Palahuddin, 2018).

The Islamic reform movement that emerged in the early 19th century sought to bring Muslims towards progress, especially after the view that the door to ijihad had been closed and the negative influence of the tariqa had spread, causing intellectual decline and stagnation (Saepulah, 2021). As a result of colonialism and the backwardness of Egyptian society compared to the West, several Islamic figures emerged who sought to change the fate of their society and country. One of these reformers was Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, whose ideas were expressed in both the political and religious spheres. The essence of his preaching was to unite Muslims, with the aim of bringing Muslims from all corners of the Islamic

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world together under one great caliphate, so that Muslims who were suffering from stagnation could rise together through unity.

Responding to these conditions, Al-Afghani put forward the idea of reform, particularly through the concept of Pan-Islamism, as a collective effort by Muslims to rise from the backwardness and ignorance that surrounded them in the 19th century AD (Azlan, 2022; Zubaidah, 2016). The discourse of Pan-Islamism initiated by Jamaluddin Al-Afghani emerged as a critical response to Western colonial domination, which paralysed the political power and autonomy of Muslims (Ashaf, 2016). This was not merely a reaction to physical colonisation, but also an ideological resistance to the spread of Western secular civilisation, which was considered to have weakened Islamic civilisation (Muhibuddin, 2022).

In this context, Al-Afghani argued that Western colonialism was a continuation of the Crusades, which Muslims must oppose in unity, emphasising the need to adapt to technological advances and rationality without sacrificing Islamic principles (Nasbi, 2019; Sluis, 2017). Al-Afghani's ideas of renewal also aimed to restore the glory of Islamic civilisation, which had excelled in the fields of philosophy and socio-economics between the 9th and 12th centuries AD, surpassing the achievements of the West at that time (Kuru, 2021). Through Pan-Islamism, he called for the unity of Muslims as the only bulwark against foreign domination and encouraged populism to form a strong constitutional government to reject external intervention (Mahendra, 2023).

Based on this, it is necessary to examine Al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism more deeply as a theoretical and practical framework for restoring the political independence and intellectual dignity of Muslims in the modern era. In this context, Al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism can be seen as a comprehensive strategy to revitalise the collective strength of Muslims, through an emphasis on unity and solidarity in the face of external pressures. This idea does not only revolve around the unification of Islamic countries into a single political entity, but also emphasises the importance of a shared outlook on life among them in order to resist foreign slavery and imperialism.

METHOD

This study uses the literature review methodology (Maleong, 2007). . This study was conducted to comprehensively analyse Al-Afghani's political thought and its impact on the revival of Islam in the modern era (Nasbi, 2019; Septiana & Rofiah, 2023). This approach allows for the exploration of Al-Afghani's central ideas regarding Pan- -Islamism, their relevance in the contemporary context, and their implications for anti-colonial resistance and the formation of the political identity of Muslims. The data sources for this paper include primary and secondary literature discussing Al-Afghani's thought, the history of Pan-Islamism, and Muslim intellectual responses to Western modernity (Aziza, 2017). The qualitative library research method used in this study allows for an in-depth analysis of the main discourses in Al-Afghani's thought, particularly regarding his call to return to rational and scientific *sunnatullah* theology as an effort to catch up with the West. In addition, this study also examines how Al-Afghani encouraged Muslims to reclaim the rapidly developing sciences in Europe and reopen the door to *ijtihad* as a means of reinterpreting the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith to make them relevant to the modern era. The data validity technique in this paper considers source triangulation and intertextual comparison to ensure the validity of the interpretation of Al-Afghani's ideas and their relevance in the context of history and contemporary Islamic thought.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Brief Biography of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani.



