Hawliyat is the official peer-reviewed journal of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Balamand. It publishes articles from the field of Humanities.

Journal Name: Hawliyat

ISSN: 1684-6605

Title: ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim’s Political Program

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To cite this document:


Permanent link to this document: DOI: https://doi.org/10.31377/haw.v17i0.77
After defining the constituents of Egypt’s national identity: common descent, Arabic language, and Islam, ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, in the first part of this article, acknowledged the fact that Egypt was a backward society which needed to move forward by modeling itself on some other dynamic society. His choice fell first on Europe and secondly on Egypt itself in past times. Al-Nadim believed, without any doubt, that Europe was the enemy; paradoxically it was the teacher as well. This relationship described by some as a “Janus-headed love/hate relationship” was a key element in his political thought; it was systematically manifested in all his works. In every solution he suggested he was proposing to adopt European methods but at the same time suggesting how to fight European domination.

The First Model to Adopt: Europe

Despite his excessive patriotism, and his fiery and stormy oratory during the ‘Urabi revolution, Al-Nadim was not a xenophobic nationalist who hated foreigners and any contact with them. On the contrary he was a great supporter of contact and exchange between nations in all fields of commerce, tourism, industry, agriculture, education, etc. He realized how devastating isolation could be for a nation; he knew how much Egypt had suffered before the nineteenth century because it had lost contact with the outside world, and despite his knowledge of Europe’s

(1) The first part of this article was published in the previous issue of Hawliyāt under the title: “Egypt’s National Identity According to ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim.”
imperialist intentions, he nevertheless acknowledged the importance of maintaining a continuing contact with it; after all, Europe was much more developed, more powerful, and wealthier and it was due to Europe’s interference in the affairs of the East that the Easterners were able to know about the modern world and its ideas; otherwise the East would have remained misled by its despots. This interaction (al-mukhalata al-mubaraka) benefited both parties: Europe gained wealth and the East acquired knowledge. This contact, Al-Nadim felt, would ultimately lead to the liberation of the oppressed countries from the yoke of imperialism, because only through knowledge could they realize their dream of independence and the only way to obtain knowledge was via Europe. The equation he seemed to apply was simple: to be free from Europe meant to learn from Europe. But what made Europe so developed and powerful? Al-Nadim assumed that Europe became advanced because it realized two things: the rule of law and democracy. But in order to establish the rule of law and to insure its endurance, society ought to be governed by institutions which would survive the life span of any individual. Government by institutions, Al-Nadim insisted, was very important because it permitted the accumulation of experience. If a functionary left his post, his successor would be able to continue from where his predecessor had left off. Moreover such institutions should function in a democratic manner and not submit to the whims of this or that minister or king.

Hence Egypt had to adopt European methods in order to survive and to develop. But how was it going to do that? Should it just imitate Europe in every respect? Al-Nadim, in fact, warned against blind imitation of the West:

It is unfair to criticize Europe and the work of its inhabitants and their traditions, because every nation has its own characteristics and traditions. However we are criticizing those who want to imitate Europe by adopting its habits of drinking, gambling, adultery.

(5) Ibid.
(6) Ibid., 1:460.
(7) Ibid., 1:418
It was not by just imitating the West that Egypt would advance and become prosperous. On the contrary, such a procedure could have devastating effects on its culture and identity. When adopting new habits, one must compare them to his own and check their benefits and drawbacks. If he finds out that his own habits were better suited to preserve Egypt’s national identity and would not jeopardize its language, nor its religion, he should maintain his attachment to them. However, if he discovers that the imported habit serves his country better he should adapt it in the service of preserving Egypt’s national identity. Thus Egypt had to import the essential model created by Europe, but it had to provide it with an Egyptian content. But despite his profound admiration for Europe, ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim had no inferiority complex towards it. It was true he considered the West more advanced than the East at this particular moment, but the East had its own indigenous values that would make it prosper again. Why, Al-Nadim argued, should Egyptians wear European clothes that were not designed to suit the Egyptian way of life and climate? The people of Alexandria, he explained, were used to wearing special vests (sidriyya) which protected them from the humidity common in coastal cities. Now they were expected to wear imported clothes strange to their way of life and their climate. The people of the hot city of Cairo, he continued, used to wear clothes (jubba and quftan) which facilitated their movement and kept them adequately ventilated. Now they were expected to wear trousers that were inappropriate for hot climates. Instead of importing western clothes, Egypt should import western technology to produce, in Egypt, clothes suited for the Egyptians. Instead of adapting products to the needs of Egyptian society, Al-Nadim believed, Egyptian society was adapting itself to the needs of western products, hence transforming a productive society into a consumer society. A rich man, for example, used to survive on a limited diet served on a dozen plates usually made out of copper; now the Egyptian market was being submerged by western products made out of breakable material. A rich Egyptian was attracted by these products and was spending a lot of money to buy hundreds of unnecessary plates, spoons and cups, thus causing the

(8) Ibid., 1:12.
(9) Ibid., 1:47.
disappearance of hundreds of Egyptian artisans\textsuperscript{10}. By importing foreign habits, Al-Nadim concluded, the whole, economic and social structure of Egyptian society was at the point of collapsing.

**A Second Model: Egypt**

Europe, no doubt, should be looked at as a source of inspiration, but not as the only one. Egypt was itself a great source. The consciousness of belonging or having belonged to a venerable political entity, “a historical nation”, has always been a decisive criterion of proto-nationalism and nationalism according to late scholars\textsuperscript{11}. This ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim was able to sense long before. In fact, he gave three examples proving, in his opinion, that Egypt had once been a strong and prosperous nation: under the Pharaohs, during early Islam, and under Muhammad ‘Ali. Although not a real admirer of ancient Egypt, Al-Nadim used the example of the Pharaohs, most probably, to seek Egypt’s greatness in the distant historical past. Ancient Egypt, after all, was far older than Islamic Egypt, and going that far in time bestowed on Egypt the title of the historic nation and not merely a historic nation. Hence emphasizing this sense of belonging to Pharoanic Egypt provided it with undisputed legitimacy. To Al-Nadim ancient Egypt was a success story that could be repeated. Ancient Egyptians were able to travel around Africa and nearly succeeded in digging a canal between the Red Sea and the Nile. Under the Pharaohs Egypt became the cultural center of the ancient world and Pythagoras lived and learned in it. If ancient Egyptians were able to achieve glory, were their descendants, Al-Nadim asked, incapable of repeating history\textsuperscript{12}?

