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**FINAL PAPER**

“Global Identity of the Muslim World: The Legacies of the  
Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Intellectual History”

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**Abstract:**

In the current global debate on “Islam and the West,” it is rarely recognized that, even though the Islamic faith tradition has played an important role in the lives of Muslims throughout history, the idea of “the Muslim world” and the notion of an Islamic civilization are modern constructs whose origins can only be traced back to the crisis of imperial world order in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. What are the roots, content and evolution of the idea of the “Muslim World”, and how did it gain its contemporary global recognition, paradoxically in a world order composed of nation states?”

This paper argues that the discourses on “the Muslim world” are neither just the legacy of basic belief requirement, nor an invention of Cold War era Islamism. The modern idea of the “Muslim world” emerged in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a context of imperial legitimacy crisis and rapid economic globalization. The fact that a transnational identity of “Muslim” emerged by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was no exception in world history, because other global identities, such as “white,” “Western,” “Asian,” “black” or “Christian” developed around the same time due to what I call the “geopolitization of globalization.”

This paper will outline the origins of transnational Muslim identity and its imperial context in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and emphasize its parallels with Pan-Asian, Pan-African, Pan-Slavic, Jewish, and white/colored race identities. As a background, the paper will delve into the conceptions of world cultures, history and universalism in medieval Muslim intellectual traditions, especially among

the educated elites of Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empires. The writings of two cosmopolitan travelers, Ibn Batuta (14<sup>th</sup> century) and Evliya Çelebi (17<sup>th</sup> century), will be used to illustrate how pre-19<sup>th</sup> century conceptions of Muslim space, history and diversity were still far from the modern notions of Islamic civilization and geopolitics. While showing the development of a 19<sup>th</sup> century global consciousness about Muslim identity, and the importance of Ottoman imperial visions in this process, the paper will discuss the impact of the 18<sup>th</sup> century tradition of religious renewal and Salafism or the general Islamic tradition of theology, law and mysticism, on anti-colonial Muslim thinkers.

### **The Origins of Pan-Islamic Identity in a Global Comparative Context, 1882-1919**

The Pan-Islamic notion of the “Muslim World” should best be evaluated within the general phenomenon of Pan-nationalism, in comparison to Pan-Asianism (and the idea of Asian world), Pan-Africanism (African world), Pan-Slavism (slavic world) etc. Pan-nationalisms are generally defined as “politico-cultural movements seeking to enhance and promote the solidarity of peoples bound together by common or kindred language, cultural similarities, the same historical traditions, and/or geographical proximity. They postulate the nation writ large in the world’s community of nations.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, this definition of pan-nationalism based on the shared assumptions of a supra-national community has to account for when and how a globally constructed notion of continental, racial and civilizational community emerged.

There were regional, religious, and cultural identities connecting different communities in Asia and Africa before the experiences of Eurocentric globalization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, these transregional links in the Asian and African continents, and Muslim societies, never produced any pan-nationalist vision. For example, during the medieval and early modern periods, the predominantly Muslim parts of West and Central Asia, together with the Muslim populations of South Asia and China, shared various levels of Muslim networks of trade, education, literature and pilgrimage, which also extended to Africa. Similar to the networks fostered by the Islamic faith and the Arabic language, Buddhism and more importantly China-

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Snyder, *Macro-Nationalisms: A History of the Pan-Movements* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1984); p. 5.

centered Confucianism and Chinese literary culture created powerful networks in East Asia, facilitating the exchange of ideas, goods and human travel in a large region extending from Korea and Japan to India and South East Asia. Yet, until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was no shared consciousness of being Asian or African in the sense of a pan-nationalist feeling of belonging to a specific continent or race, nor were there any signs of Pan-Islamism. Rather than pan-national identities, imperial identities were very important. In fact, we must see empires, not religion, civilization, race, ethnicity, as the main actors of world history.<sup>2</sup> Even in the first half of the twentieth century, imperial units were taken as the basic actors of the rapidly globalizing world order, in a diplomatic arrangement symbolized by the Congress of Vienna of 1815. According to the logical outcomes of this system, as embodied in the alliances of the Crimean War, the Ottoman Empire, for example, would not be associated with either Turkish nationality or Pan-Islamic solidarity.<sup>3</sup>

During the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Eurocentric notions of continents, races and civilizations became globalized and spread to different societies in Asia and Africa, various geopolitical and continental identities began to be shared and embraced by individuals and social groups from Morocco and Egypt to China, Japan and Mongolia. Some of these pan-national identities could be overlapping, as Indian Muslims or Muslims under the Dutch Rule in East Indies could share both a Pan-Asian and a Pan-Islamic identification, while Egyptian nationalists could be proud of being Muslim and African (and still sympathize with Japan and China). Moreover, the racial nature of some of the geopolitical identities of Asia and Africa (which were loosely tied to yellow and black race constructions) made members of the African diaspora in America strong advocates of Pan-Africanism, while the Chinese diaspora was linked to a Pan-Asian identity. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the geopolitical identities of race, civilization and continent were so entrenched in the global public sphere that nationalist and reformist

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<sup>2</sup> For an example of intellectual, cultural and economic networks among Muslim societies of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, without any Pan-Islamic identity, see Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, A Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); For the importance of Empires in world history, see Tony Hopkins, "Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History," *Past & Present* 1999 (Vol: 164-1): 198-243.

