IBN KHALDUN MODERNIZED:
BETWEEN NATIONALISM
AND GLOBALIZATION

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Although the first translation of Ibn Khaldun was in Turkish in the Ottoman Era the first complete English translation emerged more than a hundred years later in 1958, compiled by Franz Rosenthal, in three volumes. The most enthusiastic review was from the eminent historian Arnold J. Toybee in the British weekly newspaper. Toynbee saluted *Al-Muqaddimah* in the following terms:

Undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever been created by any mind in any time or place. . . . The most comprehensive and illuminating analysis of how human affairs work that has been made anywhere.[1]

— *The Observer* (London)

An earlier eulogy of Ibn Khaldun was by Robert Flint in the following terms:

As a theorist on history he had no equal in any age or country until Vico appeared, more than three hundred years later. Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine were not his peers. . .[2]

— *Encyclopedia Britannica* Vol. 6, 15th Edition (Chicago and London, 1986)

The subsequent Arab Scholar, Sati□ al-Husri, defined Book I of *Al-Muqaddimah* as a general introduction to sociology; Books II and III as sociology of politics; Book IV as urban sociology; Book V as economic sociology; and Book VI as the sociology of knowledge.

Al-Muqaddimah's elaborate and complex analysis is held together by Ibn Khaldun's imaginative concept of *asabiyah*, which is often translated as *"social cohesion."*

This paper argues that the most universalized modern version of *asabiyah* is nationalism. We shall first address that concept of *nationalism* in all its variety and pluralism.

The post-modern *asabiyah* is the new concept of *globalization*. Ibn Khaldun had taken *asabiyah* to the consolidation of *civilization*. In this paper we are addressing *nationalism* as a modern form of social cohesion and globalization as the post-modern *asabiyah*.

FROM ASABIYAH TO NATIONALISM

Nationalism can be both an ideology with specific constituent ideas or a set of sentiments, loyalties and emotional predispositions. In the European context, nationalism emerged in the course of the development and maturation of the nation-state. For many European nationalists no distinction was made between loyalty to the state as a system of authority (vertical allegiance) and loyalty to the nation as a fellowship of community (horizontal allegiance). To most nationalists, one's own state or nation was entitled to supreme loyalty.

In the history of Europe nationalism emerged with the decline of two earlier paramount allegiances—the erosion of more localised feudal fiefdoms, on the one hand, and the decline of the transnational influence of the Church in Christendom, on the other. De-feudalization and the beginnings of secularization left a fertile ground for new foci of fidelity. The Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 had been the midwife of the new nation-state. By the eighteenth century nationalism had become one of the ideological forces of Europe.

The political thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau was complex, but it did include a nationalist tendency. His distinction between "the general will" and "will of all" was a distinction between the inviolate will of the nation, on one side, and the will of all the citizens at

any particular moment in time. The "general will" was superior to the "will of all." The nation was more enduring than its citizens.

In the 18th and early 19th centuries nationalism was often combined with liberal values. Prince Otto von Bismarck was among the first great conservative nationalists and authoritarian unifiers. A much worse example of rightwing nationalism combined with militant unification was of course Adolf Hitler in the twentieth century. A more humane nationalist unifier was Garibaldi in the struggle for the unification of Italy.

The full internationalization of modern nationalism did not occur until the ideas and sensitivities manifested themselves in Asia and Africa under colonial domination. In the Arab world nationalism was often combined with transnational Pan-Arabism. In Africa the anti-colonial struggle gave birth to both localized nationalisms and Pan-African movements. For a while Japanese nationalism attempted to rally the rest of Asia with slogans like "Co-Prosperity" and demands like "Quit Asia" addressed to Western imperialists and colonisers. Pan-movements are usually a case of *trans-national nationalism*.

Japanese nationalism at that time was combined with imperialism. A desire to build an empire can itself be a goal of nationalism. Rudyard Kipling was an imperial nationalist who glorified empire-building by the white man:

> Take up the White Man's burden
> Send forth the best ye breed,
> Go bind your sons to exile,
> To serve your captives' need.
>
> Take up the White Man's burden
> —The savage wars of peace

Fill full the mouth of famine

And bid the sickness cease.