But for Al-Nadim, Egypt’s golden age was the period of the early Arab caliphate. In the process he projected backward many of the characteristics of the European civilization he both admired and feared, accompanied, of course, by the assertion that these modern features of civilized life were merely returning to their original homeland.

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\textsuperscript{(10)} Ibid., 1:51-56
and source in the East. Once upon a time, the East was powerful and prosperous, now it was Europe's turn to be powerful, and rich:

We need not be ashamed to borrow from Europe and imitate her at the present time by promoting the activities of scientists, which is indeed taking place now. For she borrowed from our ancestors and imitated them, until her turn came to exercise independence of thought through her savants, as it is the norm in cycles of civilizations through which kingdoms east and west pass.\(^\text{13}\)

This imagined view of history did not imply that Al-Nadim was a bad historian; it simply confirmed his talents in the field of communication and as a propagandist. The period of early Islam was considered, by every Muslim, to be a golden one. Thus by bestowing upon it the attribute of cultural superiority, he was not only adding legitimacy to the early Islamic era, he was in fact giving credibility to European civilization and adding an Eastern face to it.

In order not to remain in the domain of historical fiction and the unreachable past, Al-Nadim reverted to modern times: the era of Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha, the founder of modern Egypt. Al-Nadim acknowledged the great role Muhammad ‘Ali had played in building a new powerful and wealthy Egypt. He implicitly disregarded his authoritarian rule and overlooked his ruthlessness. He wanted to prove that modernity and civilization could be realized in Egypt itself by Egyptian hands, contrary to England’s claim that Egypt could not become a modern and industrialized nation on its own. Al-Nadim maintained that Egypt’s economic, social and educational infrastructure was the work of Muhammad ‘Ali and not the work of Europeans as some voices pretended. England, he argued, falsified the history of Egypt and was trying to create a new one that served its purposes. The young Egyptians, who ignored their own history due to foreign education and European propaganda, were brainwashed by the English version and accepted it as a fact. However, he continued, Egyptians cannot be fooled for a long time, and since, under Muhammad ‘Ali, they were on the verge of becoming a modern state, they can repeat it again\(^\text{14}\).

Europe, which Al-Nadim believed was the ideal to aspire to,

\(^\text{13}\) ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, al-Ustadh, 1:220.
\(^\text{14}\) Ibid., 2:643-662; 1:97-107.
represented at the same time the imperialist who intended to prevent Egypt from becoming an advanced and modern state. Moreover, the Egyptians who, under the Pharaohs and Muhammad ‘Ali, managed to build a wealthy state could misrule themselves and turn Egypt into a backward society. Al-Nadim, therefore, argued that Egypt should confront the same two models, namely, Europe and the Egyptians themselves.

**An Enemy to Defeat: Europe**

Thus, in a political sense, Europe was the enemy that ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim fought all his life. He believed, for a while, in direct military confrontation, but the ‘Urabi revolution as a military option, had failed and Egypt was occupied, disarmed, and succumbed to direct British political tutelage. Ten years of occupation convinced Al-Nadim that the way to liberate his country was not by military means. For the British invader was able to penetrate Egyptian society and to alter its nature through a massive campaign of cultural and economic dominance. Sooner or later, he believed, Great Britain would end its direct occupation but what could not be abolished easily was its cultural and economic heritage.

Despite his real admiration for Europe’s knowledge and free thought, Al-Nadim hated and feared its imperialist policies. He viewed the West as a disease (\(da'\)) infiltrating the ‘body’ of the East in order to weaken it and eventually subdue it\(^{15}\). Europe wanted to colonize the East not only for political, economic and cultural benefits but for the simple fact that the East was East and Muslim and the West was West and Christian. To him, Europe was simply a sectarian community. The spirit of the Crusades was still dominating its soul. European countries might be in conflict against each other but they were all ready to unite efforts against the East\(^{16}\). The Ottoman state, he argued, was under continuous attacks and conspiracies for the sole reason of its being a Muslim state. The Ottoman state would have never been the target of European imperialism had it been a Christian state\(^{17}\). Europe had huge


economic and political interests in the East to exploit, nevertheless colonialism was due first and foremost to the spirit of the Crusades reigning in Europe. Despite enduring a long period of time, this spirit was continuously replenished by the Orientalist writers (Kuttab) who invented lies and described the Easterners as ignorant human beings, unfit to govern and deserving to be enslaved and ruled by foreigners.\(^{(18)}\)

After occupying Egypt, Great Britain needed to move in a non-hostile environment, and the only way to do it was to change the nature of Egyptian society. Thus it was they who attempted to provide it with a western face that would accept and cooperate with the occupation. They first resorted to the press which Al-Nadim believed “had grown in importance in Egypt and Syria, influencing ideas and teaching the nation the principles of politics.”\(^{(19)}\) They hired local journalists with the aim of using them to sway Egyptian “ideas from a pro-Eastern to a pro-Western stand and to defend the point of view that Egypt needed Western supremacy to survive.”\(^{(20)}\) Thereafter, Al-Nadim argued, the British tried to picture eastern traditions as backward and uncivilized; then they introduced new western habits which had a devastating impact on Egyptian society, such as the opening of brothels, wine-shops and casinos. When used to these habits, Al-Nadim added, Egyptians lost two things: first, their fortunes and money which was transferred to Europe and secondly their identity which lost its Eastern values without gaining western values. They became neither Western nor eastern, they were, Al-Nadim concluded, tools to achieve England’s aim in the East.\(^{(21)}\)