<sup>3</sup> For the importance of imperial cooperation in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century international order, see Eric Weitz: "From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions," *American Historical Review* (Vol: 113-5): 1313-1343; See also Selim Deringil, "'They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery': The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Vol: 45-2) (2003): 311-42.

intellectuals all over the world had to envision their future and destiny in terms of this dominant narrative about pan-national identities.

Thus, it was the spread of Eurocentric categories of knowledge about human geography, coupled with the intense process of globalization of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which led to the emergence of Asian, Islamic and African identities, a precondition for the rise of pan-nationalist thought. For example, it is not only the travels within the Buddhist world, but the familiarity with the emerging European literature of the history of Buddhism, that created a global Asian-Buddhist identity. Thanks to these intra-Asian Buddhist travels and dialogues, Buddhists from Japan to Sri Lanka contributed to the formation of a modern Buddhist canon and facilitated a new Pan-Asian Buddhist identity that was best reflected in the 1893 Chicago World Parliament of Religions.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, although pre-modern Muslim networks already existed, it was only during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century that the Muslims of West Asia began to visit, write and read about Muslims in China or South East Asia, leading to the formation of a new consciousness about a global Muslim World.<sup>5</sup> African identity also showed this dimension of movement of people coupled with intellectual history, and it was the African diaspora in America and Europe who became the most vocal advocates of early Pan-Africanism.<sup>6</sup>

Due to its crucial global nature and intellectual component, pan-nationalism was never just a natural response to European expansion in Asia and Africa, which had already been taking place since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, at the time of the French invasion of Algeria in 1830, the Opium Wars in China, or Indian Mutiny in 1857 there was no developed notion of Asian, African or Islamic solidarity as a response. Instead, many intellectuals of the existing non-Western empires (Ottoman, Chinese, Japanese and Persian) accepted the idea of a universal European civilization and even the benevolence of European imperialism in offering to uplift the level of civilization in the rest of the world.<sup>7</sup> Formulated in the paradigm of

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Jaffe, "Seeking Sakyamuni: Travel and the Reconstruction of Japanese Buddhism," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 30:1 (Winter 2004), 65-96;

<sup>5</sup> Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), Chapter 2.

<sup>6</sup> Andreas Eckert, "Bringing the "Black Atlantic" into Global History: The Project of Pan-Africanism," in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s-1930*, Ed. By: Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2007): 237-257.

<sup>7</sup> For a formulation of a universal theory of civilization by the most prominent early Meiji era intellectual, see Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (Bunmeiron no Gairyaku), translated by David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973).

liberal civilizationism, this ideology allowed the non-Western imperial elites to challenge the new European international society to be more inclusive, by asking European powers to accept the multi-religious Ottoman State and Iran ruled by a Muslim dynasty, or the non-Christian Chinese and Japanese Empires ruled by non-Christian emperors as equal members of the new system, upon the fulfillment of the required reforms. Appropriation of the notion of a Eurocentric but universal civilization by the Ottoman, Chinese, Egyptian, Persian and Japanese elites also empowered these same elites in domestic politics, as they could justify centralizing radical reforms over their own populations as a civilizing mission.<sup>8</sup> Self-civilizing projects in Cairo, Istanbul or Tokyo meant that peasants had to pay more taxes and families had to send their male children to the army, while diverse sub-national lifestyles had to be sorted out for the homogenizing projects of the central government.

While the globalizing world order of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was shaped by cooperation among various European empires, and non-Western empires trying to join this club of civilized empire, a gradual yet radical change began to occur in a period from the 1850s to the 1880s in terms of rise of racial, civilizational and continental identities demarcating humanity. The Ottoman Empire initially hoped to become a civilized empire composed by Muslim, Christian and Jewish subjects, but it increasingly became identified with Islam and the Muslim world. The Russian Empire began to champion the cause of Slavic races and Orthodox Christianity, although it had a substantial Muslim population, many of whom loyal to the Czar. Both the Japanese and Chinese Empires began to be associated with yellow race. More importantly, European empires were embracing the ethos of white race's superiority over the colored races or the superiority of Christianity over Islam in its legitimacy claims during a more intense and competitive imperial expansion symbolized by post-1882 division of Africa by various European empires.

It is in the period from the 1880s to the first world war that world public opinion witnessed the popularisation of geopolitics as the predominant paradigm for interpreting international politics. The full colonization of Africa and more

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For the broader Ottoman context of Westernization during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Sukru Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, DATE)

<sup>8</sup> For aspects of the Ottoman civilizing mission to its own populations, in the form of re-applying European Orientalism for domestic political purposes, see Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 768-796. For the Japanese version of the same process, see Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Past into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

aggressive imperialism by European powers were sustained by more systematic theories of Orientalism and race ideology, establishing permanent identity-walls between Christian/white Europeans on the one hand and the Muslim world or the colored races on the other. In that sense, Muslim responses to the invasion of Tunisia and Egypt in the early 1880s were different from their response to the invasion of Algeria some fifty years earlier because, in the early 1880s, European expansion and hegemony were seen as part of a global pattern of uneven and unjust relationships. Similarly, when European empires were dividing Africa between themselves, the emphasis on white race's mission to civilize the "dark continent," became stronger over the years, prompting African-American intellectuals to reflect on the global politics of their race. By the turn of the century, the global consciousness of supra-national identities was already well-established in various educated reformist communities all over the world, whether in the form of strong white-Western pride of American ivy league elites and globalized black consciousness of African-Americans, or Chinese, Ottoman and Japanese intellectuals' perceptions of themselves as Asians and Orientals. Non-Western reformists who were enthusiastic about executing Westernizing reforms began to perceive a non-transcendable racial and civilizational barrier between their own societies and Europe and expressed a strong sense of being pushed away by the European center they were looking to for inspiration. During the high of age of imperialism, the anti-Muslim racist statements of British Prime Minister William Gladstone or the anti-yellow race remarks of German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm were not scandals of rarity, but mainstream European discourses supported by multitude of racial and civilizational theories in European social sciences and humanities.

