

# **Redefining Nationalism and Patriotism in Iran and Azerbaijan: Exploring Fathali Akhundzade's Modernist Perspective**

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## **Abstract**

Fathali Akhundzade emerged as a preeminent figure among Muslim intellectuals and modernists of the nineteenth century, whose intellectual legacy profoundly impacted societies in Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey. For the first time, he proposed various concepts and ideas, including Islamic Protestantism, alphabet reform and modern education, as well as nationalism, ideas that are still controversial. Among his ideas, those regarding religion and patriotism have been more controversial than others, so that many scholars have offered conflicting interpretations of his ideas. For example, many in Iran consider him the founder of Persian nationalism, while others primarily in Azerbaijan and Turkey portray him as one of the earliest Turkic nationalists. This is largely due to a selective examination of his works. This article applies the conceptual history approach to focus on Akhundzade's ideas on nation, nationalism, and patriotism and by examining all his works, it challenges claims that he is the founder of Persian (sometimes Turkish) nationalism. The mentioned method analyses the content by focusing on the central concepts within the content and considering the social context surrounding the text and idea. According to the findings of the research, although some of his thoughts about pre-Islamic Iran allow a nationalist interpretation of him, he is not looking for a single-ethnic modern nationalism, but a pluralistic patriotism. Furthermore, his fundamental issue is the application of western modernity to offset the backwardness of Muslims. Patriotism is also one of the components of this modernity and Akhundzade proposes it for all the "peoples" of the "Islamic nation".

**Keywords:** Akhundzade, Patriotism, modernity, Nationalism, Azerbaijan, Iran

## Introduction

Factors such as the war between Tsarist Russia and the Qajar Empire, Nasser al-Din Shah's trip to Europe, the arrival of Western missionaries to Iran and the region, and the direct intervention of Russia and Great Britain in the Qajar sultanate led to a deeper acquaintance of Iran and Azerbaijanis with the West. This made Muslims realize that they were far behind Europeans. While seeking a solution for such mustiness, they turned their attention to identity and "nationhood," imbuing these concepts with new meanings. Later, especially in Iran, the ideas of Orientalists, Indo Persians (Zoroastrians) and some intellectuals who were influenced by them, such as Mirza Fathali Akhundzade, became the source of the thought that gave rise to new definitions of identity.

While Akhundzade was indeed born in Azerbaijan, spent his most productive years in Tbilisi, and wrote mainly in Azerbaijani Turkish, his intellectual influence was profound in both Iran and Azerbaijan, albeit in different ways. Further, although his works were officially and widely available to the public in Azerbaijan after 1924, the intellectuals were familiar with them and his works were staged in various ways, including in Tbilisi. Akhundzade's comedies "Haci Qara" and "Vazir-i Khan-i Lankaran" were also staged in 1873 under the leadership of Hasan Bey Zardabi (Cabbarlı, 1959: 35-36). Additionally Persian translation of Akhundzade's collection "Tamsilat" was also completed in 1871 in Tabriz and made accessible to Iranian readers.

Akhundzade generally expressed his ideas about the backwardness of Muslims through critical literary works and saw the solution in modernization. In this direction, he emphasized the concepts of rationality and science, freedom, new order, parliament, gender equality, Islamic Protestantism, critical approach, constitution limiting despotic rulers, new alphabet and modern education, and "Patriotism" instead of religion, which used to be a socially unifying value (Bagir, 2022: 4). However, his most discussed ideas in Iran and Azerbaijan are his ideas about the

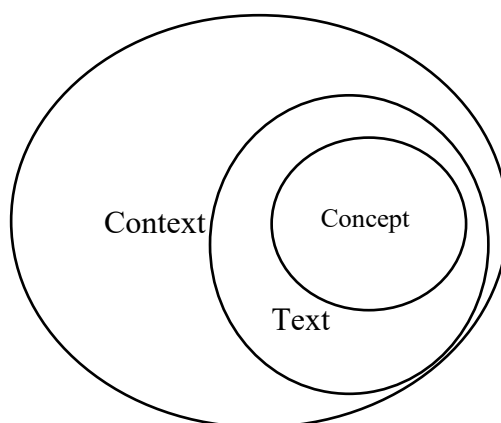
concepts of religion and nation and the 'Patriot'. Although they do not deal with the nation and nationalism in the modern sense in their works, many Iranian intellectuals and writers give a nationalist interpretation, especially based on the work *Maktubat* (Letters). In the work, Akhundzade glorified ancient Iran in a legendary way and criticized Islam and the Arabs in a derogatory manner. He believed that religion is one of the main reasons for the backwardness of Muslims and that modern values such as the idea of progress, patriotism, and secularization, which were presented as some of the main narratives of modernization and enlightenment, should be prioritized.

Some claim that Akhundzade contributed to the development of nationalist movements in Iran and Azerbaijan with these thoughts. However, since he had different ideas than the ethnic nationalism that emerged after him, instead of being called the founder or advocate of this type of nationalism, this article focuses on his thoughts around the concept of "patriotism". At the same time, how the concept of nation was used in his thought, the change of its meaning over time and its related terms is discussed based on the History of concepts theory and method. The method of conceptual history is employed in textual analysis to investigate how the meaning of a concept has evolved within its historical context. By concentrating on specific concepts, this approach reveals the historical, cultural, and social factors that have influenced the text.

### **Conceptual History**

Conceptual history, which started to be used in the late 1950s and has since become one of the most common theories and methods in the history of thought, is a field of research that examines a concept and its changes in linguistic content that occur in a historical context. According to Koselleck (1989: 309), the most important figure of the theory, transferring past texts and ideas to the present requires the conceptual history method. In other words, we must use this method to understand the events

that took place in the past and the ideas put forward in the present. For this reason, he defines conceptual history as 'a variety of social history' (Olsen, 2009: 143). Koselleck also argues that historical developments often result from changes in the meaning and connotations of key concepts. He believes that these shifts in meaning are not arbitrary, however, they are deeply rooted in the historical context (non-linguistic) in which they occur. Therefore, this theory and method is like interpretive and discourse analysis theories, as it tries to understand the text and the discourse and context behind it through the concept. Conceptual history also uses it as a strategy in textual analysis. In this sense, it offers an alternative to fields such as semiotics, content analysis, and Hermeneutics (Palenon, 1997: 42).



**Figure 1.** Concept, Text, and Context in the Conceptual History Method.

This method has very close similarities with discourse analysis. However, it focuses on concepts, not statements when examining the text. In other words, the history of concepts is an approach that does not reject the pre-existing discourse analysis, but contributes to it, especially in terms of method, and provides a more objective method. Henrik Halkier (2003 :17) points out an important difference between the history of concept approach and critical discourse analysis which is the unit of analysis. According to him, the unit of analysis is a special concept in the history of concepts and discourse in critical analysis and even though these units of analysis are different, the underlying idea is the same. This theory also uses Synchronic and

Diachronic analysis, examining the concepts simultaneously and diachronically and revealing their origins and the meaning behind them. The table below shows the similarities and differences between the Historical Concept and discourse analysis.