Jamaluddin Al-Afghani was one of the reformers in the Islamic world who had a major influence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly through his advocacy of Pan-Islamism as a means of uniting Muslims against Western colonial domination (Rois et al., 2024). His life was spent moving from one Islamic country to another. There is no certainty as to where he was born, as there are two opinions regarding Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's birthplace. First, he was born in Asadabad, Afghanistan in 1838, and second, he was born in Asadabad, Iran in 1839 (Amiruddin, 2014; Hasan, 1996). Born in Asadabad, Afghanistan in 1838, Al-Afghani was known as a thinker, political activist, and journalist who dedicated his life to raising political and intellectual awareness among Muslims (Saepulah, 2021). Contrary to Hamka's opinion, Jamaluddin was born in 1839 (1254 AH) in the region or village of As'ad Abad Kabul, Afghanistan, coinciding with the British entry into Afghanistan (Hamka, 1982, p. 14). . Although there is uncertainty about his place of birth, the general consensus is that his full name was Sayid Muhamad bin Saffar and he was known as Jamaluddin, with the title Al-Afghani referring to his region of origin, Kabul, Afghanistan (Bakti, 2016). His father's name was Said Shaftar, and his lineage traces back to Said Ali At Turmudzi and, above that, to Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Thalib RA, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

His brilliance and intelligence enabled Jamaluddin Al-Afghani to master various disciplines and languages at a relatively young age, such as Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and English (Fauziah et al., 2021). His ability to master various foreign languages enabled him to access various sources of knowledge and interact with diverse intellectual circles throughout the Islamic and Western worlds (Akhtar et al., 2023). His rhetorical and writing skills were well-balanced, as evidenced by his works published in various print media. He even created the journal Al-Urwah Al-Wutsqa while in France. Furthermore, his involvement in journalism demonstrates his efforts to spread the idea of Pan-Islamism widely in order to revive Muslims from their decline (Keddie, 1983). His dynamic life journey reflects his commitment to the Islamic reform agenda, where he travelled to various countries such as India, Turkey, Egypt, Britain, and Russia to spread the call for unity against Western hegemony (Mine, 2022). Therefore, in addition to being a politician, he also had a high and unquestionable commitment to his religion, Islam, even though some people accused him of being a *mulhid* (Kedourie, 1966; Nurhakim, 1998). This accusation, however, contrasts with the general view that considers him a reformer who sought to revitalise Islam from stagnation, as acknowledged by many historians and scholars of his time. In fact, a number of Muslim scholars, including Muhammad Abduh, one of his most famous students, and Rashid Rida, upheld his reputation as a defender and reformer of modern Islam (Kedourie, 1966).

Jamaluddin Al Afghani's preoccupation with various issues facing the Muslim community did not leave him much opportunity to marry. Marriage would only hinder his struggle, so he decided not to marry for the rest of his life. This uncompromising dedication underlined Al-Afghani's main priority in his political and intellectual struggle, which placed the interests of the Muslim community above his personal aspirations.

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's Involvement in Politics

As a politician who aspired to free countries from the grip of colonialism, he was actively involved in various political and intellectual movements throughout the Islamic world, utilising platforms such as the journal *al-Urwah al-Wusqa* to voice his opposition to Western imperialism (Adam & Emalia, 2022; Tamrin, 2010). For Al-Afghani, travelling the world was not only to avoid persecution by the colonisers or conflict with the rulers where

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he lived, although this was undeniably the case, but more to spread his ideas so that Muslims would become aware of the need to unite and free themselves from the grip of colonialism, which had truly torn apart the unity and integrity of the Muslim community. Wherever he went, he never failed to spread his ideas to inspire resistance and unity among Muslims in the various regions he visited (Fauzi, 2017).

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani prepared his mission to revive Islam. When he saw resistance taking place throughout India, he took part in this critical period by joining the Indian war of independence in May 1857 (N. Zahra & Fatimah, 2023). His role in the conflict reflected his belief that armed resistance was an important strategy for removing foreign domination and restoring the sovereignty of Muslims. However, he realised that military resistance alone was not enough, so he also promoted intellectual and political reform as the foundation for the sustainable revival of Islam. He witnessed the failed Indian uprising and British colonialism spreading throughout the Islamic world, including Afghanistan itself, if it did not carefully guard its independence. This experience strengthened his belief in the importance of unity among the people and the need for a comprehensive strategy, covering military, intellectual and political aspects, to face the threat of modern colonialism (Jalal, 2007).