The ports ye shall not enter,

The roads ye shall not tread,

Go make them with your living,

And mark them with your dead.[3]

Kipling wrote the poem partly as an appeal to American nationalism, encouraging white Americans to accept the burdens of an imperial power in the Philippines. Rudyard Kipling and Cecil Rhodes also often appealed to that side of British pride which was in effect *imperial nationalism*.

NATIONALISM BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

Nationalism can sometimes be preoccupied with the defence or revival of culture, rather than with fidelity to the state. Among the major European powers the French are pre-eminent cultural nationalists, though combined with fidelity to the French state. Cultural nationalism in France profoundly affected their colonial policies, and gave rise to such goals as the *assimilation* of the colonised. The defence of French cultural influence has also affected French foreign policy more broadly, complete with a readiness to invest considerable resources in the propagation and teaching of the French language from Senegal to Saigon.

Nationalism is sometimes a combination of culture as *identity* and culture as *communication*. When the nationalism and the language are either completely *or* substantially fused, what we get is *linguistic nationalism*. The focus of the nationalism is substantially pride in one's language.

The foreign policy of France in Rwanda in the 1990s was partly a defence of the French language in the Great Lakes area of Africa. Among European countries the French are greater linguistic nationalists than the British. Defensively the French are also greater linguistic *purists* than the British. The French are on guard against their language being too corrupted or polluted.

But here one may have to distinguish between *direct* linguistic nationalism and *derivative* linguistic nationalism. Direct linguistic nationalism is when the central focus of the nationalism is the issue of language in relation to identity. Separatism in Quebec is a case of direct linguistic nationalism.

Derivative linguistic nationalism is when the pride in language is part of a wider cultural pride. It is arguable that the French are primarily cultural nationalists—and their linguistic nationalism is part of the wider cultural patriotism, which covers pride in

— French literature
— French role in history
— French cuisine
— French civilization

The Arabs are also great linguistic nationalists—but in the derivative sense. They are proud of the Arabic language partly because they are proud of the Arab role in world history, the Arab impact on world religion, Arab civilization through time, and the Arabs as the ultimate custodians of the religion of Islam.

Turkish linguistic nationalism has sought in the past to impose the language on its Kurdish minority. The Kurdish language has often been denied legitimacy in the Turkish state. Inevitably such policies provoked Kurdish nationalism, both linguistic and otherwise.

Turkey may be the most striking illustration of nationalism wearing the garb of secularism. In Turkey secularism is not just an attitude of mind; it is often a militant ideology often linked to nationalism.

In its cultural nationalism Turkey has faced one dilemma: How can Turkey dis-Arabize without risking dis-Islamization? When does dis-Arabization end and dis-Islamization begin? Can Turkey be secular and Muslim at the same time?

This brings us to nationalism and orthography. The Ataturk nationalist revolution dis-Arabized the alphabet (and adopted the Latin). The nationalist revolution also dis-Arabized dress culture (and adopted Western dress). Nationalist Turkey also dis-Arabized much of the vocabulary of the Turkish language (though it was impossible to dis-Arabize completely).

The nationalist revolution sometimes goes to the extent of discouraging:

(a)   the learning of the Qur'an in Arabic

(b)   going on pilgrimage to Mecca

(c)   *soldiers* from going to the mosque at all

(d)   civil servants from growing beards

While in Turkey nationalism has been linked to militant secularism, in the Islamic Republic of Iran after 1979 Iranian nationalism has often been linked to militant Islam. Iranian nationalism has been in rebellion especially against American power and presence in the Gulf.

Nationalism, when linked to *religion*, includes Sikh nationalism in India and certain schools of Zionism and Jewish nationalism in Israel. The rise of Islamic separatism in British India led to the birth of Pakistan in 1947.

Nationalism can be inspired by *race*. In the Black world this includes movements like Negritude, Black Power and certain schools of Pan-Africanism. The Nation of Islam led by Louis Farrakhan in the United States combining nationalism with both religions and racial symbolism. The National Socialists (Nazis) under Adolf Hitler combined nationalism with militant racism. Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa has included race-consciousness.

Nationalism may sometimes be preoccupied with defending *culture* more broadly.