**Table 1.** Similarities and differences between Historical Concept and discourse analysis

<i>historical change reason</i>	<i>Relationship to social reality</i>	<i>relationship with language</i>	<i>unit of analysis</i>	<i>Analysis purpose</i>	
Floating signifier	Influenced by poststructuralism, reflected through language.	Influenced by structural linguistics.	Semantic statements in discourse.	Critique of power relations.	<b>Discourse Analysis</b>
Extralinguistic oppositions	Influenced by poststructuralism, reflected through language, emphasizing conceptual transformation.	Influenced by structural linguistics.	Concept.	Through the concept, it seeks to understand power relations and social change.	<b>Conceptual History</b>

The sources for this research primarily consist of Akhundzade's collected works, published in three volumes in Baku in 2005. Additionally, several of his works, originally written in Persian or translated into Persian and published in Iran, have also been utilized. Although all these works are included in the mentioned three volumes, other works were examined solely for comparative purposes to enable a detailed analysis of the original concepts he employed. Furthermore, dozens of papers, books, and dissertations related to him, published in various countries including Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey, have also been utilized. All these texts have been reviewed and analyzed using the "conceptual history" method, which has been separately outlined.

## Literature Review

Fereydu Adamiyat's "The Thoughts of Mirza Fathali Akhundzade" (1970) is one of the most significant studies on Akhundzade in Iran. Adamiyat highlights Akhundzade's role in advancing modern nationalism, constitutionalism, and the rule of law, viewing him as a proponent of separating politics from religious law. Akhundzade's work *Maktubat* critiques societal foundations, aiming to raise historical awareness and foster national consciousness. He advocates for replacing despotism with constitutional rule, distinguishing religion from sharia, and supports a "Protestantization" of Islam. In this work, Adamiyat explores key aspects of Akhundzade's thought, presenting him as a modern thinker and one of the founders of Iranian nationalist ideology. However, it does not clarify the characteristics or elements of his modern ideas or the specific features of his nationalistic views. Nor does it address the differences between Akhundzade's nationalism thought and that of the following generation.

Similarly, Hamid Algar (1984), in an article introducing Akhundzade, describes him as a founder of modern thought and a critic of tradition and religion, while also emphasizing his Iranian nationalist tendencies. However, this work is also quite brief and introductory, sharing the same shortcomings as Adamiyat's work, as it does not elaborate on its claims regarding Akhundzade's ideas.

Reza Zia Ebrahimi, in his 2016 book "The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation," discusses the development of Iranian nationalism, identifying Akhundzade as one of its founders. He notes that the roots of Iranian nationalism are both local and tied to broader regional dynamics. In this work, he argues that Akhundzade is influenced by Ernest Renan's racial ideas. However, Akhundzade's works show that although he is aware of Renan's thoughts and was influenced by them, it cannot be claimed that he accepted Renan's thoughts about the Aryan race or their superiority. Akhundzade's statements about the Arabs originate from Ibn Khaldun rather than being influenced by Renan.

Also, Zia-Ebrahimi argues that Akhundzade was one of the founders of Persian nationalism. However, he does not address the fact that the nationalism later established in Iran in 1925, based on Iranian/Persian identity, is far from Akhundzade's pluralistic definition of homeland and Iran. And generally, he did not pay attention to the fact that Akhundzade's unreliable history of pre-Islamic Iran, like his plays, was a fictional image and a model for building a new modern society like Europe. Akhundzade's pluralistic view of Iran reflected the spirit of his time, shared by Qajar rulers like Naser al-Din Shah, who respected the cultural heritage of post-Islamic Arab-Turkish empires while advancing modernization (Kahraman& Gül, 2022: 434-435).

Sedat Adıgüzel, in his 2015 research on Akhundzade's works, introduces him as a proponent of modern thought transcending Azerbaijan's borders and as a leading intellectual for the Eastern world. Adıgüzel highlights that Akhundzade's ideas on enlightenment and progress are not merely theoretical but address issues many Eastern societies face today. He also examines Akhundzade's plays, explaining his ideas on problems facing Muslims, particularly in 19th-century Azerbaijan. He also emphasizes Akhundzade's influence on Turkic-Azerbaijani identity, though he does not analyze this influence deeply due to the limited scope of his study and mentions little about Akhundzade's views on Iran, patriotism, and nationhood.

Orkhan Valiyev and Bünyamin Bezci (2020) also examine Akhundzade's ideas on nation and nationalism, especially his role in the nation-building process of Tsarist Azerbaijan. According to them, although Akhundzade's thoughts are not directly considered within the scope of modern nationalism, his writing in the popular language and seeing education as a means of progress made an important contribution to the formation of national consciousness. They emphasize Akhundzade's role in increasing national awareness in Azerbaijan, especially with Azerbaijani Turkish language in plays and declare that he cannot be considered as a modern nationalist (Valiyev and Alptekin, 2023). However, this work covers only Azerbaijan and not Iran.

Nadir Mammadov (1987) examines Akhundzade's contribution to the spread of enlightenment ideas in Azerbaijan and focuses on how he addressed social problems through his playwriting. He introduces Akhundzade as one of the modern thinkers not only in Azerbaijan but also in a wider geography in the Islamic world including Iran and Turkey. However, he does not provide an explanation about his influence in other Muslim countries. In general, this work cannot be considered a comprehensive research analysis of Akhundzade's writings. Instead, it is a collection of Akhundzade's works accompanied by an introduction that presents general perspectives about him.

In an article published in 1990 titled "The Aesthetic Memory that Begins with Akhundzade: The Awakening of the Turks of Azerbaijan," Yashar Qarayev examines the profound impact of Mirza Fathali Akhundzade on the language, literature, and culture of Azerbaijan. He describes Akhundzade as a pioneer of the "New Age" in Azerbaijan and the broader East, highlighting his transformative role in areas such as professional national theater, realistic aesthetic prose, and democratic philosophical and aesthetic thought. Qarayev also emphasizes that Akhundzade was among the first to address constitutional governance, social freedom, and democratic revolution. According to Qarayev, Akhundzade's artistic and philosophical contributions extend beyond local borders and hold historical significance for Islamic communities and all of humanity. In this brief article, Qarayev provides general references to Akhundzade's ideas and, naturally, does not have the opportunity to delve deeply into analyzing own interpretations and claims regarding Akhundzade.

### **Akhundzade's understanding of the Nation**

As mentioned in the introduction, some scholars in Iran see Akhundzade as the founder of Iranian/Persian nationalism. For instance, according to Zia Ebrahimi (2016: 9), in the second half of the 19th century, intellectuals such as Akhundzade



resorted to nationalism and anti-Arab ideas while thinking about the problem of Iran's backwardness and systematically put forward these different ideas in ideological form. Zia Ebrahimi recognizes this as dislocated nationalism. Fereydu Adamiyat also refers to his emphasis on 'homeland bigotry' instead of 'religious bigotry' (1970:118), and calls Akhundzade "the creator of the philosophy of Iranian nationalism" (1970: 23). Such interpretation of Akhundzade's thoughts is generally made by referring to his work "Maktubat" and some of his letters.

Some thinkers in Azerbaijan are also trying to define Akhundzade as a national identity theorist and portray him as a Turkish/Azerbaijani nationalist. For instance, Ali Bey Hüseyinzade (1864-1940) evaluated Akhundzade's impact on the Turks as important in his article titled *Maktub-e Makhsus* (1904), which he wrote for the "Türk" Newspaper (Bayat, 1998: 303). Likewise, Ziya Gökalp defined Akhundzade as one of the most important Turkists in Russian territory, especially based on his comedies written in Azerbaijani Turkic (1923: 25) Yusuf Akçura (1978: 66-67) also touched upon the importance of Akhundzade's role in literary Turkism, although not as much as Gökalp emphasized, as it was the first Turkish theatre he wrote.

