

Teaching and Learning History: National and International Perspectives

Introduction

Like all academic programs, teaching history at the university level has its own challenges. One major challenge in this regard originates from the perspective of the general orientation of the curriculum in which the subject is taught. One must note that history is the only social science subject that is taught at the secondary and high school level and this program of study is usually used for cultivating national identity and instilling loyalty to specific nations. This nationalist approach sometimes has created confusion particularly among Muslims due to the universal nature of the concept of *ummah*. This perplexity intensified in the 1990s with the rise of globalization in international politics. The clash of civilizations thesis complicated the question of identity and loyalty further. What is the impact of the nationalist approach of history curriculum on the discipline itself? This raises a fundamental question – what is the purpose history curriculum? Should the curriculum be used for indoctrinating students in favor of national interests? Or the curriculum is geared toward seeking the truth? Should the approach at the university level be different from the high school level? This paper addresses these questions.

Secondary School History Curriculum

A Department of Education document in the United Kingdom defines the purpose of history curriculum as:

A high-quality history education will help pupils gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world. It should inspire pupils' curiosity to know more about the past. Teaching should equip pupils to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement. History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people's lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time.¹

This apparent positive note on the purpose of studying history at the school level is subject to national interests and orientation. How the nations understand their past? Are they allowed “to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement?” One professor of criminal law at a leading American university Observes:

Throughout history, it is the stories endlessly told—myth, history, poem, and song—that crystallized our view of the world and our place in it. Our ancestors were taught that they were part of something larger than themselves, that every person has value, and that we all belong. Our children must be taught this same lesson.

Are the “myth, history, poem, and song” for everybody in the nation same? Will a perceptive student ask about the validity of the role of myth in the curriculum? Will the history be the same for all diverse groups within a nation? How can all children in a given society be taught the same lesson? Will the nations be willing to allow questions challenging the “national narrative?” In

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study>

other words, in reality it would be very difficult for a nation to promote complete independent approach toward history. Such a conclusive statement, however, would raise question whether or not the purpose of studying history would be seeking the truth or to support and consolidate national identity. In an article entitled “History Education and Identity Formation: A Case Study of Uganda” Takako Mino says:

Nationalized History education helps build nations because it provides a shared national narrative. All of the collective identities examined in Chapter One are founded upon a belief in a common past. The national narrative is thus a requisite for the formation of a cohesive national identity. An individual’s understanding of her current position in the world is based upon what she remembers. Beyond simply teaching the past, History education builds the foundation for an individual’s national identity by transmitting the myths and values of the nation.²

This approach to history writing challenges not only the global and universal perspective; it sometimes even challenges national perspective. In a recent report from South Korea has claimed that the government is about to “replace the country's school history books with a single text, which will be called the ‘correct history textbook’”. The minister of education has claimed that "the current history textbooks contain errors in historical facts and contents that have caused controversy over ideological bias." "This has been causing confusion over history perception among students and also a division in national discourse and social conflicts," he said.³ As a result more than 50,000 people have signed a petition against the government’s move which has been initiated by teachers and academics.

Consequently one may conclude that the secondary school history curriculum in most countries is problematic. One could trace the problem in the origin, nature and characteristic of the idea of nationalism in Europe in the 19th century and its extension to the Muslim world at the beginning of the 20th century.

Growth of Nationalism in Europe and in the Muslim World

The idea of nationalism originated in Europe in the 19th century. There is no precise and widely accepted definition of nationalism, but scholars agree with the view that the concept is represented in history by independent and sovereign nation-states, which claim the exclusive loyalty of their citizens. One historian noted this development in Europe as:

... an age when Christianity was in retreat, (where) nationalism became the dominant spiritual force in nineteenth-century European life. Nationalism provided new beliefs, martyrs, and “holy” days that stimulated feelings of reverence; it offered membership in a community, which satisfied an overwhelming psychological need of human beings for fellowship and identity. And nationalism supplied a mission – to which people could dedicate themselves.⁴

It is precisely on this question of loyalty with nationalism being a spiritual force that the concept clashes with that of *ummah* in Muslim societies. Given that nationalism first developed in

² http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1106&context=cmc_theses

³ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/south-korea-write-correct-history-textbook-151012165855598.html>

⁴ See Marvin Perry, ed. *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics, and Society* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 2004), 553.

Europe, we shall try to understand the concept as it developed in that region and then examine how it related to the emergence of nation-states in Muslim lands.