It is in this context that Pan-Islamic, Pan-African and Pan-Asian ideas were produced as a rethinking of the relationship between civilizing processes, the international order and predominant forms of racial and religious identities. The first Pan-Islamic magazine, *al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa*, was published in Paris, by Jamal ad-Din Afghani (1838-1897) and Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905), in the early 1880s.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the first Pan-Asianist organization, Kôakai, was established in 1880.<sup>10</sup> Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian ideas gradually entered into the vocabulary of writings about international affairs, often paralleling the ideas of Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, and

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<sup>9</sup> Nikkie Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Berkeley, 1968).

<sup>10</sup> Vladimir Tikhonov, "Korea's First Encounters with Pan-Asianism Ideology in the Early 1880s," *The Review of Korean Studies*, 5 no.2 (December 2002): 195-232.

later Pan-Europeanism. Similarly, around the same period, Pan-Africanism started as a political project calling for the solidarity and potential union of all Africans into a single African federation to which those in the African diaspora could return. The earliest notions of a Pan-African vision of unity were developed by a wide range of African-American intellectuals, such as Martin R. Delany (1812–85), Alexander Crummell (1822–98) and Edward Blyden (1832–1912), who all shaped the more systematic ideas of African identity and unity in the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963). Their ‘negro race’ based Pan-Africanism rested in large part on a critique of Western civilization and white supremacy.<sup>11</sup> Initially, well-educated non-western or non-white intellectuals had to think of themselves as members of a single ‘Negro’ race, yellow race, Orient or Muslim world before they could envision a program of pan-nationalism. These global level supra-national identity markers could overlap and sometimes contradict each other. For example, by picking race as the primary identity, early Pan-Africanists excluded the lighter-skinned, Arabic-speaking North African populations, who were mostly Muslim, from their vision of unity. Similarly, some early Pan-Asianists would see Muslim empires in India as an outside force.<sup>12</sup> Yet, gradually, pan-nationalists would become more inclusive and internationalist.

All the pan-nationalist visions of Asian, African or Muslim solidarity had to rely on a set of assumptions about the seemingly natural division of humanity into various supra-national groups. For example, Pan-Asianists of different shades and colors were of one mind on the question of why they were Pan-Asianists, which was that ‘Asia is one’ and ‘Asia was weak”, and Asians have to cooperate to get Asia out of its state of weakness and subjugation.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Muslims all over the world began to perceive the Islamic world as a geopolitical and civilizational unit, unjustly oppressed by the Christian West and in need of revival. These assumptions of the unity of black race, yellow race, Asia, Africa, Muslim world, America was always accompanied a geopolitical vision and a comparison to the assumed unity and superiority of the white race, Christian West, or Europe. Based on this comparison

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<sup>11</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Pan-Africanism,” in Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr., eds., *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), p. 1485.

<sup>12</sup> For a profile of a early 20<sup>th</sup> century Pan-Asianist organization, composed of Japanese, Chinese and Indian members, that saw the Muslims as alien invaders of Asia, see Rebecca Karl, “Creating Asia: China in the World at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” *American Historical Review*, Vol 103, No. 4 (October 1998): 1096-1118.

<sup>13</sup> See Eri Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan's War, 1931-1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2007), p. 49.

to the unity of the West, there was a desire to assert the moral, historical, and racial equality of Asians, Muslims, Africans or colored races, with the additional implication of a need for solidarity to overcome the existing weakness of the transnational group of identification.

Political projects of union, federation or solidarity advocated by different pan-nationalist ideals were not very realistic, because there was no imperial or international power that could implement these projects, even though advocates of pan-nationalist ideals were looking for a power center to support their projects. The political and intellectual elites of the Ottoman, Chinese, Japanese, or Persian Empires would agree with the basic assumptions of their Muslim, yellow race, or Asian identities, and like their counterparts in Europe and America, they shared the Eurocentric notions of world geography and geopolitics. However, these imperial elites could not officially endorse nor were they interested in any notion of pan-national and anti-Western solidarity. Elites of these non-Western polities were very careful in fostering friendly cooperation with Western powers while attempting to prevent Western suspicions that they could be behind a “reactionary” alliance against the West. At certain times and certain locations, Pan-nationalist projects could have a pro-Western modernist imperial twist and could actually be supported by a European Empire. For example, the advocates of the Ottoman support of Aceh Sultanate (against the Dutch attacks) during the 1870s made the argument that it should be the duty of the Ottoman Empire to civilize the backward Muslim peripheries. There were Pan-Africanists in the US who could think of getting a Western support to “civilize” African continent by bringing Western technology there.<sup>14</sup> As Pan-ideologies were linked to geopolitical thinking, during WWI German Empire could think of using Pan-Islamism against the British and Russian Empires.