This article argues that while Akhundzade places an idealized and somewhat unrealistic emphasis on ancient Iran and attributes the spread of Islam as a contributing factor to the backwardness of Muslims, including Iran, his perspective does not lay the groundwork for mono-ethnic nationalism. Instead, he frames his critique within a broader theoretical approach to modernization, with secularism serving as one of its central pillars. This orientation is particularly evident in his "Maktubat", where, as he notes in his biography, he aimed to challenge the foundations of religion and address the problems caused by fanaticism (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol. 2: 220). In this regard, Akhundzade critiques the theistic worldview dominant in Muslim societies, often adopting a Deist (pragmatic) perspective akin to Voltaire and, at other times, a materialist approach reminiscent of Holbach. Consequently, his view of existence aligns with a materialist perspective that conceptualizes humanity as machine-like (Valiyev, 2020: 67).

Secondly, Akhundzade advocates for pluralistic patriotism combined with liberties, as opposed to mono-ethnic and ideological nationalism. In other words, Akhundzade consistently emphasized freedom as the cornerstone of his modernity project, viewing it as one of the most important features of a modern and pluralistic homeland. His definition of "liberal" encompasses these ideals: "Liberal is to be completely free in thoughts and actions and not bound by religious restrictions. Liberal and free thought never believe in matters outside the scope of reason and natural laws" (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol.2: 43).

This modern and secular understanding of liberalism forms the foundation of his critique of traditional, religious, and despotic systems that suppress individual autonomy. He critiques oppressive traditions and social structures, particularly those limiting the freedoms of women and young people. For instance, in works like "The Minister of Lankaran's Sultan" and "The Story of a Bear that Attacks a Thief", Akhundzade highlights how traditional customs, such as forced marriages, curtail personal freedom. These comedies serve as social critiques, turning restrictive traditions into targets of reform. Moreover, Akhundzade frames freedom as a dual concept—spiritual and material—arguing that both forms have been suppressed in Eastern societies by religious authorities and despotic rulers:

*"Every person who steps into the universe should benefit from the blessing of freedom. Freedom consists of two kinds. One is spiritual freedom, the other is material freedom... Our spiritual freedom has been taken from us by the saints and clergy of Islam, and our material freedom has been taken from us by despotic rulers."* (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol.2: 143).

Akhundzade also explores the transformative role of freedom in European development, underscoring its connection to intellectual and political tolerance:

*"They began to flourish from the day every individual on the European continent, even atheists, was allowed to freely say their true or false views. Voltaire, Renan, and other French atheists wrote and distributed books on the superstition of*

*Christianity. But the heads of state and nation could not afford to pressure them to dissuade them.”* (Ibid:14-15).

Therefore, Akhundzade considers freedom, like secularism, one of the pillars of modern society and country. According to him, patriotism is a modern element that gives individuals an identity different from the religious and traditional identity of the past. Even, there is no nation or nationalism among the 21 modern concepts that Akhundzade took from the French and defined, and the concept closest to it is 'patriot', that is, patriotism:

*“A patriot is someone who does not hesitate to spend his property and life for the sake of his homeland and strives for the benefit and freedom of his homeland and nation. This quality always appears in courageous brave men. One of them is Hz. Muhammad. He made great efforts for the welfare of his homeland, Arabia, and Mecca, where the Quraysh tribe lived.”* (Akhundzade, 2005, vol 2: 48).

Therefore, Akhundzade seeks to offer a modern and secular reinterpretation of patriotism. He defines it as a commitment to self-sacrifice and striving for the welfare and freedom of one's homeland and nation, portraying it as a virtue grounded in universal human values and a sense of honor. By emphasizing self-sacrifice for the nation's benefit, Akhundzade frames patriotism as a non-religious and universal ideal. In this context, he even cites the Prophet of Islam as an example of a patriot, focusing not on the religious aspects of his mission but on his efforts to secure the "prosperity of his homeland" and the "liberation" of Mecca and Arabia. This approach illustrates Akhundzade's broader endeavor to transcend religious boundaries and recast patriotism as a distinctly modern and secular value.

Therefore, in the definition of patriotism mentioned, Akhundzade refers to a specific geography or land, positioning it in contrast to another. In his view, this definition differs from the traditional religious one, which emphasizes the Islamic ummah. On the other hand, it seems that Akhundzade's perspective on patriotism and "nation" was shaped not only by the concept of ethnicity but also by the specific political

circumstances of his time. Nationalist's thought had not yet spread in Europe, and moreover, during the period when Azerbaijan was under Tsarist Russian rule, and while he worked as a civil servant in the Caucasus (Akhundzade, 2005, vol. 1:6), his focus was less on geography or ethnicity and more on the Muslim community, which he referred to as the "Muslim Nation."

Although this view may appear contradictory at first glance, it aligns with his overall ideas of modernism and secularism. He sought to transcend the ethnic identity limitations of the Muslim community, redefining secularism and patriotism within a broader framework, based on modern concepts of freedom, progress, and secularism. However, his ideas eventually paved the way for a nationalist interpretation of his views, particularly in Iran.

The word "Millat" is originally Arabic and generally means "sharia and religion" (Mushkur, 1989: 6-8) and was used in expressions such as "followers of Muhammad" or "followers of Jesus". However, over time, the word "followers" may have been removed and changed to simply the "Ummah" of Muhammad or Jesus. Since the mid-19th century, it began to be used 'people' and "nation" instead of Ummah and as a result, definitions such as "Arab nation", "Iranian nation" and "Turkish nation" and others emerged. These concepts also led to the rise of nationalism.

Nation and nationalism, in the modern sense, are relatively new concepts in Europe, emerging approximately a century earlier than in Muslim societies. The roots of these ideas can be traced back to the late 18th century, particularly in the works of thinkers like Rousseau and Fichte (Greenfeld, 1992: 176, 366). Additionally, Romantics such as Hegel, with their emphasis on the complete integration of individual interests into those of the collective, can be regarded as some of the earliest theorists of nationalism (Ibid: 348).

Hobsbawm (1993: 17-29) likewise argues that the concept of nation, in its modern sense, cannot date back further than the 18th century. In this line, throughout history,

people have felt loyalty to their kin groups and their traditions and homeland. However, nationalism did not become an ideology until the end of the 18th century ("Nationalism," 2023) and it was addressed as a social science subject in the 1920s and 1930s (Özkırımlı, 1999: 10).

As has been pointed out, in Akhundzade's works the term "nation" carries a religious meaning and is constantly used to describe the "Islamic nation" and "Muslim peoples". "Eastern peoples" is one of the terms he frequently uses. Therefore, this concept covers a wide geography and as a result does not mention a specific nation (in the ethnic sense). For example, in the second part of the Maktubat, he used Islam instead of the nation by saying, "the continuation of the Islamic nation is only possible by comprehending the essence of religion with consciousness and knowledge" or he used the concept of 'Nation of Islam' when describing Protestantism:

*“Protestantism is a religion in which the propositions of law of Allah have been universally abolished and only the rights of the people (hukuk-inas) remain. The formation of this type of sect first emerged among the Islamic nation through the efforts of Ali Zikr al-Salam”* (Haghdar, 2021: 24).