Prior to the Renaissance there were hardly any traces of nationalism, either in Europe or in the Islamic world, for there were no nation-states in those days. The object of popular loyalty was religion; in Europe, it was Christianity,⁵ and in the Muslim world an individual's primary loyalty was to the Islamic *ummah*. With the development of nationalism in Europe a Christian became an Englishman, a Frenchman, Spanish, or a member of one of the other nationalities. In the Muslim world, however, after the initial shock of colonial penetration, as Muslims realized that direct armed conflict against European powers would not succeed, the struggle for self-rule took a new direction at the end of the 19th century. Muslim leaders recognized the backwardness of their society and began to encourage their people to learn European languages, philosophy and science. In the process, they also learned about nationalism and began to argue for liberty and self-rule on European terms.⁶ They argued that they were different from their European masters and that they would like to be governed by their own national cultures and values which were recognized and accommodated by the values of Europe. One must note the sharp distinction between development of nationalism in Muslim countries and in European countries however. While European Enlightenment intellectuals approached the study of society as a reaction against the Church and its role in governing society, something which gradually secularized the notion of law and government; Muslim intellectuals in the 19th century were conditioned by the colonization of their lands. Therefore, while the traditional symbols of nationalism were secularized in Europe, they nevertheless still carried religious weight in Muslim surroundings: while the Europeans found satisfaction in sacrificing their lives for the glory of the nation, Muslims were satisfied with martyrdom and reward in the Hereafter.

The earliest works on nationalism in Muslim countries were published in the 1920's. Two major books on the subject were published both of which were written by Hans Kohn, a Hungarian-born journalist who participated in the Zionist student movement and who was influenced by neo-romantic German nationalism before the First World War.⁷ Later scholars of nationalism depended heavily on Hans Kohn's works, as we shall demonstrate in the following pages. Kohn traveled widely in the Middle East as a correspondent for the German newspapers, *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Kohn believed that Muslim countries were going through a secularization process similar to that of Europe. After observing the development of nationalist ideas in Asia, he noted:

A few years back religion was the determining factor in the East. Nationalism is not ousting religion, but more or less rapidly taking a place beside it, frequently fortifying it, beginning to transform and impair it. National symbols are acquiring religious authority and sacramental

⁵ On the question of loyalty in European society in the Middle Ages, see Carlton J.H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York, 1933), 28.

⁶ It, however, would be a mistake to assume that this was a deliberate choice of Muslim intellectuals. This was rather a natural outcome of their study of European civilization.

⁷ Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East* (New York: Harcourt, 1992) and *Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), originally published in Germany, in 1926. For Kohn's background see the preface to his book *A History of Nationalism in the East*.

inviolability. The truth which men will defend with their lives is no longer exclusively religious; on occasion even it is no longer religious at all, but in increasing measure national.⁸

Kohn further observed:

Only twenty-five years ago the Turks, the Arabian, and the Egyptians described themselves first and foremost Mohammedans. They were not yet conscious of ethnical designations, or only accorded secondary consideration. Today the Mohammedan is primarily a member of his nation or a citizen of his state and afterwards a Mohammedan.⁹

On the basis of these observations Kohn formed a theory in the study of social change. He said: “Nationalism takes the place of religion as the principle of governing all social and intellectual life.”¹⁰ We shall demonstrate later, however, that Kohn was wrong. For the moment, however, we shall focus on how his expertise on the issue influenced later scholars.

A widely-quoted scholar of nationalism, Harvard professor Rupert Emerson, generalized a theory that “the rise of nationalism coincides with the decline in the hold of religion”. He supported his view by citing Kohn suggesting:

[He] formulated a universal sociological view which he saw as signifying the transition from medieval to modern forms of organization: religious groupings lose power when they confronted with the consciousness of a common nationality and speech.¹¹

Following Kohn’s “universal sociological theory” Rupert Emerson again theorized the growth of nation-states in Asia and Africa saying that:

The nations have come to be accepted as taking priority over claims coming from other source. Family, tribe, locality, religion, conscience, economic interest and a host of other appeals may at any given time and place prevail over national allegiance for particular individuals or groups. But it is the characteristic feature of the national era that for most man the national allegiance takes precedence over all other claims which may be made upon them when they are confronted with alternative choices of allegiances, as most strikingly in time of war.¹²

In the 20th century, following the dismemberment of three major world empires, the world became divided into nation-states. These political entities became the only law-making and law enforcement agencies and institutions in the new world. Nation-states formulated policies to cultivate national identities through history syllabus at the school level. It should be noted that in most Muslim countries national identities were supported by Islamic religious ideas and symbols. Historian Wilfred Cantwell Smith has rightly pointed that, “nationalism in Muslim

⁸ Hans Kohn, *Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East*. 19.

⁹ *Ibid.* 24

¹⁰ Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East*, 8.

¹¹ See Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise of Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1960), 158, and the corresponding note on page 436.

¹² *Ibid.* 97.

countries is rather Muslim nationalism.”¹³ Interestingly like Hans Kohn and Rupert Emerson some western orientalist identified and interpreted nationalist developments in many Muslim countries and Muslim scholars followed the suit.