More important than its political projects, pan-nationalism produced important cultural achievements and was instrumental in the formation of anti-colonial counter-public opinion. Muslim intellectuals attended Orientalist congresses in Europe to counter the discourses of their inferiority by European scholars.<sup>15</sup> Pan-Asian intellectuals produced important critiques of Euro-American discourses on

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, “A German Alabama in Africa: The Tuskegee Expedition to German Togo and the Transnational Origins of West African Cotton Growers,” *American Historical Review* 110 (2005): 1362-1398.

<sup>15</sup> Carter Vaughn Findley, “An Ottoman Occidental in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gulnar, 1889”, *American Historical Review* 103, no. 1 (1998): 15-49.



yellow race, Confucianism, Buddhism and Asia.<sup>16</sup> Pan-Africanism encouraged and inspired a body of shared literature, artistic projects and historical writings about the African black people in a truly transnational intellectual sphere.<sup>17</sup> It was already a great achievement to show and insist on the equality of black and white races, and to demonstrate their rights for political independence via new narratives of African and black civilizational greatness. Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism were similarly instrumental in the formation of counter-narratives against the Eurocentric view of human history and global future, with strong arguments against racism and discourses of civilizational inferiority of non-Westerners.

From the 1880s to the 1910s, pan-nationalist non-Western intellectuals offered internal critiques and revisions of Eurocentric race and civilizational theories and world history narratives, if possible in dialogue with European intellectuals. It is in this context that the very flexibility of the concepts of Asian, African, Eastern, Islamic civilizations, and their contents in relation to the idealized European civilization, allowed pan-nationalist intellectuals to inject their own visions and subjectivity into these Europe-originated notions. The response of Muslim modernist intellectuals to Ernest Renan's views of Islam and progress showed how a pan-nationalist view of Islamic history and civilization could emerge in the truly global public sphere of the 1880s. Ernest Renan championed the intellectual trend to "Hellenize Christianity and Semitize/Arabize Islam."<sup>18</sup> Before the 1870s, Muslims reformists thought that the Muslim world shared the same cultural legacy with modern Europe (Hellenism and monotheism), and thus believed that they had stronger innate capacities for progress and civilization along European lines than black Africans. If the Arab-Muslim civilization preserved the Hellenistic legacy of science and philosophy and gave it to modern Europe, there could not be anything contradictory in being a Muslim and being civilized and progressive.<sup>19</sup> Being aware of these optimistic Muslim modernist ideas, Ernest Renan argued that science in the medieval Muslim world developed despite Islam and the Arabs, not because of

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<sup>16</sup> Judith Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Columbian Exposition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003)

<sup>17</sup> P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991* (Washington D.C.: Howard University, 1994)

<sup>18</sup> For a broader world historical assessment of Ernest Renan's ideas on Aryan race, see Vasant Kaiwar, "The Aryan Model of History and the Oriental Renaissance: The Politics of Identity in an Age of Revolutions, Colonialism and Nationalism," in *The Antinomies of Modernity*, ed. by Sucheta Mazumdar and Vasant Kaiwar (Duke University Press: Durham, 2003), 13-61.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Man: Science, Technology and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 11-12.

them. For Renan, as the religion of Semitic Arabs, Islam could never be compatible with modernity and progress, and Muslims would have to shed their religion in order to adapt to modern life.<sup>20</sup> As a scholar of Islam, Ernest Renan noted that if there were great scientific and cultural achievements in medieval Islam, this was either due to Christian Arabs, whose Hellenistic Christian faith controlled their Semitic Arab side, or due to Iranian Muslims whose Aryan race overshadowed the negativities of their Semitic faith.

Muslim intellectuals perceived Renan's ideas as the most eloquent formulation of the prevalent European image of the Islamic world as an inferior race, justifying European colonialism in the Muslim world just a few years after the invasions of Tunisia and Egypt in 1881 and 1882. Many Muslim intellectuals published refutations of Renan's ideas; they also searched for venues and means to engage in a dialogue with European intellectuals, especially through attendance at Orientalist Congresses. In fact, the Ottoman government sponsored trips of prominent intellectuals or sent bureaucrats to read semi-official paper.<sup>21</sup> These intellectual efforts were creating a new Pan-Islamic narrative of the golden age of Islamic history, the compatibility of Islam and modernity, the humiliation of the Muslim world by unjust colonial subjugation, and the necessity of reviving Islamic pride, which would all support demands for political equality by Muslims, even though the Ottoman government would publicly encourage nationalist resistance against other fellow Empires in Europe.

Non-Muslim Asians also struggled with similar discourses of Christianity's superiority over Buddhism and Hinduism, or the white race's superiority over the colored races. The Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893 as well as the 1911 London Universal Races Congress became forums where Asian and African intellectually and eloquently refuted Western racial superiority with their own narratives about Islamic, Asian and African civilization.<sup>22</sup> Pan-African intellectuals

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<sup>20</sup> Renan gave his speech on "Islam and Science" in March 29, 1883 at the Sorbonne, and published it in the March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1883 issue of *Journal des Debates*. Later that same year, the speech was published as a 24 page long separate booklet. For its English language translation, see Ernest Renan, "Islamism and Science," in Bryan S. Turner, Ed., *Orientalism: Early Sources, Volume I: Readings in Orientalism* (London and New York: Routledge 2000), 199-217.