Akhundzade uses the nation in the same sense elsewhere: "What is the benefit of the Pilgrimage that continues for 1200 years to the Nation of Islam?" (vol.2: 110). In a letter he wrote to Malkom Khan on the Islamic writing script, he used the concept of 'Islamic Nation' again: It is obvious that the ancient Islamic script prevents the progress of science and people. If this script is not changed, the Islamic nation will remain in the darkness of ignorance until the end of time (June 2: 1871).

Although Akhundzade brings Islam and nation together, he also attempts to utilize a new concept for the inhabitants of certain geographical areas with the concepts of "homeland" and "patriotism" and with this effort, he emphasizes a geographical-cultural identity under the umbrella of the Nation of Islam. We see this distinction clearly in a letter he wrote about himself: This man, who has countless works, is a

patriot and someone who loves his nation (Islam)... I have no grudges against Iran, which is his homeland, or the Islamic nation, with which I share the same religion" (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol. 2: 122). It is seen that Akhundzade handles the concept of patriotism in his own understanding, in consonance with religion and the Islamic community, and avoids associating these concepts with modern nationalism. It appears that he was aware of the considerable influence held by the clerical circles and the potential harm they could cause him. Therefore, in his approach, he attempted to engage with religion as tactfully as possible. Therefore, although traces of atheism can occasionally be seen in his texts, it has been stated that his main goal was to reform religion in a way that would not obstruct progress. His fear of the clergy might have also contributed to this (Valiyev, 2020: 88). In a letter he wrote to Ali Khan Vali, he distinguished between Islamic belonging and homeland belonging; however, he argued that his patriotism was not against Islam:

*I am not an enemy of religion and the state, but a person who loves his people and is ready to sacrifice his life for this cause. My patriotism can be understood as hostility to religion... But you know how deeply I believe in Islam. I do not see any religion in the world as superior to Islam (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol. 3:167).*

Akhundzade may have said these words to protect himself from the pressures of Muslim society. When we look at his works, it seems that this determination is correct, but this issue cannot lead to an ethnic nationalist interpretation from him.

The concept that Akhundzade utilizes to distinguish the people of a geography or culture from the Islamic nation is "people". Even though he used the nation in its religious sense, he used the people instead of the modern concept of nation. For example, he put forward this difference in a letter he wrote about alphabet reform:

*"Unfortunately, neither the Rum (Ottoman) nor the Iranian public leaders wanted to change the alphabet for the progress of the Islamic nation, so that the people of*

*both countries could learn to read and write within a few months, and within a few years all the works of European modern sciences would be translated into the languages of the Muslim peoples." And with the spread of knowledge, a period of happiness begins for the Islamic people." (Akhundzade 2005, Vol. 3:177).*

Here, Akhundzade used the word people for the people living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and the Qajar State and argued that both belonged to the same nation. In its current meaning, it has transformed the nation into the Ummah and the people into the nation. However, the nation does not mean an ethnocentric concept that emerged after the establishment of nation-states, but a society that includes all people living in that geography. In fact, 'nation', which is used in the second sense, is a modern concept and it would be misleading to attribute it to pre-modern times. Akhundzade used the term ' patriot ' in several places, therefore, the conceptual differences we mentioned above are seen more clearly.

According to Kachooyan (2014: 40), while the term nation meant religion in ancient manuscripts, at the beginning of Iranians' encounter with modernity, it was replaced by the term "nation", which is essentially a secular and even anti-religious concept. For instance, in the telegram he sent to Nasir al-Din Shah in the early 19th century, Mirza Shirazi describes the Roji Agreement with England as "contrary to the laws of the nation and the independence of the state" (Bigdelou, 2001: 93). Therefore, the term nation refers to religious commandments and sharia and, in this line, until the Constitutional Revolution, in all correspondence and public language in Iran, the Shah was described as the "Shah of Islam", not the Shah of Iran (Gnol, 1989: 245).

Generally, there are two distinct interpretations of popular sovereignty give rise to basic types of nationalism: individualistic-libertarian and collectivistic-authoritarian. Nationalism can also be categorized based on membership criteria, either as "civic," synonymous with citizenship, or "ethnic." Civic nationality is open and voluntary, while ethnic nationality is seen as inherent and unchangeable. Individualistic nationalism is exclusively civic, but civic nationalism can be collectivistic. Typically, collectivistic nationalism appears as ethnic particularism,

whereas ethnic nationalism is inherently collectivistic (Greenfeld, 1992: 11). He states in this work that in modern state-building history, individualistic-civic and collectivistic-civic nationalisms lead to liberal democracies (such as Britain, the United States, and France), while collectivistic-ethnic nationalism appears to produce authoritarian democracies (such as Russia and Germany).

On the other hand, some thinkers of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson theories point out similarities between, for example, French and British nationalism, however they also talk about differences. In his work "Imagined Communities", Anderson highlights the distinctions between English and French nationalism. According to (him,) while French nationalism is primarily based on citizenship and revolutionary ideals, English nationalism emerged earlier and evolved within a colonial context. The official nationalism of England sought to impose its culture on colonized territories (for instance, through Anglicization in India) while simultaneously denying these colonized peoples the opportunity to attain administrative roles (Anderson, 1983: 110). Some also believe that the formation of both French and English national identities was significantly influenced by imperial ambitions and colonial rule, experiences that they shared, leading to some similar consequences. However, what truly distinguished their national identities were the contrasting outcomes of their imperial endeavors (Kumar, 2006: 417).

The second is understood in the tradition of German romanticism and has a supra-individual and collective meaning. In the late nineteenth century, the defeat of Prussia in the French Revolutionary Wars catalyzed the rise of German nationalism. This nationalism offered marginalized intellectuals a renewed sense of identity and purpose, enabling them to unite under a shared humiliation and pride against the French threat, ultimately shaping a collective national identity. German nationalism thus was defined as anti-French and rooted in Romantic ideals, influencing the national identity of German-speaking peoples (Greenfeld, 1992: 359-161). In its historical development, German nationalism led to blood ties, romanticism, Aryan race, and anti-Semitism. For example, Carl Schmitt (one of the theorists of German



nationalism) emphasizes a form of nationalism that prioritizes loyalty to the ethnic community or "Volk" over universal principles, introducing the concept of "blood and soil" (Koonz, 2006: 60). This perspective insists that laws and social norms should reflect the specific cultural and biological heritage of a people, aligning with ethnic nationalism that can have racial undertones. Such nationalism is often associated with exclusionary ideologies. Therefore, Akhundzade's patriotism is mainly focused on individual freedoms and emphasis on the homeland, and it can be seen more in the context of the French tradition than the German one.

At the beginning of the modernization movement in Iran, since the intellectuals generally knew French and English, they began to derive the new meaning of the Nation from these languages and put forward a more liberal and pluralistic interpretation. However, Iranian elites, especially the Berliners, introduced supra-individual and German-centered (racist and ethnic-based) interpretations of this term during the First World War (Behnam, 2007: 2-3). The Iranian nation-state, which was attempted to be built by Reza Khan Pahlavi in 1925 based on Iranian/Persian nationalism, was also developed on this second meaning.