Not only did Egyptians lose their fortune, wealth and health and become indebted to Europe and under its mercy, they started losing their social manners and customs, chief among them their view of women’s status in society. The public presence of prostitutes, Al-Nadim argued, encouraged Egyptian women to change their social manners. Women started running their own businesses, drinking alcohol, and even went to theaters and danced in saloons in the presence of men. This step that some Egyptian women had undertaken was considered by him to

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\(^{(18)}\) Ibid., 2: 798. \\
\(^{(19)}\) Ibid., 1: 387. \\
\(^{(20)}\) Ibid., 1: 388. \\
\(^{(21)}\) Ibid., 1: 510.
be against Egyptian social values\(^{22}\). By accepting the modification of the most sacred of Eastern traditions, a woman’s honor, it would be easy for all Egyptians to accept the presence of a foreign occupation. Moreover this state of affairs might become a necessity for Egyptian society which had started to identify with it and with its new customs and values. By introducing new values to Egyptian society the British, Al-Nadim added, did not only try to alter its nature, they tried to weaken the role of religion in an Eastern conservative society. Thus, they resorted to spreading nonreligious ideas in the mind of the Egyptians who refrained from going to mosques and performing their religious duties\(^{23}\). Then they encouraged European missionary schools to operate in Egypt with the sole intention of converting Egyptian Muslim youths to Christianity, Al-Nadim believed\(^{24}\).

The Egyptians

It is true that Egyptians were able in the past to achieve greatness under the Pharaohs, during the Arab conquest and under the rule of Muhammad ‘Ali, however, they could misrule themselves and become their own enemy. Europe could not succeed in its schemes without the collaboration of few Egyptians whom ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim described as the “worst of men” and as being even worse than the occupier himself; the European was serving his country’s interests while the Egyptian collaborator was serving money only\(^{25}\). These compradors played a major role in turning Egypt into a consumer society spending money on European products and goods and refraining from developing industry by convincing Egyptians that neither they nor their land were suitable for industry\(^{26}\). These compradors were large landowners and merchants who, on account of their economic interests, became Britain’s principal collaborators because, among other things, the ruler failed to educate his subjects in the preservation of their rights and in safeguarding their

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 2: 781.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 1: 418.
\(^{24}\) Ibid., 2: 813.
\(^{25}\) Ibid., 1: 388.
\(^{26}\) Ibid., 1: 509.
nation\textsuperscript{27}. A ruler, to Al-Nadim, was a key element in his notion of \textit{watan}. The ruler was what Hobsbawm called one of the “holy icons” which:

represent the symbols and rituals or common collective practices which alone give a palpable reality to an otherwise imaginary community. They may be shared images or practices like the Muslim’s five daily prayers, or even ritual words like the Muslims’ \textit{Allah Akbar}…The significance of the holy icons is demonstrated by the universal use of simple pieces of colored fabric—namely flags— as the symbol of modern nation, and their association with highly charged ritual occasions or acts of worship.\textsuperscript{28}

The most satisfactory icons from a proto-national point of view, Hobsbawm asserted, were those associated with a divine king or emperor. Hence if a ruler fails in his mission to protect his nation, the whole nation would suffer. Taking this point into consideration, we could understand why Al-Nadim stood by Khedive ‘Abbas in his struggle with Lord Cromer\textsuperscript{29}. He regarded ‘Abbas as the symbol of the nation and if the symbol was undermined the whole nation would suffer. Following this same logic, Al-Nadim considered Khedive Isma‘il to be the most important comprador the Europeans ever had. It was due mainly to him that Egypt fell to the enemy. He wrote many articles about him in his journal \textit{al-Ta’if}\textsuperscript{30} during the revolution describing his cruelty, his injustice, his ever growing greed, and his recklessness in borrowing from Europe which contributed to turning Egypt from a productive state to a poor consumer society; he became Europe’s puppet and was thrown out by the British\textsuperscript{31}. Once Khedive Isma‘il gave in to the enemy, everyone in Egypt was also ready to give in.

Another factor, al Nadim believed, which helped the Europeans establish Egypt as a market place for their products was the suspicious role played by the successive governments under the occupation. They legislated and allowed prostitution and prostitutes to operate legally, borrowed and spent millions on public projects, outlawed the plantation

\textsuperscript{(27)} Ibid., 1: 511.
\textsuperscript{(28)} Hobsbawm, \textit{Nations}, 72.
\textsuperscript{(29)} ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, \textit{Al-Ustadh}, 2: 541.
\textsuperscript{(31)} Muhammad Khallaf Allah, \textit{‘Abdallah Al-Nadim wa Mudhakiratuh al-Siyasiyya}, (Cairo, 1956), 38-39.
of tobacco in Egypt while importing it from Europe, hired foreigners in the Egyptian government and changed school curricula by imposing the English language\textsuperscript{32}. The British would have never been able to achieve this without the consent of Egyptians in general and the governments in particular.

**The Political Program**

In order to reach the desired state based on a European model, ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim proposed a new political program. He suggested a complete transformation in four major fields: the political, economic, social, and educational. He believed that only by adopting these reforms could Egypt face a mighty enemy and eventually become powerful and modern itself. These reforms were inspired, mainly, by European models. However, they were to be Egyptianized before being adopted and employed. Egypt did not need to blindly imitate foreign models; it only needed to learn their secret.

**A. Political Reforms: Al-Nadim’s Watan**

‘Abdallah Al-Nadim advocated the establishment of a democratic political system based on the rule of law, run by a parliamentary government headed by a constitutional monarch. The essence of this political system was freedom and its type of government was to be a constitutional monarchy.

**The System is Essence: Freedom**

Freedom was a key concept in the political philosophy of Al-Nadim. “Freedom does not mean to follow instinctive lust and individual interests. It is the fact of learning our rights and duties and marching under the banner of humanity in dignity”\textsuperscript{33}. Freedom was the ultimate aim and right of every nation in the world. Freedom for him was mediated and lived through three major channels: the freedom of thought, of religion, and of the press in an independent sovereign state.