<sup>21</sup> Numan Kamil Bey, "İslamiyet ve Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniye Hakkında Doğru bir Söz: Cenevre'de Müsteşrikin Kongresi'nde İrad Olunmuş bir Nutkun Tercümesidir," in *Hifet Risaleleri 1* ed. Ismail Kara (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2002), 353-371. For the French version of the paper presented at the Congress, see Numan Kamil Bey, "Vérité sur l'islamisme et l'Empire Ottoman," *Présentée au X. Congrès International des Orientalistes a Geneve* (Paris: Imprimerie de Charles Noblet et Fils, 1894).

<sup>22</sup> James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 136-220.

were especially successful in formulating their critique of racism, as most of its leading advocates in the diaspora could write in the English language. In addition to influential figures in the United States such as W.E.B. Dubois, before the first world war, it was African students in Britain who organized most of the Pan-African intellectual and political activism. They used the name 'Ethiopianism,' a pre-first world war movement best depicted in J. E. Casely Hayford's (1866–1930) autobiographical novel *Ethiopia Unbound* (published in London in 1911). All of these activities aimed at 'race emancipation' while proudly claiming Africa as the 'cradle of civilization.'<sup>23</sup> Various Pan-African, Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian engagements with Orientalism and race ideologies demonstrate that Orientalist and racist notions were omnipresent but not omnipotent. They could be re-defined and re-employed for diverse purposes very different from the intentions of the original European formulators of the East-West civilizational dichotomy, or white-colored race divisions.

Pan-nationalist ideas were most visible in the perception of international affairs and world history by non-western intellectuals and reformists. Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim intellectuals began to perceive international relations as a global encirclement of the Muslim world by the Christian West in an illegitimate manner.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, East Asian intellectuals were emphasizing the conflict between the white and yellow races, while African and African American intellectuals were emphasizing the unjust oppression of the black race internationally and domestically by the white race.<sup>25</sup> Konoe Atsumaro, in an article written in 1898 upon his return from Germany, predicted an inevitable racial struggle in East Asia between the white and yellow races, with the Chinese and the Japanese siding with each other as sworn enemies of the white race. It is important to emphasize that all these clash of civilizations theories relied on the literature of international affairs produced and read in European and American universities, and reproduced in the Western media. Thus, it is not surprising that the major pan-nationalist texts on Islam vs. West or the white-yellow race conflict were produced by Muslim or Asian thinkers who had received academic training in Europe or America. Halil Halid's book *The Crescent versus the Cross* is based on a master's

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<sup>23</sup> J. E. Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Relations* (1911, repr. London: Cass, 1969)

<sup>24</sup> Halil Halid, *The Crescent versus the Cross* (London: Luzac & Co., 1907).

<sup>25</sup> Tokutomi Sohō (1863-1957) advocated the term "Yellow Man's Burden," giving voice to an alternative to the idea of "The White Man's Burden" (Based on Rudyard Kipling's famous poem of 1899). See Hirakawa Sukehiro, "Modernizing Japan in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Studies of Culture*, no.26 (1987): 29.

thesis at Cambridge University, and Koderia Kenichi's 1000-page long *Treatise on Pan-Asianism* is based on his Ph.D. at George Washington University (then Columbian University).<sup>26</sup> Similarly, a white supremacist with a Ph.D. from Harvard, Lothrop Stoddard, was closely read and followed by Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thinkers precisely because of Stoddard's realist writings on international affairs through categories of civilizational and racial conflicts.<sup>27</sup> The Arabic translation of Lothrop Stoddard's book *The World of Islam* contains long dissenting commentaries by the leading Pan-Islamist Shakib Arslan on issues of detail, but agrees on the basic framework of interpreting world affairs as a conflict between the Muslim world and the West.<sup>28</sup> Sun Yat-Sen's famous 1924 speech in Kobe on Great Asianism also starts with a reference to the title of Lothrop Stoddard's book, by evoking a "rising tide of color against the worldwide white supremacy."<sup>29</sup>

We should not assume that Pan-nationalists during the age of high imperialism, namely from the 1880s to the 1920s, were against westernization. The majority of pan-nationalist during this period were modernists, who believed in uplifting their own societies level of civilization closer to the Europeans. Thus, they formulated some of the most advanced theoretical reflections on why non-Westerners had to embrace European conceptions of modernity while deploying their cultural and civilization distinctions in an insecure world defined by imperial competitions and geopolitical visions. Writings of intellectuals like Ziya Gokalp, Tokutomi Soho, Muhammad Iqbal, W. E. Dubois or Rabindranath Tagore reflect their ambivalence as well as sophistication in re-thinking the basic parameters of

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<sup>26</sup> A Pan-Islamist Ottoman who published extensively in England about issues of the Muslim World, Halil Halid studied and taught at Cambridge University. See Syed Tanvir Wasti, "Halil Halid: Anti-Imperialist Muslim Intellectual," *Middle Eastern Studies* 29, no. 3 (July 1993): 559–579. For Halil Halid's own autobiography, see Halil Halid, *The Diary of a Turk* (London: A. C. Black, 1903). Similarly, the first comprehensive book on Pan-Asianism was written by a Japanese graduate of Columbian College of Law in Washington D.C. around the turn of the century: Koderia Kenkichi. *Dai Ajiashugi Ron*. Tokyo: Hôbunkan, 1916.