Egypt as a Political Community: Nadav Safran

Let us first examine nationalist developments in Egypt. Political reforms in Egypt along the European model began under the leadership of Muhammad Ali (1769-1849), an Albanian who came to recover Egypt for the Ottomans following the Napoleonic invasion of the country. Muhammad Ali initiated the process of reform and modernization in Egypt which was later carried out by Muhammad Abduh and others. Scholars generally trace the beginning of the Egyptian independence movement to the life and contributions of Mustafa Kamil (1875–1908).¹⁴ Influenced by Jamaluddin al-Afghani’s pan-Islamic thoughts, Kamil was an activist thinker. In his short life, he became the leader and the symbol of aspiration for the Egyptian people. His life and thought makes an interesting case for the study of identity in Egypt; he mobilized the masses against the British rule and shook its foundation, particularly after the Dinshawai event (13 June 1906).¹⁵

Explaining the emergence of a nationalist identity in Egypt, Nadav Safran, a Political Scientist, quoted one of Kamil’s speeches, saying that: “No civilization will rise in Egypt and be of lasting unless it is built on the nation by the nation ... unless every one of its members realizes that man has certain sacred rights ...”

Following this quotation Safran remarks:

Nowhere in the entire speech, or else, did Mustafa Kamil elucidate those ‘sacred rights’ in detail nor did he explain and defend the sources from which they derived. One can only assume that he meant them in the Western liberal sense since he received a thoroughly Western education and moved in Europe circle.¹⁶

Therefore, Safran believed that Mustafa Kamil wanted to secure Egypt’s freedom from foreign control and wanted to adapt European ideas.

¹³ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 85.

¹⁴ See Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought of the Liberal Ages (1798-1939)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 199, and Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community: An Analysis of the intellectual and Political Evolution of Egypt (1804-1952)* (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 1961), 85ff. No work on the life and works of Mustafa Kamil is available in the English language. In Arabic, see Abdurrahman Ar-Rifa’i, *Mustafa Kamil, Ba’th al-Harakat al-Wataniyyah*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdat al-Misriyah, 1950).

¹⁵ On 13 June, 1906 a number of British officials killed a woman while hunting pigeons in a village called Dinshawai. The villagers reacted angrily and attacked the officials. While running away from the village, one officer received heat stroke and later died. This caused the British authorities to take harsh action against the villagers. For a British version of the event, see P.J.Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 194-5. And for an Egyptian version, see Ar-Rifa’i, 197-235.

¹⁶ Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, 86.

But Safran is wrong and has made a gross misrepresentation of Kamil's thought. It is not true that Mustafa Kamil did not explain what he had meant by sacred rights. Not only in various speeches and writings did he explain that by sacred rights he meant human rights and values upheld by Islamic teachings, but in this very speech from which Safran quotes, Kamil clearly indicated the source of sacred rights. Let us first examine the internal evidence of the same passage that Safran quotes. In this passage when Kamil stated that for a "civilization (to) rise in Egypt... (it) will need to be built on the nation by the nation," he used the word *ummah* in the original Arabic language, and not *watan* or *sha'b* which he usually used to denote Egyptian nation or the Egyptian people.¹⁷

Let us now examine other parts of the speech from which Safran quotes. The quotation has been taken from the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Muhammad 'Ali's accession to power. In admiration of Muhammad 'Ali's contributions to Egypt Mustafa Kamil said:

The great man changed the situation in Egypt for glory and pride. He reconciled in his actions between the fundamentals of contemporary civilization and Islam, for he believed that Islam contains teaching concerning all aspects of life which is an ideal that man can never dream of. We desire to follow its teachings and accept material benefits from Western civilization...¹⁸

This statement by Mustafa Kamil clearly suggests his sources of inspiration. Furthermore, this same statement appears within a few paragraphs from where Safran quotes Kamil. It is difficult to understand, therefore, how Safran could have missed it.

Most of Mustafa Kamil's writings and speeches reflect his commitment to Islamic identity in general and particularly to the welfare of the Egyptian people. This emphasis on the wellbeing of Egypt in Kamil's writings has been viewed by some scholars as his commitment to Europeanized nationalism. Nadav Safran thinks that Kamil's whole effort was "directed at fostering and glorifying the sentiment of nationalism," and was "oriented toward the modern concept of the nation-state as the basic political-social entity."¹⁹ If this observation of Safran were correct then this would mean Kamil would have identified Egyptian interests without any consideration for universal Islamic values. Safran is wrong. In many of his writings and speeches, Kamil expressed his total commitment to universal Islamic teachings on governance. He appreciated Muhammad 'Ali for his commitment to both: to Islam and to material developments in Egypt. It does not trouble Kamil that Muhammad 'Ali was not an Egyptian-born leader, nor did he even speak Arabic like other Egyptians. The official relationship between Egypt and the Ottoman Sultan did not disturb him. In fact, Kamil not only glorified this Ottoman *khedive* (governor) of Egypt, he also strongly defended the idea of Muslim unity under the leadership of the Ottoman

¹⁷ Safran quotes from Abdurrahman Ar-Rifa'i, *Mustafa Kamil, Ba'th al-Harakat al-Wataniyyah* (Cairo: 1939), 466. This particular edition was not available to the present author. We consulted the 3rd edition of the book (1950). This quotation has been taken from Kamil's speech on the occasion of Muhammad Ali's 100th anniversary of taking power in Egypt. The speech was delivered in Alexandria, see *ibid.* 464.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 465.