\textsuperscript{33} Khalaf Allah, ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, 104.
In regard to the first channel, the freedom of thought, he judged it to be the major vehicle which would transport nations from the status of total ignorance to enlightenment. Once thinkers and writers were able to express themselves freely without being oppressed or persecuted, knowledge and ideas would spread in the nation transforming every citizen in it into an enlightened human being ready to defend its sovereignty. He believed that nations and governments should encourage and profit from thinkers and writers, and not to tyrannize or to neutralize them as rulers of the East did in order to protect their thrones\(^34\). An ignorant person would never threaten a king’s throne while an enlightened one would definitely protect his nation’s interests. The freedom of thought and the exchange of ideas would lead, eventually, to the formation of a public opinion ready to defend its interests, to pressure the government, to protest against injustice, and to struggle for its rights. Egyptian public opinion belonged, in Al-Nadim’s opinion, to three categories: the ruling class of princes and ministers, the intelligentsia, and a large middle class of employees, workers, and small merchants. The only way to bind these different groups together was through the spread of knowledge among them and in particular the middle class because “the more the arts and sciences are spread among them the greater would their allegiance to the nation be”\(^35\).

In regard to the second channel, religious freedom, Al-Nadim claimed that Egyptian society had always been characterized by an atmosphere of tolerance and religious freedom. For hundreds of years, he argued, Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived peacefully together, tolerating each other, accepting their differences. At the end of the 19th century, religious tolerance became innate in every Egyptian; it became a tradition that was respected and revered by all. This religious freedom, he said, did not even exist in Europe where the burial of a Muslim in a Christian cemetery was prohibited. Egypt, by contrast, welcomed thousands of Europeans who lived honorably and died in it with dignity\(^36\). Despite being a Muslim country, Egypt kept the tradition of the first Arab conquests of tolerance and religious freedom when


\(^{35}\) Ibid., 1:292.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 1: 416-417.
Muslims did not force people to become Muslims. On the contrary they learned how to live with them side by side. Religious tolerance constituted a unique value in Islam, he concluded\textsuperscript{37}.

In regard to the third channel, freedom of the press, he declared that its existence made the difference between a free nation and a subordinate one. The Egyptians did not invent freedom of the press. They copied it from Europe, and it was the greatest gift ever. ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim maintained that if the British occupation of Egypt had any benefits at all it was the freedom of press and publishing which it allowed to develop in Egypt\textsuperscript{38}. The press had a great role in educating and civilizing the nation:

The press is to the public what the teacher is to the student, for political newspapers transmit news that alert the public and guide it in the direction of reform; it publishes the biographies of great men and their deeds; and leads the nation on the path to unity by which states prosper and by which education, commerce and arts improve... In all these aspects political newspapers play the role of the nation's guide. Scientific newspapers disseminate culture, refine character, extinguish illiteracy, draw awareness to virtue, teach art and history. The higher the number of newspapers in a certain country, the more civilized this country is, for the ideas of its [people] would be refined and serious and the interests of its people would be more cosmopolitan\textsuperscript{39}.

Al-Nadim, however, acknowledged the difference between the press in Europe and the press in Egypt. The press in Europe was freer, more sophisticated and more advanced. It was no longer a simple means of information and knowledge; it had besides become an efficient tool for the manipulation of public opinion, and in democracies public opinion could shape government decisions. Therefore the press was able to influence governments. According to him the press had reached this level of influence and maturity only because mature and curious readers existed and never ceased to ask questions. In Egypt the situation was different; the press was subject to severe restraints due, among other things, to the immature reader and writer. An efficient press could

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 1: 338.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 1: 515.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 1: 208.
operate only in a developed ambiance, while an underdeveloped atmosphere could only lead to a weak and incompetent press. A mature educated reader was an absolute necessity for the development of the press. More important, he believed, was the role of the press as a guide to a mature public opinion which would check the government. A government without checks and balances would be more inclined to exceed its authority. To Al-Nadim the press should be what we now call the Fourth Estate. Journalists and writers should always criticize or encourage; this should be the main role of the press.

According to Al-Nadim, a free country was an independent country. But Egypt was threatened then occupied by the British army. What should Egypt do in order to become independent? The military option was ruled out after the failure of the ‘Urabi revolt. New options were suggested by Al-Nadim. First of all Egyptians should not sink into despair; the situation was not desperate. “You are human beings just like the Europeans,” he declared. But Egyptians have first to be united against the occupier and to follow Khedive ’Abbas. Then they ought to resort to peaceful means to challenge the British who, publicly at least, had declared that once stability had been restored, they would deliver the country to the Egyptians. But the British did not fulfill their promises and had kept educated Egyptians outside the circles of administration and government. Egyptians, thus, were invited by Al-Nadim to struggle peacefully until they could reach their aims.

They should refrain from military action and resort instead to political agitation, peaceful demonstrations and strikes in order to achieve their political independence.

An independent Egypt also meant a non-expansionist state. A powerful Egypt meant, for him, a state limited to its historical frontiers and not pre-occupied with military expansionism. Despite his admiration for Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha, Al-Nadim criticized his military adventurism and described it as unlawful rebellion (fitna). By fighting the Sultan and weakening the Ottoman state, Muhammad ‘Ali exposed

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(41) ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, al-Ustadh, 1: 290
(42) Ibid., 1: 529.
(43) Ibid., 1: 522.
it to European intervention and internal mutinies. Hence, by extension, he had exposed Egypt to European threats. Only a strong Ottoman state could protect the East, while a weak Ottoman state would be unable to safeguard itself. Egypt should remain within its borders, reestablish its political and economic infrastructure and maintain its good relations with the Ottoman Sultan as the Caliph of all Muslims.

**The Type of Government: a Constitutional Monarchy**

What kind of political system did ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim desire? Should Egypt become a republic or remain a monarchy? Should it be authoritarian or democratic? Al-Nadim suggested some answers. W. S. Blunt claimed in his memoirs that his assistant Sabunji had several discussions with the leaders of the ‘Urabi revolt concerning the nature of the political regime they intended to install in Egypt; he wrote:

As to their real convictions, however, they care for Abdul Hamid as much as they would care for a man in the moon. They would make use of him as long as he can be useful to them and until they are strong enough to declare themselves an independent republic. This had been the basis of their program from the beginning. But they have prudently chosen to proceed by degrees. Mahmud Pasha Sami assured me in Nadim and Abdu’s presence that before they die they must declare themselves independent of the Porte, and Egypt a republic. Nadim’s efforts are employed to instill this idea in the minds of the young generation. Since I came here I and Nadim have been together night and day. We sit talking and devising plans till one or two every morning. We mix in every society. Sheykhs, Ulemas, Notables, merchants, and officers receive us with open arms, and we talk to them of your endeavours and of the service which you have rendered to the National Cause.