<sup>27</sup> Lothrop Stoddard, *The New World of Islam*. New York: Scribner's, 1921.

<sup>28</sup> For its Arabic translation, see Lûthrub Stûdard. *Hadir al-Alam al-Islami*. Trans. 'Ajjâj Nuwayhid. Ed. al-Amîr Shakîb Arslân. Cairo: Matbaa-i Salafiyyah, 1924. For the Ottoman translation of the same work: *Yeni Alem-i Islam*. Trans. Ali Riza Seyfi. Istanbul: Ali Şükrü Matbaasi, 1922.

<sup>29</sup> For a good sourcebook and evaluation of Sun Yat-Sen's speech in Kobe on Pan-Asianism in 1924, see , Chin Tokujin and Yasui Sankichi, eds. *Sonbun Kôen Dai Ajia Shugi Shiryôshû: 1924 nen, 11 Gatsu Nihon to Chûgoku no Kiro*. Kyoto: Hôritsu Bunkasha, 1989. In this talk, Sun Yat-sen refers to Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against the White World Supremacy*. New York: Scribner's, 1920.

Eurocentric modernity in relation to nationalism, imperialism and pan-national identities.<sup>30</sup>

The shared experience of European imperialism while engaging European ideas of Orient-Occident or race hierarchies brought the advocates of different pan-nationalist identities together around the notion of a shared Asian-Eastern identity or global non-Western identity, and prompted their alternative internationalism. Pan-Asianism began to include the Islamic world via the concept of the shared destiny of non-Western Asians.<sup>31</sup> The sympathy of Pan-Asianists for Pan-African thinkers prepared the ground for broader Japanese public opinion sympathy for Ethiopians during the Italian invasion of that country in 1937, even though Italy and Japan had good diplomatic relations at that time. Similarly, W. E. B. Dubois visited Japan in 1936 partly as a product of this mutual sympathy. Meanwhile, Pan-Islamists developed great interest in the fate of non-Muslim Asia and the colored races. Initially, Japan and even China were outside the scope of the Muslim transnational imagination, as Ottoman, Iranian and Egyptian elites saw monotheistic Christian Europe, with whom they shared the Hellenistic legacy, closer to them than East Asians. The Asianization or Easternization of Muslim identity toward the 1890s allowed them to link the destinies of China and Japan with their own.

Anti-colonial pan-nationalists were not immune to contradictions and internalized racism: In fact, Pan-Islamists like Halil Halid noted that if European racism and the civilizing mission ideology were limited to the natives of Australia, the Caribbean and Africa, he would not have had any objections to it.<sup>32</sup> He was, however, noting the un-acceptability of the civilizing mission ideology for Muslim, Indian, and Chinese societies, which had had their past greatness in civilizations and a continuing legacy of higher moral values. Many pan-nationalist intellectuals took racial thinking in European social sciences especially the issue of race classification in the writings of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Gustave Le Bon very seriously. Non-western pan-nationalists generally preferred the theories of Herbert Spencer, in particular his notion of racial self-responsibility, because they

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<sup>30</sup> See Andrew Davison, "Ziya Gokalp and Provincializing Europe," in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol: 26-3 (2006): 377-390.

<sup>31</sup> For the development of a shared Eastern identity in different parts of Asia around the turn of the century, see Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). For the development of cooperation between Japanese Asianists and Muslim activist around the notion of shared Eastern identity, see Selçuk Esenbel, "Japan's Global Claim to Asia and the World of Islam: Transnational Nationalism and World Power, 1900–1945," *The American Historical Review*, 109 no.4 (October 2004): 1140-1170.

<sup>32</sup> Halil Halid, *Hilal ve Salib Münazaası* (Cairo: Matbaai Hindiye 1907), 185-188.

could accept that in reality the colored races were underdeveloped, but denied that this was a permanent inferiority. It is against the backdrop of this engagement with the European discourses of Orient and race that the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 became a turning point in the history of pan-nationalist thought of Pan-Africanism, Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism, because it disproved all previous European discourses on the inferiority of the Asian and yellow races. In fact, the reconsideration of the scientific literature on race characteristics, to which the Japanese victory contributed immensely, would lead to the 1911 Universal Races Congress, an event that indicated the global impact of the ideas and critiques of non-Western intellectuals.<sup>33</sup> The slogans of the “Awakening of the East” or “awakening of the colored races” associated with the Russo-Japanese War are indicative of the achievement of pan-nationalist thought. Western civilization or the “white race” did not have to “decline” for Asia and Africa to gain liberation from Western hegemony.

### **The Content of the Idea of “the Muslim World” and Pan-Islamic Identity**

There were four important features in the content of the Pan-Islamic notion of “Muslim world” identity from the 1880s to the 1930s, which have shaped modern transnational Muslim thought.