In many of the Islamic countries he visited, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani encountered bitter experiences in his efforts to bring about change. He served as an advisor to Sher Ali Khan in 1869, although his tenure as political advisor was short-lived due to differences of opinion regarding the direction of reform and external pressure from colonial powers. This shows how difficult reform efforts were amid foreign intervention, which often exploited internal divisions among Muslim rulers. A few years later, he became Prime Minister under Muhammad A'zam Khan. Muhammad A'zam Khan's appointment of Al-Afghani as Prime Minister faced many challenges. One of these was when Britain began to interfere in Afghanistan's domestic politics (Özcan, 2023). British intervention after the Indian Rebellion of 1857 made it clear that a new approach was needed to protect Indian Muslims, with scholars beginning to rely on the transmission of religious knowledge as a means of intellectual resistance (Ahmed, 2022). This step was in line with the strategy promoted by Indian Muslim scholars, such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Deoband group, who sought to revitalise Islamic education as the last bastion against colonial domination and the erosion of religious identity (Hamid, 2005; Mohomed, 2012). Amidst the turmoil of the time, Al-Afghani chose to side with the opposition groups supported by the British. This was his first defeat, and Al-Afghani, feeling safer, left his homeland and went to India in 1869 at the age of 30 (Wahab & Zainuddin, 2022). However, he did not stay there long, because in 1870, he moved and settled in Turkey, where Prime Minister Ali Pasha appointed him as a member of the Turkish Education Council (Nasbi, 2019; Sluis, 2017). This position provided him with a platform to voice his ideas on modernisation and Islamic reform, although he was later expelled because his views were considered too radical and threatening to the status quo. However, his intellectual journey did not end in Turkey; in 1871, he arrived in Cairo at the invitation of the Egyptian government, where he then spread and passed on his reformist ideals, which greatly inspired reformist figures such as Muhammad Abduh (Tamrin, 2010).

Jamaludin Al-Afghani's move to Egypt had a positive impact on the development of Islamic thought and movements there. Initially, he was unsure whether his ideas would be accepted by Egyptian society, so he planned to focus on scientific activities. Egypt was known as a centre of Eastern culture and an important place in the development of science, making it suitable for developing his ideas. However, unexpectedly, his presence was warmly welcomed by various circles. This support rekindled his fighting spirit. He quickly saw the great potential in Egypt to realise his broader Islamic renewal ideals, especially



through his influence on young intellectuals such as Muhammad Abduh, who later became his loyal student (Khaeroni, 2017). Al-Afghani's ideas on reform and Pan-Islamism attracted the attention of many Arab and Islamic intellectuals in the late 19th century, forming a circle of students and followers who later became the rhetoricians of the modern reform movement, such as Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Rashid Rida (Makhlouf, 2012). Abduh was greatly influenced by Al-Afghani, who taught him logic, philosophy, theology, and Sufism (Fikri, 2018; Nasution, 1991, p. 52). Nevertheless, Abduh later developed his ideas more systematically and had a more lasting influence on Muslim thought than his teacher (Hourani, 1983).

After spending approximately five years in Egypt (1871-1876 AD), Britain began to interfere in Egyptian politics. This led Jamaludin Al-Afghani to join the Free Masons organisation in 1878 AD to oppose British interference. In this organisation, he met 300 young Egyptian nationalist figures. After joining this organisation, Jamaludin Al-Afghani successfully formed a national party (*al-Hizbul Wathan*) in 1879, with the slogan "Egypt for the Egyptians". This party aimed to revive Egyptian nationalism and reject foreign domination, which then sparked a broader revolutionary movement throughout the country.

The political movement led by Jamaludin Al-Afghani succeeded in overthrowing King Khedevi Ismail, who was considered to have misused state finances. As a result, King Khedive Ismail was replaced by Khedive Tawfiq, who was expected to bring about change and political stability in Egypt. However, this change in power did not immediately end foreign interference; on the contrary, British intervention intensified, prompting Al-Afghani to shift the focus of his struggle to a broader realm, namely the formation of a global Pan-Islamic consciousness as a defence for Muslims. However, after ascending the throne, Taufik was unable to fulfil this promise due to strong pressure from Britain. At the insistence of the British, Al-Afghani's political activities were closely monitored and his movements restricted, until in 1879 Jamaludin Al-Afghani was expelled from Egypt by King Khadevi Taufik. This expulsion marked the end of the early period of his political activities in Egypt, but it triggered a new phase in Al-Afghani's struggle to spread the idea of Pan-Islamism to various parts of the Islamic world (Mohamed, 2023). Despite his expulsion, Al-Afghani's ideas and political struggle during his approximately eight years (1871-1879) continued to exert a significant influence on Egyptian reformist figures. In fact, his influence in Egypt was stronger than in his homeland, earning him the title of *Father of Egyptian Nationalism*.