Sabunji’s testimony is unique; it is the only reference which states that Al-Nadim was advocating the idea of turning Egypt into a republic and abolishing the Khedieval system. In all his writings, Al-Nadim never mentioned this possibility, nor did he speak about it in his speeches. Sabunji’s testimony, endorsed by Blunt, is probably true since

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the two persons were friends of the Egyptian national cause and had no special interest in inventing such stories. However, the discussions between Sabunji and Al-Nadim occurred during the heated days of the revolt when all sorts of ideas could have emerged. And since Al-Nadim never discussed this idea in writing before, during or after the revolt, it would be wiser and safer to say that the notion of establishing a republic was due to the radicalism which accompanies every revolt. What he really endorsed was a western concept of government, in particular along British lines. He promoted the idea of turning Egypt into a constitutional monarchy, a country ruled by a king checked by and subject to a written constitution and laws; and run by a government which in turn was checked by and controlled by an elected parliament. He believed in the separation of powers. The political system in Egypt, he argued, should be divided into 4 branches: the political (siyasi), the legislative (majlis al-shawra), the judiciary, and the executive. The first one would be concerned with foreign affairs, public order, and defence. The second would make laws, the third would interpret them, and the fourth would execute them. It was a typical western democratic concept of government in which the nation would no longer be at the mercy of the authoritarian rule of the king, but ruled instead by law and political institutions. ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim was convinced that the Khedive should reign but not govern. He should embody the soul of the nation; he was head of the state, the representative of the Prophet’s representative the Sultan. His presence would provide legitimacy to the system in the eyes of the population which was largely illiterate and religious. Actual governing should be left to a government accountable with the monarch to an elected parliament which was answerable to the Egyptian people. The parliament (majlis al-shawra), would be the backbone of this democratic system. It was owing to representative institutions that democratic European countries were able to build up stable and just political systems:

They depended on their parliaments to derive from the difference of opinions and the multiplicity of political views, permanent laws that are suitable for both the ruler and the ruled. With these laws the state was

(47) Ibid., 1: 329.
built on solid foundation. The European nations were only able to reach this end by a process of thorough examination and ultimate reliance on those who sacrificed their lives in defense of their country against an aggressor.48

But Al-Nadim thought that the Egyptians failed to adopt this system because the ruling class allowed only a section of the Egyptians to be represented in the majlis al-shawra, the rich and the notables, thus depriving the majority of their legitimate right to be represented. He argued that anyone should be eligible for election if he were virtuous and intelligent49. This is what Europe had done in order to produce effective institutions of government, so why would not the Egyptians imitate them in this practical approach Al-Nadim asked50? The parliament should be a true representative of the Egyptian people and not only a portion of it. It should include princes, notables, wealthy men, ‘ulama, craftsmen, and workers. The only criteria for representation were honesty and education. In this attitude he might have been motivated by anti-aristocratic feelings, but his conviction in the democratic ideal was also strong. He recognized that many of the notables were honest and knowledgeable and worthy of being elected, however he also knew that a considerable number were dishonest, raising their wealth by committing all sorts of injustices, dishonesties, and briberies51. In true democracies such acts were punishable by law. But in Egypt notables and princes were still feared by the peasants and the poor. Nevertheless Al-Nadim was convinced that the process of democratization once launched would face problems, corrections, and changes before it could became mature. European Parliaments faced worse problems and were able to surmount them and evolve accordingly, he concluded52.

To elect a proper parliament, a real political life with real political parties should exist in Egypt. ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim called for the creation of parties and for a multi-party system. Parties, he argued, were essential to produce politicians capable of governing. The East was plagued by the existence of corrupt politicians and the presence of

(48) Ibid., 2: 763.
(49) Ibid., 2: 764.
(50) Ibid., 2: 765.
(52) Ibid., 304.
a very few honest professional politicians was not enough to solve all the problems a nation would confront. Politics was not an individual's work, it was the work of groups and parties. If a politician, Al-Nadim argued, was operating on an individual basis he would be more inclined to use authoritarian and corrupt methods, while a member of a party would be susceptible to the pressures of his colleagues and their will. A party should act like a lobby group curbing and restraining the behavior of its president who in his turn would aggrieve party members and risk losing their support if he abused power. Parties and party members should be allowed total freedom of expression and the right to join a political group then to leave it and join a different one on the sole condition that their loyalty to the state and its Khedive should never diminish. However parties do not appear suddenly, they need time, a lot of time to be formed and organized. ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim was aware of this fact and he wrote:

Even if we are not very certain that we can fulfill all our aims and desires during our lifetime, we have at least to start gradually to prepare the ground for the formulation of political allegiances so that those who come after us would have a political system that they only need to maintain. These political allegiances and parties (asabiyyat wal-ahzab) can only be formed by patriotic nationals (wataniyyin) whose ancestors were buried in Egypt and who would loath to see foreign invaders trampling their soil.

Al-Nadim’s political system was based on the supremacy of civic institutions. What then about the role of the military in civil society? Under the occupation the answer was easy: there was no army and the British were in charge. During the revolution, Al-Nadim was the army’s closest ally and their official speaker; nevertheless he never supported the rule of the military. He believed in the supremacy of civil institutions over military ones. He insisted that the army should always submit to the will of the civil government. Yet the army might be assigned a different role because the nation is a body and the army is its soul and the body has no life without a soul and the ultimate aim of the army is to protect the nation from any danger, whether external or internal. Al-

(54) Ibid., 1: 463.
Nadim believed that the army should protect the country, its civilians, and prevent despotism\(^\text{56}\). If the civil political system for some reason fails to protect itself from the autocratic tendencies of its rulers, the army, as a last resort, should step in to restore democracy, then return to its barracks.