1. First was a new discourse on Islamic Civilization, and the corresponding idea of a Muslim World as almost a racial unit. In the post-Renan debates, a transnational Muslim intellectual network finalized the narrative that Islamic civilization inherited the Greek legacy, merged it with rational and humanist Islamic values, and through its golden age, contributed to the emergence of the modern West. This Euro-Islamic view of world history implied that Muslims were once civilized and contributed to the Western civilization, and thus they deserved to be equal to the West in the future. Since European Orientalist notions of the inherently uncivilized nature of Muslims had racial implications, even reputedly irreligious and positivist Ottoman intellectuals, such as Ahmed Riza, felt compelled to write apologetic pieces defending

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<sup>33</sup> Robert John Holton, “Cosmopolitanism or Cosmopolitanisms? The Universal Races Congress of 1911,” in *Global Network*, 2 (April 2002): 153-170. For a recent reassessment of the London Universal Races Congress of 1911, see special Forum section in *Radical History Review*, 92 (Spring 2005): 92-132.

Islam against Orientalist positions.<sup>34</sup> Ahmed Riza once noted, after a reference to anti-Semitism, that Europeans saw Muslims even lower than the Jews. In the debate on social Darwinism, generally, Muslim intellectual conceded that Muslims were underdeveloped and backward, but denied that this was permanent inferiority. Intellectual elites could intervene, with various forms of social engineering, and calls for a re-awakening to end the decline of their racial or religious communities. In that sense, the whole Muslim modernist project in the line of Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashid Rida relied on the attempt to re-think the “decline of Islam” in engagement with dominant European social science theories. In fact, Islamic modernism developed very harsh critiques of the contemporary Muslim decline and blamed Sufism or popular Muslim practices as its cause, which ironically made Muslim modernist look very similar to Wahhabi<sup>35</sup> claims to go back to early Islam in denigration of existing Muslim practices. Their desire to go back and revive the pristine values of early Islam, its rationalism and work ethics was often shaped by Darwinian concerns about the future survival of the Muslim race in the competitive and insecure era of the high age of imperialism. This Darwinian influence in modern Islamic thought can best be seen in the comparison between the salafi trends in the late 19th century and in the 17th century. Return to the original, pure form of Islam was always an important, recurrent theme in Muslim tradition, and in fact, there was a strong movement of return to Salaf and rejecting new innovations (bidah) such as coffee and mosque decorations in Ottoman Istanbul during the 17th century (Kadizadeli movement). Yet, this movement never blamed rival Muslims for the “decline” of Islamic civilization and did not concern with the Western threat at all. In the 19th century, all critiques of the contemporary Muslim stagnation had an implicit Darwinian framework in implying that Muslims caused their own decline and weakness vis-a-vis the West by degenerating their pure faith over the centuries.

Pan-Islamists were not immune to contradictions and internalized racism: in fact, Pan-Islamists like Halil Halid noted that if European racism and the civilizing mission ideology were limited to the natives of Australia, the Caribbean and Africa, he would not have had any objections to it.<sup>36</sup> He was, however, noting the un-

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<sup>34</sup> Ahmed Riza, *La faillite morale de la politique occidentale en Orient* (Tunis : Éditions Bouslama, 1979); Ahmed Riza and Ismayl Urbain, *Tolérance de l'islam*, (Saint-Ouen, France: Centre Abaad, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> For the modernism of the salafi thought during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, see David Dean Commins. *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> Halil Halid, *Hilal ve Salib Münazaasi* (Cairo: Matbaai Hindiye 1907), 185-188.

acceptability of the civilizing mission ideology for Muslim, Indian, and Chinese societies, which had had their past greatness in civilizations and a continuing legacy of higher moral values. Thus he objected to their depiction as uncivilized savages in need of colonial intervention for progress and development. Even though Ottoman elites insisted on their civilizational equality, at least in potential, with the West, they developed a civilizing mission ideology in their own regions. As Usama Makdisi underlines, the very flexibility of the notions of Orient and Occident allowed the Ottoman elite to employ these categories in both domestic politics and international relations, sometimes in contradictory positions.<sup>37</sup>

2, The second important shared content of Pan-Islamic discourses was a vision of an Islam-West conflict in history that tied modern imperialism to historical narratives of Christian attacks on Muslims. In light of their interest in re-writing Islamic history mostly in relation to Eurocentric world history, Muslim reformists developed a new interest in the story of Salahuddin al-Ayyubi, in a romantic fashion, as one of the heroes of the Islamic world defeating an earlier European imperial/crusading invasion. Ottoman intellectual Namık Kemal, for example, wrote a theater act on the life of Salahuddin during the 1870s. The trope of a balance of power and conflict between the Muslim Middle East and the Christian West was important: if the Muslims had defeated the Crusaders, they could do it again. It is in this narrative that Ottoman rule in Eastern Europe is glorified as an instance of civilizational greatness, even though the same narrative of Ottoman victories against its rivals in Europe was conflicting with Ottoman claims to belong to Europe. It was the same view of historical conflict that revived an interest in the story of Muslim Spain, which was used to bolster the argument of Islam's contribution to Western civilization through the example of Averroes and others, while implying another instance of Islam-West conflict. One should not that, before the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims did not have such a historical consciousness about a constant conflict between Islam and the West. For a Muslim in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the memory of Mongol invasion was more important than the memory of the Crusaders.