In making this point, Tavakoli Targhi (2001:15-16) believes that modern terms such as "nation" in Iran became widespread after the 19th century and had a religious meaning before that. Similarly, Vaziri highlighted that the concept of Iran and national consciousness emerged because of 20th-century ideas and found it more convincing that the "Iranian" identity fiction was fabricated by Western historians and the norm of modern nationalism (Vaziri, 1993). Muhammad Taqi Bahar (1984, Vol 2: 378) says that the word "nation" in Iran was first mentioned with a different meaning from its previous religious meaning in Mirza Malkam Khan's treatise called "Rafiq and Vazir" (1887).

As a modernist, Akhundzade also paid attention to the issues of the nation and homeland in his works under the influence of the events of the 19th century and was mainly indirectly influenced by the French revolution and thinkers such as Ernest Renan and Voltaire through Russian translation (Akhundzade, 2005, vol. 2: 8), Also

he himself stated in his letters that he had read the works of these authors (Ibid: 253, 63). However, in his thoughts, the perception of nation and patriotism appears as a component of his modernity understanding. Moreover, in Akhundzade's modernization project, he took a nationalist approach to pre-Islamic Iran due to the idea that one of the main causes of backwardness was Islam and religion in general. In other words, when determining the ideals of contemporary society, he highlighted the cultural, historical and mythological elements of ancient Iran based on legends. In other words, by praising pre-Islamic Iran, he indeed attempted to express the needs of the modern society in which Muslims should live. As can be understood from Akhundzade's works, he received his knowledge about pre-Islamic Iran from legendary historical works such as *Desatir* and *Debistan-i Mezahip*, written by Zoroastrian Parsis in India in the 17th century, and Firdevsi's *Shahnameh*.

However, when talking about the history of Iran before and after Islam, he sometimes displays an extreme and unbalanced, even racist view in some places. That's why we see that he targets the Arabs, especially when criticizing Islam: Shame on you, Iran; where did all that glory, power and happiness go? Naked and hungry Arabs have made you miserable for twelve hundred and eighty years (Vol 2: 23). As it is seen, Akhundzade denigrates the Arabs who spread Islam here, not with a critical language, but with a racist attitude. The impact of Ibn Khaldun is obviously seen in his thoughts on this issue, and he directly refers to him in several places. Some of Ibn Khaldun's descriptions of Arabs are: "The Arabs are the people most distant from property ownership and politics," "Lands conquered by the Arabs soon fall into ruin," and "The Arabs are the people least inclined toward the arts." (Ibn Khaldun, 1982: 132).

Such radical views of Akhundzade regarding Iran before Islam have also been repeated in his various writings. For instance, somewhere in "Maktubat" he states that the laws of "Peyman-i Ferheng" made the Persian rulers of the pre-Islamic period in Iran the most just sultans and made the Persian people the exemplary

people of the world. However, when he discusses those rules, it is as if he is describing the characteristics of the contemporary society he dreams of.

The laws of Peyman-I Farhang<sup>1</sup> are found in various books of the Azarkeyvan movement, including "Debistan-i Mezahip" and "Desatir", authored on the origins and history of the Persians, however, their content is mostly mythical and unreal. For example, prophets like "Mahabad" who lived hundreds of thousands of years ago and reigned for thousands of years are mentioned. These books were written in the 17th century and became one of the main foundations and sources of Iranian Zoroastrians and romantic nationalists in Iran in the 19th century. However, many scholars believe that the contents of these books are not based on facts, but merely false legends made up by their authors (Sajjadi, 2011:317). Rawlinson also puts forward similar views (Foroughi,1936: 5).

Akhundzade became acquainted with these manuscripts, especially after the 1870s, through two figures we can call Persian/ Iranian nationalists, and his writings about pre-Islamic Iran and Arabs became more radical. We see this radicalization in the additions to his work Maktubat, which he made additions to until the end of his life. One of these two people is Prince Jeleddin Mirza Qajar, the author of the book "Nameye Khosrovan", which examines the mythological stories of ancient Iran. The other was Maneckji Limji Hataria, India's leading Zoroastrian leader.

Correspondence between Jeleddin Mirza and Akhundzade began in 1870 when his book named "Namey-i Khosrovan" was sent to Akhundzade. And Akhundzade sent 7 letters to Jaleddin Mirza and received 4 letters. Also, he sent 3 letters to Maneckji and received 7 letters. In these letters, he talks about various topics, including calligraphy reform (alphabet change), criticism, public ignorance, law, European civilization, education, and the movement of writing in pure Persian initiated by Jalaluddin Mirza. When we look at the history and content of Akhundzade's writings,

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<sup>1</sup>Some groups of Zoroastrians of Pars consider it as a kind of Iranian constitution before Islam.

we see that the radicalization in his writings about pre-Islamic Iran and Arabs increased, especially after getting to know these people.

For instance, in his first letter to Akhundzade, Jalaluddin Mirza tried to introduce him to the "legendary history of Iran" and instil a sense of anti-Arab nationalism. The narrative presented suggests that ancient Iran was devastated by the Arabs, causing serious damage not only to the land but also to the Persian language:

*"Like our other fields of knowledge, the language of our ancestors was plundered by the Arabs and now only its name remains. I wanted to say something in that language and write a work in the style of Europeans, the most knowledgeable people in the world, to be beneficial to the people of my country. For this reason, despite all its greatness, I could not find a more valuable subject than the epic of the Persian shahs, whose names were forgotten because of the aggression of the Arabs. That's why I started writing this work and named it "Namey-I Hosrovan" (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol.3: 235).*

In his first letter to him, Akhundzade begins to make imitative anti-Islamic and anti-Arab sentences and ends up with the issue of letter change, which is his purpose: Your book is praiseworthy because it tries to remove Arabic words from Persian... I am also attempting to save our nation from the Arab alphabet. I wish others would be found and save our nation from the customs of the Arabs" (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol.3:107). Akhundzade puts forward the same ideas in his fourth letter.

In a letter he wrote to Maneckji, he stated that he did not know much about ancient Iran, asked some questions about the Zoroastrian religion, and based on what he learned, said to him, "We are the children of the Persians. They were just people; we should follow in the footsteps of our ancestors" (Vol.3:142).

After meeting these people, Akhundzade obtained information about the pre-Islamic history of Iran and thought that he could use this information as an argument against the Islamic religion. At the same time, in the aforementioned sentences, he called the Persians the rulers of ancient Iran, without emphasizing a specific ethnic group. He

defends Persians' superiority not because of a particular race, but because they established a progressive and fair system appropriate to their age. In this context, instead of challenging these two people's praises about ancient Iran, he thinks that the imaginary socio-political order in question can be presented as a model of modernization in the new world. He is probably of the opinion that if he connects the modernization model inspired by the West to ancient Iran, his chances of acceptance will increase.

In fact, in another letter he wrote to Maneckji, he emphasizes that no matter how good the pre-Islamic period was, it is impossible to return to it, and says that he is in favor of establishing a modern society by taking civilized societies as a model:

*“In Iran, it is no longer possible to revive the «Peyman-i Farheng» and the laws of the Zoroastrians and the old state. Because states and religions have a life just like people. You, who are aware of the state of the world and world civilization, must also go through this dream” (Vol.3:125).*

Apparently, Akhundzade used everything, including the ancient Iranian thesis, to criticize the religion of Islam, which he saw as an obstacle to achieving his main goal of modernization and "civilization". At the same time, when he discusses pre-Islamic and Persian culture, he uses it as a supposed sample to get rid of religious fanaticism, superstitions, despotism, ignorance and underdevelopment, rather than defending an Iranian/Persian nationalism.