¹⁹ Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, 85-90

Caliph. He frequently wrote articles in French newspapers and responded to some of his readers' views on Muslim *ummah*.

It seems that some of his western readers had sympathy for his struggle for Egypt's freedom and independence though they didn't approve of his Islamic orientation. He therefore asked Western audience whether they believed that national rights were legitimate only when they destroyed religion. In fact, Kamil suggested that the fanaticism of nationalism (*ta'assub*) can only be controlled by religious teachings. He, therefore, recommended that the education system in Egypt should be based on religious values.²⁰ He also counseled his Western audience that it was due to the teachings of Islam that had historically enabled non-Muslim to live cordially with Muslims under the latter's.²¹ Kamil never conceived of the rights of Egyptian people (*sha'b*) without Islam. His concern for the entire Muslim world was reflected in *Al-'alam al-Islami*, a newspaper he edited and published, and which covered events throughout the Muslim world. It is for this service that Mustafa Kamil was decorated with the title *Pasha* by the Ottoman Caliph. It should also be noted that he subscribed to the idea of an Ottoman Caliph while most of his contemporaries such as Aburrahman al-Kawakibi (1849-1903) wanted to install an Arab Caliph and an Ottoman Foreign Minister. Therefore, it would not only be unfair but also an academic crime to suggest that:

...he (Kamil) did not seem to notice the contradiction between the concept of the *ummah* based on common religion, which underlies pan-Islamism, and the modern concept of nation – based on secular, political, and geographical and other factors – which is at the root of nationalism.²²

Now the question is why Nadav Safran is interested in demonstrating that Mustafa Kamil was a nationalist. In our view this was necessary in order to give an Islamic color to Egyptian nationalism which became more Europeanized by incorporating its Pharaonic past as Egypt moved toward becoming a political community.

Namik Kemal: the Apostle of Liberalism in Turkey?

Turkey moved toward the formation of a nation-state through the Young Turk movement at the beginning of the 20th century. But the idea of nationalism in Turkey could be traced in the earlier Young Ottoman movement. The most famous and influential among the Young Ottoman intellectuals was Namik Kemal (1840–1888). It is in Namik Kemal's thought that historians generally identify the beginning of the emergence of a new nationalist identity in Turkey.²³ He popularized the term *vatan* (fatherland) in modern Turkish literature. According to some historians, this concept of *vatan* later led to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Turkey which now claimed the absolute loyalty of its inhabitants. His identification with this idea of absolute loyalty to the nation-state, however, needs to be re-examined.

²⁰ Abdurrahman Ar-Rifa'i, *Mustafa Kamil, Ba'th al-Harakat al-Wataniyyah*, 138-40 and 492-3

²¹ *Ibid.*, 422-3

²² Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, 88

²³ See Mardin, 21, Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 179, Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 141.

In studying Namik Kemal's life and works it is important to remember that he appeared in Turkey's political arena while *Tanzimat* reforms were under way. The prime focus of Ottoman reform edicts, however, was the position of non-Muslims. At this point, Namik Kemal and his fellow intellectuals and patriots stood for the rights of Muslims under the Ottoman rule. Kemal believed that the declining Ottoman nation (*ummet*) could regain its health and strength if it were governed in light of Qur'anic principles which demanded rule with the consent of its people. He wanted a constitutional government for the Ottomans based on the consensus (*Ijma'*)²⁴ of the Muslim community. He envisioned Ottoman parliament (*sura-i-ummet*) with the caliph at its head, to safeguard the constitution. Namik Kemal says: "In Islam, the good and the bad are determined by the *Seriet* (*Shari'ah*) which is the expression of the abstract good and the ultimate criterion of the truth."²⁵ For him, it was the *Shari'ah* or the Islamic principles of governance that provided the ultimate values. At the same time, however, he expressed his appreciation for the French constitution and admired some French enlightenment philosophers. Kemal expressed willingness to accept European technology, media and education to further the material development for the Ottomans. In addition to his scholarly writings, he also wrote a number of drama and poem through which he popularized his ideas to the masses.