**B. The Economic Struggle**

The second major field that needed new ideas and reforms was the economy. The real battle between Egypt and its oppressors was not going to occur on the battlefield, nor in the government corridors of Cairo and London. Military occupation and direct political rule was sooner or later going to end. Real danger, however, and real submission lay in the economic dependency of Egypt on the West. Europe, Al-Nadim maintained, aimed not only at direct political and military gains; it aimed in fact to turn the East into an unproductive society which imported everything from the West. By transforming Egypt into an economic vassal, Great Britain was making sure that its declared short sojourn in Egypt would be a very long one. Hence, in order to make the oppressor’s stay as short as possible, Egypt should first and foremost win the economic struggle. As Al-Nadim writes:

> One who neglects national industry and depends on foreign imports is just like a hired hand that works and labors in building a house only to be occupied by a different person. A similar case is that of England and India, for when the former destroyed the latter’s domestic textile industry and bought the raw material to be processed in England, the Indians became dependent on imports of English textile.\(^\text{57}\)

By turning Egypt into a consumer society which imported all its needs from outside, England was literally stealing Egypt’s fortunes and wealth and transforming it into a dependent poor society. “The European is draining (\textit{yantazifu}) your wealth” he cried again and again.\(^\text{58}\). Yet the situation was not desperate and Egypt could adjust the balance to her benefit if the Egyptians applied the solutions he suggested. The formula he offered was very simple: “there is no state without men, there are no

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\(^{56}\) Ibid., 99.


\(^{58}\) Ibid., 105.
men without money, and there is no money without the development of industry and agriculture\(^{59}\). The two pillars of the Egyptian economy were, he said, industry and agriculture and both were in decline. Industry, in fact, was almost non-existent because the Egyptian market was submerged by cheaper European products. Peasants were becoming impoverished day after day due to the costly western style they adopted in their lives instead of the simpler low cost eastern way of life. The treatment should start with psychological therapy. Egyptians, he claimed, have an inferiority complex towards the Europeans, they tend “to fall in love with the foreigner and to admire everything he does, whether good or bad”\(^{60}\). They had to change this mentality and to start considering themselves as equals to the Europeans capable of realizing the same achievements and even bettering it because “the Eastern intellect, and the Arabic brain and the Egyptian mind do not need more than a jolt to awaken them from their slumber”\(^{61}\). Once the Egyptian mind realized its potential and overcame its psychological obstacles, the concrete measures suggested by Al-Nadim to save the industrial and agricultural sectors could be adopted. Agrarian reforms were essential; the government could provide the poor and the unemployed with lands it owned to settle in. Instead of being homeless and unemployed, they could become hard working peasants generating profits for themselves and for the government that would thereby gain money, land and manpower\(^{62}\). Wealthy Egyptians were invited to participate more in the revival of the economy. They had to invest more in the industrial sector, instead of accumulating fortunes and spending it on European products. They should feel with their fellow citizens and give priority to the Egyptian workers and not to the foreigners\(^{63}\). It is a matter of patriotism and not merely profit and loss. Despite the crucial role that should be played by the government in encouraging industry, Al-Nadim believed that only the private sector would be able to perform this laborious task. The government, however, ought to be involved in two major activities: to impose taxes on imported products with a view

\(^{(59)}\) Ibid., 60.
\(^{(60)}\) Ibid.,
\(^{(61)}\) Ibid., 61.
\(^{(63)}\) ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, al-Tankit wal Tabkit, 128.
of protecting national industry from fierce external competition\textsuperscript{64}, and to legislate laws that could protect small farmers and workers against falling into debt\textsuperscript{65}. As a result the private sector would be able to invest without being threatened by foreign competition in different fields: it could acquire old state owned factories and renovate them and put them into production. Moreover the private sector could make better use of Egyptian resources and raw materials. For example by appropriating huge pieces of land, Al-Nadim suggested, and raising thousands of cattle in them, private local factories would be able to make use of local livestock for manufacturing purposes\textsuperscript{66}. Other decisive steps should be adopted as well. One of them would be the creation of an industrial association to encourage the development of Egyptian enterprises, an idea which would be realized thirty years later by Tal‘at Harb. Once the association was founded, engineers would be consulted concerning equipment, construction plans and the future lines of production\textsuperscript{67}. The role played by private capital should be accompanied by great efforts by the workers to create unions which would protect their rights and livelihood and their retirement plans\textsuperscript{68}.

Was Al-Nadim a proto-socialist? Could we consider his economic reforms to be the result of socialist influence? Contrary to the common view put forward by some historians\textsuperscript{69}, Al-Nadim was not a socialist and anti-capitalist thinker. He argued rather for a redistribution of wealth by legal means. He never favored or even spoke about expropriating the wealthy. It is true he criticized their arrogance and their injustices, he even condemned the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, yet the only solution he suggested was for the rich class to invest their money in industry and thus create employment opportunities for Egypt’s expanding labor force.

\textsuperscript{65} ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, \textit{al-Tankit wal Tabkit}, 44.
\textsuperscript{66} ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, \textit{al-Ustadh}, 1: 111.
\textsuperscript{67} ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, \textit{al-Tankit wal Tabkit}, 76.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 60.
\textsuperscript{69} For example, Rif ‘at al-Sa ‘id, \textit{al-Asas al-Ijtima ‘i lil Thawra al-’Urabiyya} (Cairo, 1994) and Salah ‘Issa, \textit{al-Thawra al-’Urabiyya}. 
C. Society and Citizen

The political and economic reforms suggested by ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim required that Egyptian society possess certain social qualities and virtues specific to it. An Egyptian fanatic could not grasp the need for contact with the West or the need to learn new sciences. A lazy Egyptian could not realize how urgent and necessary is hard work for the recovery of the Egyptian economy. Al-Nadim believed that certain specific virtues were indispensable if Egypt were to challenge European economic supremacy and achieve independence. Tolerance (al-i’tidal) and moderation were among these virtues. Egyptian society should be a tolerant open society since only in this sort of society could different races and opinions coexist peacefully. Minorities and foreigners would not be the target of any prejudice, and the majority would not feel threatened. Both would work at maintaining this atmosphere of moderation because it would best protect the interests of all parties. “Moderation is the key to success”