### **Patriotism and Patriot**

As mentioned, Akhundzade argues that religion can no longer be a unifying value in society in the contemporary world, and puts forward 'Patriot', that is, patriotism, which he says is new in the West. He states that in the modern world, values such as freedom, independence, people's power and love of homeland come to the fore. Akhundzade emphasizes that it is possible to create a society like the powerful

nations of Europe by popularizing science and reason and creating a sense of patriotism among people (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol.2:124).

The patriotism in Akhundzade's thoughts is only possible when various people in the country, the "people" from different sects and ethnic backgrounds, can live together and the values under the "homeland" are protected. To emphasize that this understanding is far from racist nationalism, Akhundzade ironically criticizes romantic and blind nationalism in his work *Maktubat* through the mouth of Jamal al-Dawla: "Even though our sultan is a despot, thank God, he is still one of us. Thank God, we (India) were not held captive by a foreign nation like you." (Vol.2:149).

In one of his poems, contrary to the Iranian/Persian nationalism that emerged later in Iran, he presents a pluralistic interpretation of "the people of Iran" in which Turks and Persians and Muslim and Christian live in "same homeland":

Ke Ma Khalk-i İran Ze Hurdo Bozorg.      Ze Gabro Ze Tarsa Ze Fars o Ze Turk  
Hame Zirak o Marefat Pişeim              Ze Fart-i Zekavat Por Andişeim<sup>2</sup>

In this poem, Akhundzade defends a modern homeland that consists of different religions and ethnicities, and none of them is superior to the other.

In line with this thought, Akhundzade, in a letter, wrote to the editor of the 'Hakâyik' newspaper published in Istanbul in 1873, about the alphabet change, defends all three languages, Turkish, Persian and Arabic, and does not favor one over the other: "In what ways do you think Muslim intellectuals should learn European science and art? "Should they study this science in European languages or in our own languages, which are Arabic, Turkish and Persian?" (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol.3:170).

In the same way, he criticizes all post-Islamic sultans in İnan, regardless of their ethnicity. In the letter he wrote to Jaleddin Mirza (Vol.2: 229-30), he called the dynasties that were mostly Turkish but of different ethnic origins and reigned in the

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<sup>2</sup> Tran: we Iranian people, from small to large,  
We are all smart and knowledgeable.

Irreligious or (religious), Persian or Turkish  
Intelligent and thoughtful.

Iranian geography as despots. In this way, unlike the nationalists after him, he does not only criticize the Turkish and Arab dynasties: "Shall I say the plunder and bloodshed of the Arabs, or the deeds of the Deylamis, Alevis, Saffaris, Samanid, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, Genghis, Aq Qoyunlu, Safavid, Zand and Qajar? "

Therefore, the concept of nation and identity, which is Akhundzade's most discussed idea, is not one-sided and ideological, but should be seen as a requirement of modernization and civilization. However, it can be said that his ideas about ancient Iran and the Arabs were open to interpretation and influenced the ideology of Iranian/Persian nationalism that followed him. This should not be forgotten that nationalist ideas, which were new in the West at that time, had not yet reached the Islamic geography, and Aryan, Indo-European languages and ideas that placed them as a superior race had not become widespread. Additionally, it appears that Akhundzade read and was influenced by thinkers such as Molière, Voltaire, and Renan, as their works were present in his library, and he directly referenced them in some of his writings.

Both French thinkers have theories on Protestantism, race and nation, freedom, and development. Renan in particular, is considered as one of the founders of anti-Islamic and anti-Arab-Semitic nationalist and racist ideas, associating religion and lineage with development. For Renan, the extinction of Muslim philosophers was caused by the "Tatar and Barbarian races", which he described as "rude, cruel and uncultured" (Alizadeh, 2021: 106). Therefore, it is possible to say that the thoughts of these intellectuals, the French Revolution and the nationalism movement that emerged in the West influenced Akhundzade.

On the other hand, the last three appendices that Akhundzade added to the *Maktubat* at the end of his life show the impact of the anti-Semitic ideas of French thinkers, especially Renan. Nevertheless, the concepts of Arya/Aryan are not encountered in any of Akhundzade's works and they do not seem to be favored. In fact, although Akhundzade read the works of these thinkers and made some anti-Arab statements, he did not defend those ideas that had a connection between race and civilization at

that time. At the same time, he openly rejected a return to the old era regarding Iran and romantic nationalism as a solution to underdevelopment.

Thus, although some of Akhundzade's ideas were open to a nationalist interpretation for later Iranian nationalists, he was fundamentally different from them. For example, modern Iranian/Persian nationalism marginalizes Turks as well as Arabs. However, we do not see this in Akhundzade's works. Alienation and marginalization of Turkish culture in Iran later became widespread and continued.

At the same time, when he emphasized education and the political system, he certainly did not mention a single language and race. Therefore, it would be reductionist to portray Akhundzade as the founder of Persian and Turkish nationalism. His concepts such as 'nation' and 'homeland' should be interpreted under the broader framework of modernization. Of course, this concept had already begun to spread in the Ottoman lands, and especially the young Ottomans began to use and spread concepts such as homeland, patriotism, freedom, and constitution (Demirtaş: 1999)

Therefore, instead of the comments made about Akhundzade so far, it would be more accurate to define him as a patriot not nationalist. In other words, he defends a modern homeland and society that tries to reach a new civilization in the Iranian geography, not a monochromatic nationalism that is based on the Persian race and language and marginalizes other ethnicities and nations. The features of homeland and patriotism in Akhundzade's thought are quite diverse and, in general, the following features can be said:

- Non-mono-ethnic: It is not based on a single ethnic group and includes members of the society from various ethnic backgrounds.
- Homeland takes precedence over ethnicity: a society based on patriotism, instead of emphasizing ethnic roots, gives importance to homeland and citizenship



-Secular: Refers to the separation of religious institutions and beliefs from governmental or societal affairs, emphasizing a neutral stance toward religion in public life.

-Plural and free: It tolerates different thoughts and beliefs and supports individuals to act with their free will and to criticize freely when necessary.

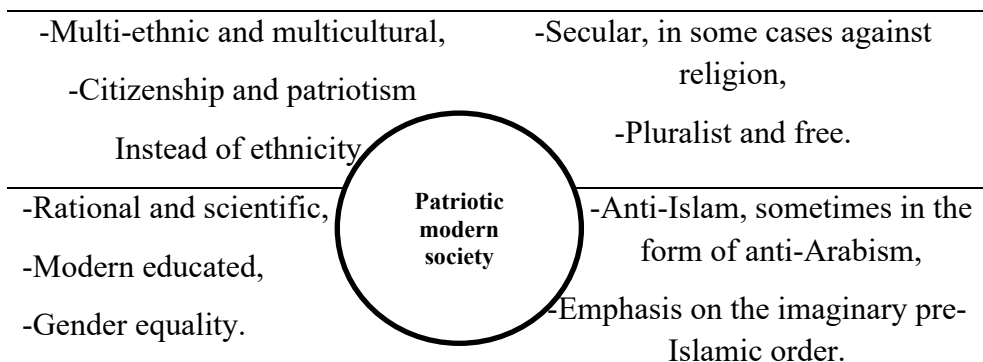
-Modern education: It sees modern education as a condition of a civilized and developed society.