In 1883 AD, Jamaludin Al-Afghani was in London to hold peaceful discussions with Sir Randolph Churchill and Drumand Walf regarding the situation in Egypt and the al-Mahdi rebellion in Sudan. During the meeting, Walf asked Al-Afghani to become a mediator to establish relations between Britain and Islamic kingdoms such as Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan. Britain needed this cooperation to counter Russia's political influence in the Middle East. However, these efforts failed (Nasution, 1991, p. 57). These diplomatic efforts were unsuccessful because the tension between British colonial interests and the aspirations for sovereignty of Muslim countries was too deep to be reconciled through individual mediation alone (Shibeika, 1949). Then, in September 1883 AD, Al-Afghani moved to Paris to lead an Islamic solidarity campaign. His goal was to awaken Muslims and oppose modern Western colonialism. To support this movement, he published the magazine *Al-Urwat al-Wutsqa*, which ran for 8 months (13 March-16 October 1884) with 18 editions. The magazine was distributed to members of the movement and Islamic countries, including Indonesia. However, its publication was halted because it was banned by the British in their colonies. Nevertheless, the ideas contained in *Al-Urwat al-Wutsqa* continued to spread widely and provided important inspiration for anti-colonial movements in various Muslim countries (N.

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Zahra & Fatimah, 2023). The magazine served as an intellectual platform that disseminated ideas of Islamic reform and challenged Western hegemony through rational arguments and calls for Muslim unity.

The Political Ideas of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani was a prominent figure known as an Islamic reformer. According to him, the decline of the Muslim community was not due to Islamic teachings themselves, but because Muslims had become passive, stagnant, neglected knowledge, and abandoned morality. In fact, Islam is a dynamic, rational teaching that can adapt to the times. Unfortunately, the attitude of the Muslim community, which is too obedient to the ulama, traditions, and leaders, has made them apathetic and unwilling to think or change. As a result, Islam has not developed to its full potential (Prastyo, 2002, p. 29). Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's view of Islam is very comprehensive. According to him, Islam covers all aspects of life, including worship, law, and social issues. The unity of Muslims must be re-established, he argued, as the strength of Islam depends on the success of fostering unity and cooperation. In achieving this goal, Al-Afghani emphasised the importance of mastering modern knowledge and science as a prerequisite for the advancement of Islamic civilisation, while also advocating rational thinking among Muslims (Amiruddin, 2014).

The first policy adopted by Jamaluddin Al-Afghani was to approach the community by providing a better understanding of his ideas than before. Jamaluddin Al-Afghani also assessed that a country can only be strong if its people are united. According to him, imperialism from Western countries was very threatening and dangerous for Muslims. Absolutism and despotism can have a significant impact on society, preventing it from rising up against colonialism. As a result of this, Muslims always think about apostasy and even believe in superstitions and heresy. According to Al-Afghani, this condition has weakened the spiritual and intellectual foundations of the people, making them vulnerable to foreign exploitation and domination. Therefore, Al-Afghani called for a return to the pure teachings of Islam, namely teachings that emphasise reason, knowledge, and unity among the people as the basis for revival (Mahendra, 2023; Nasbi, 2019). To advance society, Al-Afghani mobilised the people to bring about change and oppose Western imperialism and colonialism. He also sought to reform the beliefs of Muslims, which he considered to have strayed, by inviting them to return to the pure teachings of Islam. According to him, errors in faith made Muslims weak, disrespected, and unable to progress. Therefore, Muslims needed to practise their religion sincerely in order to free themselves from the oppression of rulers and foreign colonisation. The goal of Western imperialism was not only to gain absolute control of governments, but also to change the way people thought to become more materialistic. Therefore, Al-Afghani encouraged Muslims to return to the true teachings of Islam and raise awareness so that they could reject colonialism and the authoritarian power behind it. He also called on Muslims to unite through the idea of *Pan-Islamism* (Husaini & Hidayat, 2002; A. A. Zahra et al., 2025). The concept of Pan-Islamism not only served as a call for political unity, but also as a basis for religious-based educational reform, which then had a significant impact on the pattern of education in Indonesia during the struggle for independence.