Egyptian society, Al-Nadim maintained, should also be ethical and guided by morality because a society without ethics could not be a civilized society. A person who acted only to satisfy his instincts was closer to the status of an animal than of a human being. Bars, prostitution, alcohol could not constitute part of a civilized nation; they were the signs of decadence and animalistic behavior. Once again Al-Nadim sought the example of Europe to demonstrate his point of view: a civilized nation like England was reconsidering its policy of tolerating alcohol, he argued. Egyptian society should keep its conservative Eastern values. It should remain a patriarchal society where the head of the family—the father—had complete control over the lives of his wife and children as long as he lived. However, Al-Nadim favored a hierarchical type of society shaped on the European model in which a certain educated class (tabaqa) would occupy top positions. This class would, he believed, be divided into five different categories: kings and princes, ministers, merchants, scientists, and finally the intelligentsia. As to kings, they would play the role of a

(70) ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, al-Tankit wal Tabkit, 221.
father in a family, or the shepherd who protects his cattle. They would have to be well educated, and politically mature, while the princes should prepare well for their future roles as kings by mingling with all classes of society in order to know them and to understand them better. They should participate in all charitable and philanthropic societies which would provide them with considerable popularity\textsuperscript{72}. But it was the ministers’ task to run the government and deal with daily problems. They were the men of \textit{al-hal wal ‘aqd}; as such they had to create solutions for the problems which encountered Egyptian society. They would work day and night to safeguard the interest of the country and to make it advance\textsuperscript{73}. The class of merchants, Al-Nadim observed, was becoming the most influential group in shaping a modern society. They controlled the different sectors of the economy and accumulated money and wealth and were able to influence the government in their favor. Unlike traditional merchants-guilds the new educated merchants were more dynamic, more ambitious, and much more effective\textsuperscript{74}. However nations and societies could only advance and prosper when a class of scientists developed and assumed positions of prominence. By scientists, he meant medical doctors, chemists, engineers, astronomers, mechanics, etc\textsuperscript{75}... They are the ones who would spread knowledge and science among people. Each one of them could prepare hundreds of pupils who would be in their turn ready to spread their knowledge among thousands of Egyptians. It was due to them that nations might become civilized and advanced. The last category was the intelligentsia. Their power lay in their profound ability to influence people’s minds through their writings in the press and in their books. They would be, he thought, propagandists of talent who would push people to wage war or to make peace. Their importance would increase with the spread of the press and their ideas would influence everybody, in particular people in the sphere of politics and authority\textsuperscript{76}.

\textsuperscript{(72) Ibid., 1: 221.}
\textsuperscript{(73) Ibid., 1: 222.}
\textsuperscript{(74) Ibid., 1: 223.}
\textsuperscript{(75) Ibid., 1: 225.}
\textsuperscript{(76) Ibid., 1: 265-267.}
Egyptian society was a traditional society. Man was the head of the family. How, then, did Al-Nadim conceive the condition of women? His attitude was extremely conservative and traditional; this was a rather unexpected attitude originating, as it did, from a revolutionary who struggled all his life to emancipate his people from the yoke of occupation and backwardness. The message he sent was clear: man and woman are not equal on the social level. She was and must remain subordinate to her father, then to her husband. Women, rich or poor, were meant to become housewives. Their ultimate aim in life was to provide comfort for their husbands and to raise their children. Women should not be illiterate, he thought. However, their education should not exceed the basic principles of reading and writing in Arabic only. They should not learn foreign languages nor foreign habits like playing music and dancing ballet since these activities required the partnership of men or at least their presence. These habits were totally Western and thus were foreign to Eastern Egyptian culture which necessitated a total separation between the sexes. However an exception to these rules could be made for the royal family and the ruling class whose political and diplomatic duties required them to attend mixed parties in which they needed to communicate with foreigners to serve Egypt’s interests. Nevertheless, to imitate the west blindly would inevitably lead to social instability. Egypt, he argued, had developed its own social modus vivendi that needed to be preserved and strengthened. In Al-Nadim’s society, men exercised total control over women. She was a prisoner of his will and of his house. Going out unescorted would jeopardize her dignity and honor since she might be confused with prostitutes who wandered in the streets of Cairo. This Western practice was despised by Al-Nadim because “it went against Eastern habits and was opposed to their religions.” But, for him, this male supremacy did not exempt men from accomplishing their duties. They had to be caring husbands and fathers, devoting as much of their time as possible to their families. At the time he was writing, Egyptian society seemed

(77) Ibid., 1: 299-302.
(78) Ibid., 1: 246-251.
(79) Ibid., 1: 440.
(80) Ibid., 2: 912.
(81) Ibid., 1: 229.
to have been infected by a major drinking problem, causing a great number of Egyptians to waste their money and health on alcohol and in the process bringing many disasters to Egyptian families. ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim invited his fellow citizens to fight this European disease through a European cure:

Those European men whom you imitate in the habits of consuming alcohol and frequenting bars, always have their meals with their wives and children, for they have organized their times accordingly. The European wife knows that her husband would come home at a certain hour and she knows his whereabouts all day long.\(^{(82)}\)

Men derived their supremacy over women, Al-Nadim thought, from the fact that they worked harder and because they supported their families. But once this equation was broken, women might ask for real equality. Hence Al-Nadim differentiated between the city women and women in the countryside. The female peasant worked harder than her male equivalent and had to till and sow the soil and to irrigate it during some months of the year. Women in addition to cultivation had to work, all year long, in feeding and taking care of the animals and to prepare bread, to cut wood, to build her house of clay, and to accomplish her daily duties towards her husband and children\(^{(83)}\). In simpler words, she worked harder than her husband and deserved to be treated as his social equal provided she remained under his legal authority. In cities, however, the problem was of a different nature. Women were divided into three categories: wealthy, middle-class, and poor. The poor ones, Al-Nadim claimed, worked as hard as their husbands but were confined to their houses. They worked hard because they could not afford the services of a maid. Hence their work, which was very hard, did not allow them to equal their husbands on a social level. Rich and the middle class women obviously worked less than their men and as such were not entitled to any equality with their men since all they did was to merely look after themselves and their families\(^{(84)}\).