-Gender equality: It especially values equality between men and women and emphasizes that women should have the same opportunities as men in social and educational fields.

-Science and reason based: It encourages acting under the guidance of science and reason and asks people to shape their decisions through logic and reason.

-Towards civilization: this patriotism aims to leave the outdated order and traditions and keep pace with developed societies and nations, often by emulating the modernization trajectories of the Western world.

-Akhundzade recommends patriotism not only for Iran and Azerbaijan, but also for all Eastern and Muslim nations.



**Figure 2:** Characteristics of the concept of homeland and patriotism in modern society in Akhundzade's thought.

The differences between nationalism and patriotism can be seen in different definitions. For example, George Orwell differentiated between the two based on aggressive versus defensive orientations. Nationalism revolves around the pursuit of power: its advocates seek to amass as much power and prestige as they can for their nation, often at the expense of their individuality. In contrast, patriotism is defensive in nature: it entails a commitment to a specific locale and preferred way of life, without the desire to impose these beliefs on others (Orwell, 1968: 362). Others have also discussed the differences between the two. For example, according to Acton, nationality is "our relation to race" which is "merely natural or physical", while patriotism is an awareness of our moral duties to the political community (Acton, 1972:163).

At the same time, patriotism is generally farther away from religion and sect than nationalism. For enlightenment thinkers in 18-century Europe, loyalty to the state took precedence over loyalty to the church. So, they put forward the argument that the clergy who promised heaven to students in public schools should be dismissed and instead, patriotism should be taught to children. One of the leading proponents of this classical understanding of patriotism is Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Chisick, 1999: 11). Akhundzade's understanding of patriotism was also far from religion and sects, and accordingly he advocated a secular education. For this reason, although Akhundzade praised ancient Iran and the Zoroastrian religion, he emphasized that no religion could save people in the contemporary world. From this perspective, Akhundzade's understanding of patriotism is based on a scientific and secular basis, beyond religion and sects.

Also, while nationalism is generally based on a particular race or a single nation, patriotism represents, with a broader perspective, the idea that different people, cultures, and ideas can live together. At the same time, patriotism is universal in nature, while nationalism usually covers a specific ethnic or racial group. We see this difference in Akhundzade's emphasis on the Islamic nation, the Eastern and Muslim peoples, the world's people and civilization, and his understanding of patriotism is

based on a pluralist ground. Just as the nature of Akhundzade's modern thought is independent of a particular sect and religion, it also adopts the same framework regarding nation and homeland. That's why he talks about a patriotism that is multilingual, multi-religious, includes different thoughts and is far from any kind of holiness. This basis can also be called liberal nationalism of French origin. In this context, people should be accepted as citizens within the modern political and social order, not under the rule of religious values and despotic sultans. Liberal or civic nationalism is a movement in which liberal values such as freedom, tolerance, equality, and individual rights are combined with nationalism (Auer, 2004: 5).

Civic nationalism is also a political identity built around shared citizenship within the state. A "civil nation" is thus defined not by language or culture, but by the common homeland that its citizens undertake to protect. Membership in the civil nation is open to every citizen, regardless of culture or ethnicity, who shares these values (Stilz, 2009: 257). Therefore, it is not possible for him to keep the past period alive, especially as a romantic period, and instead, a free homeland must be built in the present. For this reason, when examining Akhundzade's thoughts about the nation, it would be more accurate to use the concept of "patriot".

For this reason, Akhundzade's issue is not to theorize nationalism. All his concepts are in the direction of modern civilization for Muslims and the Eastern world. Iran and Azerbaijan are also considered as part of the Eastern Muslims. He tries to replace modern common values with a common value previously associated with religion and calls it patriotism. According to him, this type of patriotism exists in the West, and he focused more on France in this regard.

Therefore, the solution offered by Akhundzade for backwardness is not nationalism, but modernization with different elements and dimensions such as patriotism. The transformation of mono-ethnic Iranian/Persian nationalism into the main axis around "Iran" happened in the periods after Akhundzade. In this type of nationalism, Persian culture and identity are placed above all values in Iran. For example, according to Kazemzadeh-Iranshar, one of the well-known founders of Iranian/Persian

nationalism, 'Nationality and Iranianness should be taken as basis, and the development of the country can only be achieved by keeping it superior (1963: 39). Apparently, unlike Akhundzade, who emphasizes the modernization of society and the importance of law, freedom, equality, secularism, women's rights, education and progress, they emphasize a romantic and racialized Iranian nation. According to Kazemzadeh, there can only be one solution to Iran's current problems, and that is nationality<sup>3</sup>:

*“The preservation and rise of nationality should be everyone's aim. Nationality will be the only thing that will save Iran. Our nationality is Iranianness (Iraniyat), and Iranianism is our everything: our honor, our dignity, our greatness and our life. “Anyone who has Arya blood in his body and anyone who accepts Iran as his homeland should be considered Iranian” (Fazeli, Tahmasbi, 2014:112-113).*

This type of nationalism defines the Persian language as the core of Iranian identity. For them, language is a symbol of the thoughts, experiences and aspirations of any nation. Ehsan Yarshater, the founder of IRANICA<sup>4</sup>, expressed his opinion as follows: "Persian language is my homeland":

*“One of the elements that has long helped preserve Iranian national identity and has consistently preserved Iranian identity and common historical experiences and values since the fall of the Achaemenid Empire has been the Persian language. Only by valuing the Persian language and making it more productive can the current crisis be overcome. Thanks to it, we can prevent our identity from being destroyed” (Zandian, 2016:132-133).*

Similarly, Shahrokh Meskoob (2000) a cultural historian and Persian nationalist, says in his book "Iranian identity and Persian language" that Iranians are different and special from other Muslims due to their different languages and history. Therefore, presenting the Persian language, which is not as common as Turkish

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<sup>3</sup> He refers to Iranian nationalism.

<sup>4</sup> Columbia University's encyclopedia on Iranian culture and history, published in English in 1973

among the people in Iran, as the national and only language of the country is one of the most important features of Iranian nationalism that continues.

Although Akhundzade praises this language in some places, his emphasis is not a language-based ideological nationalism. He wrote most of his works in Turkish and gave much more importance to the Language of Islam, which consists of Turkish, Arabic and Persian. The script change effort (Akpınar,1980:116), which he tried to implement for many years and was the first in the Muslim world, was made for all three of these languages.

In the same way, categorizing Akhundzade as either a Turk/Azerbaijani nationalist does not align with his works and thoughts. However, it can be said that his intellectual works contributed to the process of Turk/Azerbaijani and Iran/Persia nationalism, which emerged for political motives with the rise of the national bourgeoisie in the early 20th century.