British Orientalist Bernard Lewis considers Namik Kemal the apostle of the idea of fatherland in Turkey. In order to justify this claim, Lewis traces the origin and meaning of the word *vatan* in the Turkish language. He equates the French word *la patrie* with the Turkish *Vatan*, and quotes from a French-Turkish dictionary, published in 1841, and translated *vatan* as *la patrie* to support his argument.²⁶ A deeper examination suggests that Kemal's use of the word *vatan* differs radically from the French concept of *la patrie*. In response to an article by Earnest Renan (1823-1892) who used the idea of *la patrie* extensively in the French language, Namik Kemal says:

History bears witness that, because of certain differences that appeared among the Muslim peoples, all of them have been able to preserve their national identities. However, if anyone asked (about his identity) he first say that he is a Muslim and adds that he is, say Circassian or an Afghan...²⁷

This undoubtedly indicates Kemal's clear understanding about the hierarchy of identity of a citizen of the Ottoman state. He also clearly expressed his commitment to *shari'ah*. He believed that the universal standards of justice could be best fulfilled by practicing prescriptions of *shari'ah*; and a good government being that which fulfils its commandments.²⁸ The French concept of *la patrie*, on the other hand, originated with the Jacobins during the French

²⁴ One of the sources of classical Islamic law.

²⁵ See Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 212.

²⁶ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 334-5.

²⁷ Namik Kemal, *Kulliyat-i-Namik Kemal*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul: Mahmudi Pr. 1326 H., 1908). The present author is indebted to the late Professor Fazlur Rahman of the University of Chicago for letting him use his translation of Namik Kemal's work.

²⁸ See Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 285-308

Revolution. The French commitment to *la patrie* was reflected in a letter by a young soldier to his mother during the Revolution saying, “When *la patrie* calls us for her defense, we should rush to her. ... Our life, our goods, and our talents do not belong to us. It is to the nation, to *la patrie*, to which everything belongs.”²⁹ Kemal’s Ottoman identity didn’t enjoy such unconditional loyalty; they were conditioned by Qur’anic values.

Bernard Lewis misrepresents Namik Kemal perhaps because of the latter’s appreciation of the role of the French parliament and constitution in achieving the rights of the French people. For Kemal right and human dignity must originate from Islamic teachings. The Turkish historian Serif Mardin rightly points out that, “He (Namik Kemal) believed that the *Shari’ah* includes all that could ... be counted as a constitution, both the fundamental structure of the government and the fundamental rights of the subjects.”³⁰

Bernard Lewis considers Kemal’s appreciation of French thought as an attempt to synthesize European and Islamic ideas. This, according to the former, was a task akin to earlier attempt of marrying Aristotelian philosophy and Qur’anic theology, involving a reinterpretation of both.³¹ This is an unjust claim on the part of Lewis, because he fails to point out where Kemal deviated from the basic teachings of the Qur’an. Kemal was convinced that the members of the Ottoman parliament would be committed to Islam. He knew that the number of non-Muslim inhabitants in the Ottoman territories was very small and also that the *shari’ah* had already secured the rights of non-Muslims in society. One could see evidence of this throughout the history of Islam. What was necessary was putting the values of the *shari’ah* into practice. Therefore, he never distinguished between Ottoman and Islamic ideals and values. Bernard Lewis, however, demonstrates his frustration on Namik Kemal by saying:

Namik Kemal, the apostle of liberal patriotism, adopts a milder tone (toward nationalism in Turkey), but he too, in his patriotic writings shows that he never really distinguished between what was Ottoman and what was Islamic.³²

Here again, Bernard Lewis fails to note that there was little room for race or language in Kemal’s concept of *vatan*. His Ottoman nationality was based on Islamic teachings. In this sense then it would be a mistake to consider Kemal as an apostle of modern Turkish nationalism mainly because 20th century Turkish nationalists adopted a policy of westernization and heavily relied on the Turkish ethnic identity.

In order to address the question of whether Namik Kemal can be considered such an apostle, it is necessary to define the term ‘liberal patriotism.’ In his statement, Lewis does not define the term. If patriotism means one’s emotional attachment to his supreme identity, then the question arises of what that identity is? For Namik Kemal it was his Ottoman-Islamic identity that was supreme. It should be noted here that he was not the first Muslim in history to identify himself as a Muslim

²⁹ Carlton J.H. Hayes, 55.

³⁰ Mardin, 313.

³¹ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 142.

³² *Ibid.*, 336.

as well as a native of a particular geographical territory. After all, it was not long before that Algerian Muslims fought against the French (1840s) under the leadership of Abdul Qadir, and that Indian Muslims fought a war of independence against the British (1857) on the basis of their local geographical and Muslim Identities.