Women, to Al-Nadim, were equal to men in legal rights and duties yet they were inferior to them in the social hierarchy. Al-

\(^{(82)}\) Ibid., 1: 230.
\(^{(83)}\) Ibid., 1: 115-118.
\(^{(84)}\) Ibid., 1: 159-161.
Nadim was never able to treat this matter as an unbiased observer; he rather treated it as a male living in a nineteenth century milieu where women were subordinate to men. He confused the realities of progress occurring in the status of women in Europe and the imperialist schemes being executed in Egypt in order to destroy its social values. To him, Egyptian women should not imitate their European counterpart because Europe had a different set of values. To introduce these new European values meant a direct attempt to destroy Egypt and its social structure and not to liberate woman. It seems that his anti-imperialist tendencies overwhelmed his judgment.

D. Education for all

Egypt would not achieve political freedom and democracy, economic prosperity, and social harmony without education. An illiterate population could not survive in the modern world. ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim viewed education as the only means by which nations could become civilized. Education would help in transforming societies from a condition where superstition and the irrational prevailed into a state where the rational (‘aqliyyat) and scientific truths would dominate. Egypt must become a place where people worked and thought along scientific lines. Any other option was doomed to failure.

Education must be mandatory, gratuitous, and universal. All schools must adopt the same curriculum that should focus at the primary level on teaching the principles of reading and writing, ethics, math, history, geography, and religion. He suggested that theoretical instruction at the primary level should be linked to practical work: every student would go to school in the morning then join his father at work in the afternoon. Those who showed intelligence and a great ability would be sponsored by the government at a higher level in the “sciences of industry, agriculture, navigation, and administration”, the sciences which, he believed, made Europe advance. Education should reach the whole nation and in particular the fallahin in the primary phase at least. Egypt was an agricultural country and an educated fallah was more productive than an ignorant one who failed to realize the foreigner’s

real intention to deprive him of his land\textsuperscript{86}. An educated \textit{fallah} would be able to know his rights and duties; he would be able to protect himself from extortion. The \textit{fallah} who ignored everything outside his field and his village, had to be educated if he were to become a citizen who understood the importance of his country and his nationality\textsuperscript{87}. But “no government on earth is able to teach and educate all its citizens” ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim cried\textsuperscript{88}. How then to finance this great task? Despite his appreciation of the efforts achieved previously in this field, Al-Nadim admitted that it was insufficient. New methods must be created and implemented in order to finance this ambitious project. It was the task of the rich and wealthy to build and spread philanthropic national schools all over the country, like their European counterparts who contributed heavily towards the establishment and expansion of religious and missionary schools which reached all the way to Africa and Asia\textsuperscript{89}. Egyptian national schools must replace foreign schools which were threatening Egypt’s national identity\textsuperscript{90}. War between East and West would, he said, not be fought between armies, nor would it be an economic one only; war starts from early childhood in schools. Foreign schools would ultimately produce pro-Westerners, national schools would produce Egyptian nationalists:

Do not ever think that progress can only be achieved by a bloody revolution, and anyone who tells you so is misleading and delivering you into the hands of foreigners. Progress depends on eliminating hatred and discord and bringing together the Eastern races which can only be achieved through proper education. The aim behind bringing together Eastern races is not to revolt against and evict the foreigners, but to imitate the foreigner in his scientific and commercial advance.\textsuperscript{91}

Education needed educators and who was better suited than the ‘\textit{ulama} and the great Azhar. As Al-Nadim writes:

The ‘\textit{ulama} (scholars) in every nation and in every generation are the leaders on the path towards civilization. They guide them in their movement from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge.

\textsuperscript{(86) Ibid., 209-212.}
\textsuperscript{(87) Ibid. 190.}
\textsuperscript{(88) ‘Abdallah Al-Nadim, \textit{al-Ustadh}, 1: 188.}
\textsuperscript{(89) Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{(90) Ibid., 2: 812.}
\textsuperscript{(91) Ibid., 1: 362.}
They are the supporters of kings, the pillars of kingdoms, the basis of order and the guardians of nations.\(^92\)

Notwithstanding his high esteem of the ‘ulama, Al-Nadim maintained that, in his time, ‘ulama were mediocre and al-Azhar was reduced to a minor school teaching only fiqh and hadith\(^93\). Al-Azhar, he said, ought to regain its former prominence and the ‘ulama must be able to play their former roles as educators, enlightened Islamic scholars who acknowledged modern science and its techniques, and who had a modern outlook\(^94\). This, for him, was the only way they could regain their former roles as a leading intellectual elite. Al-Nadim, in fact, advanced a plan to reform al-Azhar which consisted of twenty four points. Here are the main points: New topics were to be introduced: geometry, arithmetic, geography, astronomy, law, history, philosophy. Non-Azharite teachers were to be hired if needed. Examinations were necessary to earn the degrees certified by the Egyptian government and not a simple ijazah by the shaykh. Al-Azhar should be decentralized and several religious schools administered by al-Azhar should open in provinces. Several political and scientific journals should be available to students. Students should remain under medical supervision all year long. It is essential to limit the teaching hours, to decrease the days of holidays and to compel the teachers to major in one or two topics only. Students should learn to read and speak literary Arabic\(^95\).

Was he a proto-Islamic revivalist? He, no doubt, believed in the need to introduce reforms and new ideas to the religious establishment. However, those reforms were the means and not an end by themselves. The prosperity of Egypt as an independent nation should always be the ultimate goal. All necessary reforms, including religious ones, ought be undertaken, not, to be sure, to serve religion but in the service of Egyptian nationalism.

\(^92\) Ibid., 2: 603.
\(^93\) Ibid., 2: 608.
\(^94\) Ibid., 2: 609.
\(^95\) Ibid., 2: 614-616.