3, The third important shared discourse was the theme of humiliation of Muslims by Western imperialism. Muslim reformists already saw the underdevelopment of the Muslim world and its political subjugation, in contrast to the its golden age and civilizational achievements, as a humiliation. Moreover, starting from the late 1890s, Muslim intellectuals began to perceive international relations as a global encirclement

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<sup>37</sup> Usama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism." *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 768–796.



of the Muslim world by the Christian West in an illegitimate manner.<sup>38</sup> While European authors perceived Islamic solidarity as xenophobic anti-Westernism, Muslim writers either denied the existence of any reactionary alliance against the West or noted that it was the only way to overcome the unjustified rule of the imperial world order. The global political context of this clash of civilization discourse can best be seen in the fact that, around the same time, East Asian intellectuals were emphasizing the conflict between “the white and yellow races.”<sup>39</sup> It was during these moments that Pan-Islamist thinkers developed the narrative of a sinister Western expansion in Asia since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, via Hegelian notions of continuous conflict between East and West. But they all noted that their goal was not to reject all things European. It was rather to save Europe from its imperialism and materialist greed by synthesizing the best of West and East.

4, The fourth shared theme of transnational Pan-Islamic discourse was an anti-western internationalism that embraced the non-Muslim societies of Asia. Despite the Hegelian discourse of East-West conflict around the notion of Islam versus the Christian West, there was still a dominant strand of internationalism during this period. Visible Muslim nationalist sympathy for Japan’s modern achievements and Chinese nationalism are good examples of this anti-Western internationalism. Similarly, many non-Muslim Asians were very supportive of pan-Islamic discourses, and did not think of this as a conservative religious movement. The shared experience of engaging European ideas of Orient-Occident brought the predominantly Muslim Middle East and non-Muslim East Asia together around the notion of a shared Asian-Eastern identity, and prompted their alternative internationalism. Early Pan-Asianism focused on the Chinese cultural zone of East Asia, China, Japan, and Korea, with their identity based on the same “Chinese” culture and the same “yellow” race (*dobun-dosbu*). Gradually, the scope of Asian solidarity and identity was extended, first to India via Buddhist legacy arguments, and then to the whole of West Asia, including the Islamic world via a concept of the shared destiny of non-Western Asians.<sup>40</sup> A similar expansion of the

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<sup>38</sup> Halil Halid, *The Crescent versus the Cross* (London: Luzac & Co., 1907).

<sup>39</sup> Tokutomi Sohô (1863-1957) advocated the term “Yellow Man’s Burden,” giving voice to an alternative to the idea of “The White Man’s Burden” (Based on Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem of 1899). See Tokutomi Sohô, “Kôjin no omoni,” *Kokumin Shimbun* (January 1906). See also Hirakawa Sukehiro, “Modernizing Japan in Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Studies of Culture*, no.26 (1987): 29.

<sup>40</sup> For the development of shared Eastern identity in different parts of Asia around the turn of the century, see Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). For the development of cooperation between

notion of the East occurred in the Muslim “mind.” Initially, Japan and even China were outside the scope of the Muslim transnational imagination, as Ottoman, Iranian and Egyptian elites saw monotheistic Christian Europe, with whom they shared the Hellenistic legacy, closer to them than East Asians. The Asianization or Easternization of Muslim identity toward the 1890s, however, allowed Muslim intellectuals to link the destinies of China and Japan with their own. The emerging Muslim admiration for Japan is a good example for this change in transnational identity imagination.<sup>41</sup> The growing Asian identity of Muslim intellectuals had grave consequences for the Ottoman Empire, because, parallel to the development of a pro-Western Christian identity of its Greek and Armenian citizens, the divergence between Muslim and Christian subjects of the empire grew larger.

### **Conclusion:**

Contemporary Muslims need to critically re-examine the assumptions of modern Muslim historiography, and the construction of the past. A good historical genealogy is crucial in achieving a dual critique and dialogue: Both the critique of the contemporary nationalism and political Islam, which is closely tied to a critique of late 19<sup>th</sup> century knowledge categories that also became the basis of modern social sciences: civilization, enlightenment history, modernization, development, progress, national interest etc. The Pan-Islamic notion of “Muslim World,” is a good example of a identity globally accepted today having an origin the colonial globalization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, shaped by the European currents of thought in the field of geography, Eurocentric view of history, and Darwinian sociology. Yet, this notion of the Muslim world survived the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and being utilized by contemporary Muslims without recognizing its late origins and its global history context. It is ironic to see projects with great humanist intentions, such as the UN Year of the Dialogue of Civilizations, and the UN project on the Alliance of Civilizations, co-directed by the Turkish and Spanish Prime Ministers, still relying on the same epistemological framework, rarely

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Japanese Asianists and Muslim activist around the notion of shared Eastern identity, see Selçuk Esenbel, “Japan’s Global Claim to Asia and the World of Islam: Transnational Nationalism and World Power, 1900–1945,” *The American Historical Review*, 109 no.4 (October 2004): 1140-1170.

<sup>41</sup> Cemil Aydin, “Nihon Wa Itsu Tôyô No Kuni Ni Natta No Ka? Chutô Kara Mita Kindai Nihon” (When Did Japan Become an “Eastern” Nation? Modern Japan in the Imagination of Middle Eastern Nationalists), in *Atarashi Nihongaku no Kôchiku - Constructing Japanese Studies in Global Perspective* (Tokyo: Ochanomizu University 1999), 81-86.

reflecting on the politically overloaded terms of “Islamic” and “Christian-Western” civilization. Thus, there is a lesson from this history for today’s theories of clash or dialogue among civilizations, which unfortunately still suffers from ahistorical perspectives.