In this context it should be remembered that the ‘constitution of Madinah’ adopted by the Prophet declared the city of Madinah a sacred place for its inhabitants irrespective of their tribal and religious identities. Therefore, a Muslim fighting for the city of Madinah was fighting for Islam as well. For him his Muslim identity and Madinian identity were not in conflict: they were mutually supportive. But for the Makkans who had migrated to Madinah the situation was different. When the Makkans attacked Madinah, the migrant Muslims choose to abandon their Makkan identity in favor of their Muslim identity which was based on universal Qur’anic values. As for Namik Kemal, he perceived no conflict between his Ottoman and Islamic identities. All through his life he struggled against the Ottoman-Muslim misrule and European political and intellectual domination. This was true for most of his contemporaries. They considered themselves “nothing but a member of a Muslim state.”³³ This is true, not only for Ottoman Turkey, but for all Muslim territories under European rule.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, under the impact of European thought, a clear shift had taken place from a distinct Ottoman identity to Turkish nationalist identity with the emergence of the Young Turk movement. Clearly Young Turks were more secularized than the Young Ottomans. Our question in this context is – why Bernard Lewis is interested in depicting an Islamic color to Turkish nationalism and attempts to identify Namik Kemal as the “apostle of liberal patriotism” in the discussion about the growth of Turkish nationalism. Lewis seems to have wanted to suggest that Turkish nationalism began with an Islamic tone but later slowly it turned to be Europeanized and secular. Therefore Turkey and the rest of the Muslim world would follow what Rupert Emerson had called “the universal sociological theory.” But this didn’t happen in the Muslim world: Islam didn’t take the back seat in the Muslim world as did Christianity in 19th century Europe. Perceptive Lewis realized earlier than other orientalists. In article in January 1976 in the magazine *Commentary* he noted “The Return of Islam.”³⁴

By the middle of the 20th century many Muslim majority territories emerged as independent and sovereign nation-states in international politics and each nation developed its own national history curriculum to satisfy its national needs. On the other hand, however, Muslim majority nation-states established Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1969 to promote Muslim agendas internationally. Although the OIC confronted with formidable challenges in garnering member-state’s support for cooperative developments, the institution continued to remind Muslims of their traditional identity in international politics. This identity consciousness received more prominence at the end of the century through the appearance of the clash of civilizations thesis in international politics. It should be noted that the orientalist Bernard Lewis played a significant in the emergence of the thesis.

³³ Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 327.

³⁴ <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-return-of-islam/>

Clash of Civilizations Thesis and Approaches of Studying History

The collapse of the former Soviet Union provided a fresh opportunity for historians such as Bernard Lewis to manipulate Muslim history. Although the idea of clash of civilizations originally came from Lewis,³⁵ it was Samuel P Huntington who popularized the thesis. Huntington believes that a war in our contemporary times involving the core states of the world's major civilizations is "highly improbable but not impossible."³⁶ At the end of the cold war as he searches for enemies Huntington provokes his readers to imagine a possible scenario of a "global civilizational war" in which "the United States, Europe, Russia and India ... become engaged in a truly global struggle against China, Japan, and most of Islam" in the year 2010. Such a conflict may spark and escalate "if aspiring Muslim core states compete to provide assistance to their coreligionists."³⁷ It should be noted, however, that even though Huntington puts China and Japan on the side of "most of Islam," the major part of his work discusses the potential for conflict between Muslims and the United States.

Why should "most of Islam" turn against "the United States, Europe, Russia and India" in the "global civilizational war"? Huntington believes that the reason for it was that with the passage of time the Muslim world was becoming more Islamic and thus increasing the potential threat to Western civilization in international politics. Around the same time as the OIC was founded by Muslim countries, Huntington observes:

Beginning in the 1970s, Islamic symbols, beliefs, practices, institutions, policies, and organizations won increasing commitment and support throughout the world of 1 billion Muslims stretching from Morocco to Indonesia and from Nigeria to Kazakhstan. ... In 1995 every country with predominantly Muslim population, ... was more Islamic and Islamist culturally, socially and politically than it was fifteen years ago.³⁸

In response to these developments Muslim "political leaders rushed to identify their regimes and themselves with Islam," observes Huntington:

King Hussein of Jordan, convinced that secular governments had little future in the Arab world, spoke of the need to create "Islamic democracy" and a "modernizing Islam." King Hassan of Morocco emphasized his descent from the Prophet and his role as "Commander of the faithful." The Sultan of Brunei, not previously noted for Islamic practices, became "increasingly devout" and defined his regime as a "Malay Muslim monarchy." Ben Ali of Tunisia began regularly to invoke Allah in his speeches and "wrapped himself in the mantle of Islam" to check the growing appeal of Islamic groups. In the early 1990s Suharto explicitly adopted a policy of becoming "more Muslim." In Bangladesh the principle of "secularism" was dropped from the constitution in the mid 1970s, and by early 1990s the secular, Kemalist identity of Turkey was, for the first time, coming under serious

³⁵ <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/issues/90sep/rage.htm>

³⁶ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 312.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 312–318.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

challenge. To underline their Islamic commitment, governmental leaders — Ozal, Suharto, Karimov — hastened to their *hajh*.³⁹