Nationalism can sometimes be sustained by political nostalgia—an idealized memory of the past, with a desire to revive it. The most successful nationalism of nostalgia was the Zionist movement, which did succeed in bringing into being a new Israel (with its citizens now called Israeli's instead of Israelites).

But nationalism can also be sustained by particular negative memories of the past—especially a sense of martyrdom from a specific experience. Armenian nationalism has been partly sustained by the sense of martyrdom going back to the Armenian massacres under the Ottoman Empire in 1915. Certain schools of Jewish nationalism also draw inspiration from the Semitic martyrdom under the Nazi holocaust.

Most recurrently nationalism can be sustained by rivalry for territory and by disputes over borders. Nationalism in both India and Pakistan has been influenced by the dispute over the fate of Kashmir. This is quite apart from the nationalism of the Kashmiri people themselves, in rebellion against forced integration with India.

Nationalism may seek to reunite those who have been divided by history and imperialism—such as Somali nationalism and Kurdish nationalism. On the other hand, nationalism may want to pull out of an enforced territorial marriage—such as the separatist

nationalism of the Tamils of Sri Lanka, or the secessionist nationalism of Chechnya seeking to pull out of the Russian Federation.

The word "nationalism" has transcended its etymology. Nationalism is now much wider and more diverse than the unit of the "nation." As we have indicated, it is possible to have transnational nationalism (like that of the Arabs) or sub-national nationalism (like that of the Kurds). The term "nationalism" has come to be associated with certain forms of militant patriotism and with units of allegiance which are more diverse than merely the nation-state.

FROM NATIONALISM TO GLOBALIZATION

Now that Africa is being courted by more than one superpower (China, as well as the United States), let us familiarize ourselves more fully about the meaning of *globalisation*.

Africa in this twenty first century is likely to be one of the final battlegrounds of the forces of globalization—for better or for worse. This phenomenon called GLOBALISATION has its winners and losers. In the initial phases, Africa has been among the losers as it has been increasingly marginalized. There are universities in the United States which have more computers than the computers available in an African country of twenty million people. This has been the great *digital divide*. The distinction between the Haves and Have-nots has now coincided with the distinction between *Digitised* and the "*Digi-prived*."

Let us begin with the challenge of a definition. What is *globalization*? It consists of processes that lead toward global interdependence and the increasing rapidity of exchange across vast distances. The word *globalization* is itself quite new, but the actual processes toward global interdependence and exchange started centuries ago.

Four forces have been major engines of globalization across time: religion, technology, economy, and empire. These have not necessarily acted separately, but often have reinforced each other. For example, the globalization of Christianity started with the conversion of Emperor

Constantine I of Rome in 313. The religious conversion of an emperor started the process under which Christianity became the dominant religion not only of Europe but also of many other societies later ruled or settled by Europeans. The globalization of Islam began not with converting a ready-made empire, but with building an empire almost from scratch. The Umayyads and Abbasids put together bits of other people's empires (e.g., former Byzantine Egypt and former Zoroastrian Persia) and created a whole new civilization. The forces of Christianity and Islam sometimes clashed. In Africa the two religions competed for the soul of a continent.

Voyages of exploration were another major stage in the process of globalization. Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus opened up a whole new chapter in the history of globalization. Economy and empire were the major motives. There followed the migration of people. The Portugese helped to build Fort Jesus in Mombasa. The migration of the Pilgrim Fathers to America was in part a response to religious and economic imperatives in Europe. Demographic globalization reached its height in the Americas with the influx of millions of people from other hemispheres. In time, the population of the United States became a microcosm of the population of the world, for it contained immigrants from almost every society on earth. The making of America was the making of a globalized society or universal nation. South Africa had Dutch settlers three centuries ago—a potential universal nation on the African continent was initiated.

The Industrial Revolution in Europe represents another major chapter in the history of globalization. This marriage between technology and economics resulted in previously unknown levels of productivity. Europe's prosperity whetted its appetite for new worlds to conquer. The Atlantic slave trade was accelerated, moving millions of Africans from one part of the world to another. Europe's appetite also went imperial on a global scale, and one European people, the British, built the largest and most far-flung empire in human experience, most of which lasted until the end of World War II. Kenya got its boundaries and its name from British imperialism.