In the foreword to issue I of *al-Urwat al-Wusqa* magazine, Jamaludin Al-Afghani said that British occupation was a great disaster for the Islamic world. He called on Muslims to unite in the face of this disaster. To that end, Muslims were required to forge a stronger unity. He further said, "Indeed, the danger that has befallen Egypt has pained the hearts of Muslims. This danger is no longer a secret to them, for their unity transcends race and language. As long as the Qur'an is still read and its verses are understood by people, no one can humiliate them. The



catastrophe in Egypt has brought deep sadness and pain to the hearts of Muslims, something they did not expect. They must brace themselves to face the past and the future" (Saefuddin, 2003, p. 42).

Jamaludin Al-Afghani continuously ignited the spirit of jihad among Muslims, urging them to rise up and unite against those who humiliated them, both through his writings and other means. He used verses from the Qur'an as a basis for opposing Western imperialism, including: QS. Ali Imran: 103, 105, 118, Al-Baqarah: 57, An-Nisa' 78, Al-Anfal: 46, Al-Ra'ad: 11, Al-Hajj: 46, Al-Qasas: 51, Al-An-Kabut: 2, Al-Ahzab: 62, Al-Zariyat: 55, and Al-Mumthanah: 4. Through references to these holy verses, Al-Afghani systematically built a theological argument for the legitimacy of resistance against oppression and colonialism, while emphasising the importance of unity among Muslims as the foundation of strength (Özcan, 2023). In his preaching, Jamaludin Al-Afghani always stated that Britain was a usurper of honour, a violator of human rights by forcing people into slavery. He also emphasised to Muslims that this holy religion commands them to expel colonisers from their lands and not to recognise foreign powers that control Muslim countries, and that colonisers must even be fought with weapons. Al-Afghani's view of armed resistance against colonisers, particularly in the context of jihad, shows consistency with the historical interpretation of jihad as a multidimensional effort that includes educational aspects, resistance to radicalism, and counter-narratives to extremism, as reflected in the context of contemporary digital jihad (Handoko, 2018; Ilyas et al., 2025).

Jamaludin Al-Afghani's ultimate desire was for the Qur'an to become the leader that ruled over all Muslims. By many Muslims, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani is regarded as a great hero who devoted his life to defending Islam from Western attacks, not only religiously, intellectually and culturally, but also politically (Husayn Ahmad, p. 89). Jamaludin Al-Afghani's ideas for reform in the political sphere are as follows:

1. Pan-Islamism

One of Al-Afghani's most famous ideas is **Pan-Islamism**. He is even considered the main figure behind this idea. With this thinking, Al-Afghani is known as the main proponent of global political unity among Muslims, centred on efforts to unite Muslim countries (Nasr, 1994, p. 3). To purify Islamic beliefs and teachings while uniting the ummah, Al-Afghani encouraged the formation of a global political alliance of Muslims, called *Jami'ah Islamiyah* or **Pan-Islamism**. According to him, this alliance must include all Muslims, both those living in independent countries such as Persia and those still under colonial rule. This alliance was based on religious solidarity, aiming to build unity and togetherness among Muslims to fight against oppressive or arbitrary governments. He encouraged the replacement of governments with a consultative system as taught by Islam. Therefore, Al-Afghani rejected absolute power systems, including the Ottoman government, and opposed colonialism and Western domination.

During his lifetime, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani sought to realise the unity of Muslims, known as Pan-Islamism. This movement did not mean uniting all Islamic kingdoms into one country, but rather uniting views and establishing cooperation. In Islam, unity and cooperation are very important. According to Al-Afghani, the unity of Muslims can only be achieved if they have the same views and return to the pure teachings of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (Asmuni, 1998, p. 77).

The essence of Afghani's Pan-Islamism lies in the idea that Islam is the only bond of unity among Muslims. And if that bond is strengthened, if it becomes the source of their life and the centre of their loyalty, then the extraordinary power of solidarity will enable the formation and maintenance of a strong and stable Islamic state (Azra, 2002, p. 249). All these

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efforts were channelled, among other things, into publishing political papers that stirred up enthusiasm.