In order to convince his readers of the violent nature of the relationship between Islamic and Western civilizations, Huntington quotes Bernard Lewis, whom he refers as “a leading Western scholar of Islam,” and argues that there exists “no less than a clash of civilizations.” He provides empirical data from history, claiming that “50 percent of wars involving pairs of states of different religions between 1820 and 1929 were wars between Muslims and Christians.”⁴⁰ Although a number of Muslims viewed European colonialism as a continuation of medieval crusades, in academic terms Bernard Lewis’ argument is pretty trivial. This is because during the colonial period, when most of Africa and Asia were under the occupation of European powers, it was only incidental that most of Europe supposedly followed Christianity (‘supposedly’ because most Europeans were deists and followed no organized religion during the second half of the 19th century) and most of Africa and Asia was populated by Muslims. History books have recorded these conflicts as anti-colonial or nationalist struggles to achieve self-determination. History has also recorded that one of the major contributions of the United States to world civilization is that it introduced the idea of self-determination in modern times. The US not only fought a war of independence against European colonization, but it also hard-pressed the world bodies such as Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and later the United Nations to undertake the diplomacy of decolonization.⁴¹ Huntington now seems to want the United States to abandon its historical role to promote Enlightenment values such as freedom of conscience and respect for human dignity and to assume the historical burden of Europe’s Christendom.

In support of his thesis Huntington argues:

[i]t is hard to find statements by any Muslims, whether politicians, officials, academics, businesspersons, or journalists, praising Western values and institutions. They instead stress the differences between their civilization and Western civilization, the superiority of their culture, and the need to maintain the integrity of that culture against Western onslaught. Muslims fear and resent Western power and the threat which this poses to their society and beliefs. They see Western culture as materialistic, corrupt, decadent, and immoral.⁴²

Huntington believes that since the “1979 Iranian Revolution, an inter-civilizational quasi war developed between Islam and the West,”⁴³ and in the near future “conceivably even more intensely anti-Western nationalisms could emerge, blaming the West for the failures of Islam.”⁴⁴ Therefore, there is strong likelihood of a perpetual conflict between the two civilizations. He believes that, “[the] problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different

³⁹ Ibid., 115.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 210. It is interesting that Huntington finds 50 percent of wars involving Muslims and Christians during this period. However, he forgets that during this most volatile century in the fourteen centuries of Christian-Muslim relations the two communities taken together constituted at least 70 to 75 percent of the world population. It is also noteworthy that most members of the UN are either Christian or Muslim majority: out of the current 192 member states at least 169 have clear Christian or Muslim majority or a combination of both.

⁴¹ Although the US never officially joined the world body, President Woodrow Wilson’s idea of national self-determination laid the foundation of the League of Nations.

⁴² Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 213.

⁴³ Ibid., 216.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 121.

civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power.”⁴⁵ He reiterated his thesis in an article entitled “The Age of Muslim Wars” saying that “throughout the Muslim world, ... there exists a great sense of grievance, resentment, envy and hostility toward the West and its wealth, power and culture.”⁴⁶ In order to establish his thesis Huntington manipulated the history of both civilizations. Introducing the discussion on “Islam and the West” during the Clinton administration, Huntington suggests that:

Some Westerners, including President Bill Clinton, have argued that the West does not have problems with Islam but only with violent Islamist extremists. Fourteen hundred years of history demonstrate otherwise. The relations between Islam and Christianity, both Orthodox and Western, have often been stormy. Each has been the other’s Other.⁴⁷

Huntington’s knowledge of history of both Islamic and Western civilizations seems awkward. While a thorough analysis of the historical relationship between Islam and Christianity does not fall within the scope of this paper, Huntington’s claims do call for taking a look at history. Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of Islam and Islamic history knows that the Qur’an does not single out Christians as the enemies of Muslims. In fact it encourages Muslims to develop friendly relations with them not only because the latter affirm God’s existence, but also because they believe in many Prophets such as Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses (peace be on them) and several others mentioned both in the Bible and the Qur’an. In fact when the Muslims were persecuted by their fellow tribesmen in Makkah they sought refuge with the Christian King of Ethiopia. The Qur’an also showed a sympathetic tilt toward the Byzantine Christians when military encounters took place between them and the Persians (see Qur’an 30: 2–7). In this context, one may refer to the seminal work by Professor Richard Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, which perceives a close relationship between Islam and Christianity in history and thus seems discordant with Bernard Lewis’ view of “Judeo-Christian heritage.”⁴⁸ However, one needs to carefully examine Huntington’s proposition that Christians and Muslims persistently constitute “the other’s Other.”

In fact, the Qur’an does not identify any specific religious, linguistic or ethnic group as its enemy; rather, it strongly condemns those who hide the truth as regards the existence of the One True Lord and attempt to become lords over others.⁴⁹ The Qur’an claims that such people spread corruption on earth in order to establish their lordship over others, especially over the poor and the weak.⁵⁰ It is well-known that the earliest enemies of Islam were the Prophet’s own fellow tribesmen, the Quraysh. The message of Islam attracted not only people from the Quraysh, but also from various other groups of people of non-Arab ethnic background—the Africans, the Persians, etc. who lived in Arabia. In other words, Islam’s message was universal and therefore one could find both friends and foes among all kinds of people. This is not to necessarily suggest

⁴⁵ Ibid., 217.

⁴⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Age of Muslim Wars,” *Special Davos Edition Newsweek* (December 2001–February 2002), 9.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 209.