The two world wars were themselves manifestations of globalization. The twentieth century is the only one to witness globalized warfare: during 1914–1918 and again during 1939–1945. The Cold War (1948–1989) was yet another manifestation of globalization, for it was a global power rivalry between two alliances: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact. While the two world wars were militarily the most destructive, empirically the Cold War was potentially the most dangerous, for it carried the seeds of planetary annihilation via nuclear warfare. At that time Africa was being courted by the Soviet bloc, China as well as the West. But China was a minor player.

The final historical stage of globalization came when the Industrial Revolution was joined with the new Information Revolution. Interdependence and exchange became dramatically dependent upon the computer. The most powerful country by this time was the United States. *Pax Americana* mobilized three of globalization's four engines: technology, economy, and empire. Although in the second half of the twentieth century this *Pax Americana* apparently did not seek to promote a particular religion, it did help to promote secularism and the ideology of the separation of church and state. On balance, the impact of Americanization probably has been harmful to religious values worldwide, whether intended or not. Americanized Hindu youth, Americanized Buddhist teenagers, or indeed Americanized Muslim youngsters in Mombasa are far less likely to be devout adherents of their faiths than their non-Americanized counterparts. The United States has been a secularizing force in Africa and elsewhere.

In the new millennium the forces of *globalization* are likely to continue, against the background of the meaning of the twentieth century in world history. As the twentieth century comes to a close, scholars have interpreted globalization in three distinct ways.

I: Forces which are transforming the global market and creating new economic interdependency across vast distances. Africa is affected, but not centrally.

II: Forces which are exploding into the information superhighway—expanding access to data and mobilizing the computer and the Internet into global service. This tendency is marginalizing Africa.

III: All forces which are turning the world into a global village—compressing distance, homogenizing culture, accelerating mobility, and reducing the relevance of political borders. Under this comprehensive definition, globalization is the gradual villagization of the world. These forces have been at work in Africa long before the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

As we have indicated, the twentieth century is the only century which had world wars—1914 to 1918, and 1939 to 1945. This was the only century which created world diplomatic institutions—the League of Nations and the United Nations.

This was the only century which created a World Bank—the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) with the International Development Association. The twentieth century also issued a Universal Declaration of Human Rights—adopted by the United Nations in 1948. This was the only century which established a global university—the United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan. Some of these have affected Africa more deeply than others. China was marginal for much of the second half of the twentieth century.

This was the only century which had a world health institution—the World Health Organization (WHO). The twentieth century also created a global mechanism to moderate trade relations—the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Seattle meeting of WTO at the end of the millennium illustrated the depth of feelings about the organization.

This was the only century which had a part-time global policeman—the United States of America, which tried hard to isolate China from 1949 to 1971. And, of course, this was the only century which developed a genuine world economy—or at least a close approximation to it.

All these were indicators of globalization. Although the term "globalization" is indeed new, the forces which have been, as we indicated, creating it have been going on for generations. It is only now that we have realized that the forces at work have had global repercussions and have been sometimes global in scale. The creation of the African Diaspora as a result of the African Slave trade turned out to be a manifestation of globalization.

But is a globalized Planet Earth really a global *village*? The world may be *globalized*— but what would make it <u>villagized</u>? There is something missing—the compassion of the village has yet to be globalized. Planet Earth will never really become a global village until the contraction of distance is accompanied by the expansion of empathy. Will China become a softer superpower than the United States?

Education world-wide can have a role in that empathy-creation. The rich must learn to be more sensitive to the poor; the better endowed be more concerned than the less; the North must learn to be more just to the South. But for Africa there is no substitute for self-reliance as a long term struggle. Will Africa's partnership with China foster or inhibit Africa's search for self-reliance? We must wait and see.

Ibn Khaldun was born in Africa—and it was in North Africa that he first dazzled the world with his knowledge. Today *asabiyah* has at last gone *globalized*. So has the legacy of Ibn Khaldun.

NOTES

1. *The Observer* (London).

2. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 6, 15th Edition (Chicago and London, 1986).

3. Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" (1899). Reproduced in Louis L. Snyder (ed.), *The Imperialism Reader: Documents and Readings in Modern Expansionism* (Princeton, NJ: N.J.D. Van Nostrand, 1962), pp. 87–88.