Based on the above explanation, Afghani's Pan-Islamism is still relevant to contemporary developments, particularly in facing the challenges of globalisation and the relevance of the humanistic and universal teachings of Islam (Komarudin et al., 2022; Oktarini et al., 2025). This concept emphasises the importance of national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and adaptation to local culture, in line with the values of religious moderation promoted by the government (Riyanto, 2021). This approach is also in line with the multicultural Islamic education curriculum that integrates the values of compassion, tolerance, and humanity, as well as opposing slavery and supporting equality, which are at the core of Islamic teachings and democratic ideals (Muslim & Tang, 2024).

2. *Al-Hizb al-Wathani (National Party) and the Government of the Republic*

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani initiated a political movement by spreading the idea of Pan-Islamism throughout the Islamic world. To realise this idea, in 1879 he helped form the National Party (*Al-Hizb al-Wathani*) in Egypt. The party's objectives included fighting for education for all, freedom of the press, and giving the Egyptian people a greater role in the military. This movement then inspired Muslims to unite in opposition to Western colonialism.

According to Al-Afghani, within the bonds of Pan-Islamism, each country's sovereignty would be recognised, and its leaders would have equal standing, with no one higher than the other. He believed that the decline of the Islamic world was caused by the loss of justice, deliberation (*shura*), and the government's disloyalty to the constitution due to a despotic system of government.

This is why, according to him, thinkers in Eastern Islamic countries failed to explain the benefits of the republican system to the people. In fact, for Afghani, the republic was a source of happiness and honour. Only humans who live under just laws and can properly regulate all aspects of life deserve to be called true humans. For Afghani, the ideal government is a people's government or a limited government, namely a government that can be monitored and held accountable to the people, which is the opposite of an absolute government (Nursi, 2009, p. 38). This system ensures that justice, as a fundamental principle in Islam, is upheld through mechanisms of public control and accountability (Sugiharto et al., 2024).

The political reform movement championed by Salafist groups in Islamic countries aims to implement Islamic teachings on deliberation through the establishment of constitutional councils and representative institutions. They also want to limit the power of the government with constitutions and laws, as well as mobilise the power of the people to support political reform and free the Islamic world from Western colonialism and domination (Nursi, 2009, p. 38). The main objective of Al-Afghani's movement was to unite Islamic countries under a single caliphate leadership, in order to form an Islamic force capable of resisting European interference. He wanted to raise awareness among Muslims about the past glories achieved through unity, and to show that the current weakness of Muslims was due to division. Although Al-Afghani promoted the concept of the caliphate as a form of collective leadership, he also recognised the importance of substantial unity based on Islamic values such as justice and welfare, rather than just the formalities of government (Faradhi, 2024; Prasetyantha, 2016). This is in line with the research study presented by Siti Nurhayati and colleagues, which states that the principles of Islamic government include Tawhid, shura, caliphate, accountability, transparency, and justice (Razak et al., 2024). A government based on these principles is expected to be able to realise good governance, where integrity, accountability, and transparency are the main pillars in running the



government (Kosack & Fung, 2014). Thus, Al-Afghani's efforts to unite Muslims under the banner of the caliphate were not merely political in nature, but also rooted in Islamic ethical and moral values aimed at creating a just and prosperous society (Akbar et al., 2025; Bransika et al., 2025; Taufiq, 2024).

3. There is no separation between religion and politics.

Politics is important because it concerns the governance of a country. An orderly society is highly dependent on political stability. Politics also influences various areas of life, such as social, economic, cultural, legal, and others.

One of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's ideas for reform was the rejection of the separation between religion and politics. According to him, the decline of Muslims was largely due to political problems, such as division, authoritarian rule, untrustworthy leadership, weak defence, poor state management, and foreign interference. All of these must be limited by religious values. For Afghani, politics must be based on morality, and morality must be based on the teachings of monotheism. Thus, the ideal politics according to Islam is politics that is subject to religious values. Therefore, Islam rejects secularism, which separates religion from public life and considers religion to be a private matter. In its implementation, politics must also follow the principles of da'wah: without coercion, without violence, without manipulation, and without lies.