Therefore, this article concludes that Akhundzade is a representative of modernist and reformist ideas rather than nationalism. So, it is possible to say that it is not necessary to use adjectives that have political connotations and targets, such as nationalist, for Akhundzade (Valiyev and Bezci, 2021: 55). However, in line with modernization, his emphasis on the modern and secular value 'homeland', instead of religion, which used to be a unifying value, influenced nationalist thoughts in the following period. Since he talks about ancient Iran, it can be said that he played a role in raising an Iranian/Persian nationalist consciousness. The same can be said about being an Azerbaijani nationalist or the founder of this movement. But based on the results of this research, introducing him as a nationalist will not reflect his thoughts. Even though the focus of his works and plays is Azerbaijan and Iran, he emphasizes the backwardness, social, political, and cultural problems of all Muslims.

In the text he wrote about the author of the *Maktubat* (himself), Akhundzade explains that he does not deal only with the problems of Iran or a particular nation, but seeks to create a sense of patriotism among all Muslims:

*“This person is a patriot and someone who loves his nation (Islam)... he is liberal, progressive and aspires to civilization.... his aim is to ensure the spread of science and art among all classes of the population within the nation (Islam). To achieve this goal, he has made many efforts, one of which is compiling a new alphabet for the Islam language (Turkish, Persian, Arabic). His goal is to sow the seeds of honor, patriotism, and justice in the hearts of its nation, to remove humiliation and poverty from the nation, and to seek prosperity.”* (Akhundzade, 2005, Vol 2: 122-123).

Also, Akhundzade may have observed the Indo-European and Aryan discourse and racist theories that were common in his time, but he did not see these ideas as a solution to the problem of underdevelopment of Muslim peoples. These Aryanist ideas were later adopted by many intellectuals in Iran and has been continued until today. Even Akhundzade avoided racism when he most radically praised the Parsis and Persian speakers (he used this expression once): It cannot be denied that the Parsis and Zoroastrians and all the Persian-speaking Muslims of Iran are the forerunners of all nations in morality and behavior (vol 2: 129). This is one of the other differences between Akhundzade and the radical Iranian nationalists. Unlike Akhundzade, many of them think that Iranians were of the Aryan race and are of the same origin with Europeans. For example, Mohammad Reza Shah, the shah of Iran between 1941 and 1979, said, "We Iranians are of the same Aryan race as the Europeans, but by historical fate we ended up in the Middle East by chance" (Zia Ebrahimi: 2016). Kazemzadeh-Iranshahr (1963), one of the leading theorists of Iranian nationalism, likewise argues that Iranians are of the same race as Westerners: "It is true that today Iran remains behind the civilizational caravan of its Aryan brothers... but this does not mean that its eternal spirit is dead." However, instead of looking for a common root with Westerners and Europeans, Akhundzade praises them not for their ancestry, but for establishing a modern civilization. Furthermore,

unlike romantic Iranian/Persian nationalists, Akhundzade does not see Iranians as inherently intelligent and progressive. Therefore, in his works, he criticizes ignorance and underdevelopment and emphasizes that Iranians should strive with the right education to reach the level of civilization like Europeans.

Also, unlike Persian nationalists, Akhundzade does not reduce Iran's backwardness solely to the spread of Islam. He is aware that simply abandoning Islam or removing foreign words (usually Arabic) from the Persian language cannot be the only solution to the problem of backwardness.

Another difference between Akhundzade and Iranian/Persian nationalists is that he is a critic of the Sultanate system under the concept of "Despot" and considers it to be one of the causes of backwardness. But Iranian nationalism in general assumes that the Sultan is a part of the history of Iran/Persia and the unifying element of the country. For this reason, during the Pahlavi period (1925-1979), which was the Sultanate system, nationalism and national feeling were used as a means of strengthening administration and loyalty to the system. In fact, these concepts were created to ensure obedience and subjugation in societies, not based on a collective and equal social contract (Nazari 2007: 165). The sultanate system continued in Iranian history from the Sasanian period (640-244), and this monarchy brought modernity, secularism and nationalism (Amanat, 2004: 45).

Another feature that distinguishes Akhundzade's patriotic approach from Iranian nationalists is this fact that, as mentioned above, he does not alienate the Turks. Because a significant part of Iranian nationalism sees Turks, along with Arabs, as foreigners, invaders and barbarians of the Iranian/Persian identity. It is possible to see some examples of this in the works of writers such as Hossein Joudat (1975) and Iraj Afshar (1959).

Furthermore, parliament and democracy, law, equality, modernity, women's rights, religious reforms, and freedom are among the fundamental principles that Akhundzade prioritizes in his definition of the ideal homeland. In contrast, Iranian

nationalism sees nationality and the Persian language as the main pillars of the country and does not prioritize these principles.

**Table 2.** Differences between Akhundzade's understanding of patriotism and Iranian nationalism.

<b>Akhundzade's understanding of patriotism</b>	<b>Iranian nationalism</b>
Multi-ethnic and multi-cultural,	Single ethnic (Persian) centered.
Defends the homeland against all religions	Defends the Zoroastrian religion against Islam.
It marginalizes Arabs as spreaders of Islam.	Otherizes Turks and Arabs.
It is against king and despotic systems.	It sees the sultanate as an inevitable history and element of Iran.
Modern, with its roots in the west Socio-political system	Emphasis on Iranian-Persian historical continuity since the Achaemenid period.
It is not based on lineage or race.	Arya emphasizes its lineage
Advocates multilingualism.	Persian, an Indo-European language, is at the center of Iranian nationalism



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He sees the solution to underdevelopment in modernization, which also includes patriotism.	It sees the solution to underdevelopment in Iranian/Persian nationalism.
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## Conclusion

Akhundzade is known as a modern thinker who proposed new ideas about various concepts such as nation and homeland, which laid the groundwork for nationalism (especially Iranian/Persian). Examining his thoughts shows that in his works "homeland" is proposed as a substitute for religion in the political and social arena. Therefore, Akhundzade's ideas present a significant departure from traditional notions of identity and belonging, particularly regarding the concept of "homeland." For Akhundzade, the past was not to be idealized or glorified; rather, he emphasized the necessity of embracing modern developments and aligning with the progress of Western civilization.

Since he was a modernist, despite his praise of pre-Islamic Iran, he strongly emphasizes the need to apply modern western civilization. Even his mostly unrealistic glorifications of the pre-Islamic era are in a way his modern ideals which he expresses in the form of "Old Iran". That is why he describes that era as a candle against the sun compared to the current state of France and the New World (America) in the present century (Akhundzade: 2005). In his works, Akhundzade endeavors to redefine the concept of "nation" within the framework of his modernist project. A scrutiny of the concept of nation and patriotism in his works indicates that he has attempted to imbue the term "nation" with new meaning. Before the 19th century, "nation" had a mainly religious meaning among Muslims, but after that it gradually acquired a modern meaning.

In his writings, Akhundzade employed the concept of "people" to denote the inhabitants of a country and sought to cultivate a sense of "patriotism" among diverse

populations within the framework of the "Nation of Islam." He believed that this form of identity was modern, advocating for Muslims to replace religious affiliations with it to foster a new civilization akin to that of Europeans.

Therefore, patriotism is one of the components of Akhundzade in his Modern project. Although signs of Iranian nationalism and some anti-Arab statements can be seen in his writings, his concern was not to theorize mono-ethnic nationalism. His works show that his concern was the problems of all Muslims from Ottoman to Azerbaijan, Iran and India. He tries to show that western modernity is the solution to compensate for the backwardness of Muslims, one of the components of this modernity is "patriotism". According to him, this patriotism will be in the framework of a pluralistic, free, secular and civilized society.

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