⁴⁸ Richard W. Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ See, for example, Qur’an 2: 228, 273.

⁵⁰ Qur’an, 2: 204-205, 10: 83.

that Muslim rulers in history never looked upon or treated Christians with hostility; rather, it is meant to stress that there has not been any specific “Other” for Islam.

It is also not true that Muslims always constituted the “Other” for Christians. Christianity was born as a reform movement within the Jewish tradition and the two communities—Christians and Jews—remained, in a sense, each other’s “Other” during the early days of Christianity. Huntington romanticizes Christian history by suggesting that the “twentieth-century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism is only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared to the continuing and deeply conflictual relation between Islam and Christianity.”⁵¹ Perhaps the cold war is too close in time to be erased from the memory of Huntington’s readers. However, can one obliterate the memories of the Crusades, especially the Crusaders’ brutalities against Orthodox Christians? It is also evident that while in the Hundred Years War (1337–1453) and the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) much innocent blood was spilled. Muslims were no party to these long-drawn wars. Likewise, in the two World Wars of the twentieth century which witnessed death and destruction a genocidal kind, the key players were Europeans/ Westerners and Christians. The same holds true for the cold war between the Eastern and Western blocks which constantly cast its ominous shadows over the world for about half a century.

More astonishing is the fact that Huntington ignores the motivating factors behind the American War of Independence. There has been an explosion of reference to the Judeo-Christian heritage of the American Republic during the past decade or so. The fact, however, is that like many Enlightenment philosophers the founding fathers of America too were religious people, albeit vehemently anti-clerical. Possibly they had learned about the principles of human rights and human dignity from Judaism and Christianity which were an important source of their ideas. However, these ideas are not only common to the classical Greek tradition of Socrates and Plato which Renaissance attempted to revive but also to Islam. A student of history can hardly fail to take note of these facts. Doubtlessly there has also been conflict between Muslims and Christians during the fourteen hundred years of history. Despite that, it is an exaggeration to say that Muslims and Christians have been each other’s “Other” *throughout history*, something Huntington suggests.

Looking broadly at the record of conflict between Muslims and European Christendom one finds that both parties have committed incursions into each other’s territories. There have also occurred telling events such as the atrocities committed by the Crusaders during the occupation of Jerusalem in 1096. However, the Catholic Church, after a lapse of considerable time admitted that mistakes had been made. As for the relationship during the European colonial penetration into the Muslim world, most historians now acknowledge that the record of the European colonizers in Asia and Africa has been pretty harsh and brutal. Huntington’s claim that Muslims possess a “sense of grievance, resentment, envy and hostility toward the West and its wealth”⁵² is inaccurate and he fails to provide any evidence to support this contention. As for the Muslims’ present resentment against European colonizers, it should be viewed in its proper historical context. The Muslims’ resentment is substantially no different from that of those Asians and Africans who experienced European colonization, Muslims or otherwise. It needs no

⁵¹ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, 209.

⁵² Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the remaking of World Order*, 312.

extraordinary perspicacity to appreciate that every group of people instinctively resents being exposed to subjection and exploitation. That is why one needs to highlight the point that the conflict between the European colonizers and the Muslims of Asia and Africa originated in the course of the latter's effort to achieve freedom and self-determination and not as an indignant response to the "wealth, power, and culture" of the former. In fact pre-colonial Africa and Asia were pretty well off to covet the wealth, power and culture of the European nations.

Should the Historian Seek for the Truth or Justify National Interests

What should then be the approach to history teaching at the university level? Should students of history be encouraged and trained to seek the truth or should they be trained to promote perceived national interests? Are national interests always motivated by historical truths or they are sometimes influenced by vested interests? These questions may be raised in light of our above discussion. A university by definition stands for an institution of higher learning that promotes advanced education and research universally. Therefore, in our view, the university history curriculum must be committed to finding the truth.

However this doesn't mean that a nation shouldn't be allowed to promote and strengthen identity and loyalty of its citizens. But the challenging task would be how to achieve this goal with complete commitment to discovery of the truth. Have all nations always upheld the truth in history? Do all citizens of a given nation agree with the nationalist rhetoric about their history? We have recorded earlier in this essay a story of disagreement between the government and the opposition in South Korean history curriculum. Aren't such controversies common in most nations? In our view these are important and relevant questions in the current context. Will it be too sensitive to introduce a rational and critical approach to history lessons? This is a politically loaded question. Interestingly most nations and universities are interested in cultivating critical thinking skills in their citizens and students. Many universities around the world have introduced separate courses on critical thinking. In our view critical thinking is methodology rather than a course. Critical methodology may be applied in many courses. In fact, in our view, the history curriculum would provide the most appropriate platform for their understanding national identity and their role as responsible citizens. Essentially the curriculum should be based on values. In our view value-based curriculum would create enduring trust which is necessary becoming a responsible citizen. In our view, a value-based history curriculum will serve this purpose.