On the contrary, politics must be carried out with openness, honesty, responsibility, and the courage to convey the truth. In this way, healthy politics will be created, even though in reality many political practices tend to be secular (Supriyadi, 2008, p. 100). However, Al-Afghani argued that ideally, Islamic ethical and moral values, such as honesty, justice, and trustworthiness, should be the main foundation of every political and economic activity, whether for producers, distributors, or consumers (Rahman et al., 2025). Al-Afghani believed that religious doctrine is an integral part of human behaviour, including in political and economic aspects (Nursyamsu, 2019). This is in line with the view that Islam is a comprehensive way of life, in which religion is fundamentally integrated with politics, law, and social structures (Khumaini, 2019). Furthermore, it is also in line with the idea that Islam offers a way of life that is capable of covering every action and deed that leads to the formation of a complete human being, including in the social, cultural, legal, and even political aspects (Kholidi & Mansyur, 2023).

4. Al-Afghani's Idea of Modernity

Al-Afghani believed that modernity was not something foreign to Islam, but rather a manifestation of Islamic teachings themselves, which encouraged progress and innovation in various aspects of life. He argued that the decline of Muslims was caused by a deviation from pure Islamic teachings, not by adaptation to modernity. The decline of Muslims had been caused by fatalism, or resignation without effort, which limited creativity. As a result, Muslims have become backward, poor, and ignorant. This makes them easy to control and exploit by Western countries, which value reason, rationality, and quality laws. In addition, a misunderstanding of Islamic teachings has also exacerbated the situation. To overcome this problem, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani proposed several steps (Supriyadi, 2008, p. 103); First, the modernisation of Muslims must be based on the sacred values of the Qur'an and Hadith, in order to improve the internal weaknesses of the community. This modernisation must focus on the redevelopment of science and technology based on Islamic ethics, as a way to overcome intellectual stagnation and economic backwardness (Noviani et al., 2025; Safitri et al., 2025). This is in line with what Fadilah said about the importance of returning to

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authentic and pure Islamic teachings, which not only encourage intellectual and scientific progress but also promote moral and ethical values in social life (Fadilah et al., 2025).

Second, eliminate fatalistic thinking and replace it with rational thinking. Al-Afghani emphasised the importance of *ijtihad* to reopen the door to interpretation of religious teachings, so that Muslims can adapt to the changing times without abandoning the basic principles of Islam (Suaidi, 2014). He believed that reason and rationality are gifts from God that must be optimally utilised for the advancement of civilisation, as reflected in science and technology (Al-Farisi et al., 2025). Third, in its application, Muslims need to utilise modern science and technology from the West, while also studying the secrets of their strength as material for consideration in building Islamic modernity. He argues that Western progress is not the result of inherent superiority, but rather because they adopted the principles of rationality and innovation that were actually rooted in the previous Islamic scientific tradition (N. Zahra & Fatimah, 2023). This implies that Muslims need to re-adopt the spirit of inquiry and rationality that once characterised classical Islamic civilisation, rather than simply imitating without critical reflection (Maslani et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani was a highly influential Islamic reformer, particularly in the field of politics. He believed that the decline of Muslims did not stem from Islamic teachings themselves, but rather from the fatalistic, anti-intellectual attitudes of Muslims and their departure from true Islamic values. Therefore, he called for the need for Islamic reform based on common sense, science, and the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

One of his main ideas was Pan-Islamism, a concept of political unity among all Muslims to confront Western colonialism and absolute government systems. He believed that the strength of the Muslim community could only be built through religious solidarity, fair and consultative government, and rejection of secularism. For Al-Afghani, religion and politics cannot be separated, as both reinforce each other in building a civilised society. He also advocated rationalisation as the essence of Islamic modernisation, which enables the ummah to think critically and abandon blind imitation.

Furthermore, Al-Afghani encouraged Muslims not to close themselves off from Western progress, but to benefit from scientific and technological developments in a critical and selective manner. Thus, Al-Afghani's political thinking was not only a form of resistance against colonialism, but also an effort to build a progressive, independent Islamic civilisation that was relevant to the challenges of the times.

It is recommended that Islamic educational institutions reform their curricula to integrate religious spirituality with scientific rationality and contemporary technological sophistication. This is in line with Azyumardi Azra's view that the modernisation of Islamic educational institutions is a necessity in order to keep pace with the times.

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