Cemil Aydın

Beyond Civilization: Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism and the Revolt against the West

1. Introduction

The idea of Europe among non-Western elites from the early nineteenth through to the mid-twentieth century embodies one of the most arresting paradoxes of modern global history. From the 1880s to the 1930s non-Western elites contributed to the «end of European hegemony in Asia» with their «revolt against the West», while at the same time their own legitimacy and self-identity were initially shaped, and continued to be strongly influenced by, Eurocentric notions of civilization and modernity. Did the various visions of the world and of modernity that non-Western intellectuals developed during the era of decolonization transcend the Eurocentric discourse of civilization and the notion of Europe’s universality? What was the international impact of this non-Western intellectual engagement with the ideals and idea of «Europe», and did it make any significant impact on the process of decolonization?

In this essay I shall argue that the concept of a single universal civilization – initially formulated to define the content and justify the politics of European hegemony in the world – was preserved by non-Western elites when they challenged the idea of the «civilizing mission» contained in discourses of East-West «civilizational» synthesis. This article will focus on Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian ideas, which were highly influential intellectual and political forces from the 1880s through to the 1930s. For a long time, many advocates of Pan-Islamist solidarity saw the Ottoman Empire as a natural leader of the Islamic world, while Pan-Asianism had a strong strand that saw Japan as the leader of Asian cooperation against Western hegemony. This essay will focus on Pan-Islamic thinkers in the Ottoman Empire and Pan-Asianist thinkers in the Japanese Empire, partly to show the appeal of these ideas as reflections of a global consciousness even among non-Western intellectuals who were not directly colonized. The Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian critiques of the supposed «universality» of the West were of significance in the formulation of non-Western discontent about the late 19th century international order. These two transnational visions of anti-Western solidarity helped to...
articulate non-Western discourses on civilization(s), modernity and internationalism. Their trajectory from the 1880s to the 1920s illustrates what happened to the discourse of civilization when it was an intense topic of debate in the global public sphere, and how the politics of new «civilizational» identities functioned in relation to rising nationalist movements and changing power relations between Europe and Asia.

2. The Genesis of Anti-Western Universalisms: Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Discourses on Civilization

The first important characteristic of both Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism is their commitment to European inspired modernizing reforms. Early Pan-Asian and Pan-Islamic thinkers were modernist, not reactionary conservatives. They believed in the necessity of westernizing reforms, almost in terms of a self-civilizing discourse, to uplift Asia or the Islamic world from their backward condition. Their main thesis was that European imperialism was hampering, not fostering, pro-European style reform, and thus there was a need for anti-imperial solidarity to achieve the desired civilizational progress. More importantly, advocates of Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian solidarity perceived a contradiction between the idea of the universality of Eurocentric modernity, and the increasingly popular European discourses of the permanent and eternal inferiority of Muslims or the «yellow race». The recognition of the contradictions in the civilizing mission ideology of European imperialism led Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thinkers to search for a more inclusive definition of universalism and internationalism. In this process, Asian intellectuals re-deployed Orientalist notions of Eastern and Western civilizations for anti-colonialist political purposes, and by the end of World War I, were forcing European intellectuals to revise their ideas about race, civilization and human diversity.

The timing of their rise, the late 1870s and early 1880s, is the best indication that neither Pan-Islamism nor Pan-Asianism was a natural response to European expansion in Asia, which had already been happening since the early 19th century. In fact, at the time of the French invasion of Algeria, the British expansion in India, and the Opium Wars, there certainly were expressions of anger or reflection, but not any developed notion of Asian or Islamic solidarity as a response. The response of various Asian societies to the continuing Western expansion took many different forms of resistance, including calls for Jihad. Yet, these early attempts at resistance did not carry the notion of a systematic challenge to the Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism and the Revolt against the West

---

imagined global legitimacy of the Eurocentric world order. Instead, many intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire, and later the Japanese Empire, 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. Following the paradigm of liberal civilizationism, this ideology allowed the Ottoman and Japanese elites to challenge the new European international society to be more inclusive, by asking European powers to accept the multi-religious Ottoman State ruled by a Muslim dynasty, or a non-Christian Japanese State ruled by a Shinto Emperor 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 and Japanese elites also empowered these same elites in domestic politics, as they could justify the imposition of centralizing radical reforms upon their own populations as a civilizing mission. The Ottoman elites in Istanbul, through the liberal ideology of Ottomanism, could ask Muslim and non-Muslim subjects to become citizens of the new «civilized» Ottoman nation, while similarly asking them to make sacrifices for the costly and painful process of modern state building. Istanbul- or Tokyo-centred self-civilizing projects also meant that nomadic populations had to be settled, peasants had to pay more taxes or 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 assumptions of liberal civilizationism continued, the moment of the 1880s represented an important rupture in the Asian perception of Europe, which began to be seen as more imperialistic, aggressive and racially-religiously exclusive. The turn to the «scramble for Africa» and more competitive imperialism, accompanied by much more rigid theories of Orientalism and race ideology, established a permanent identity-barrier between Christian-White Europeans on the one hand and the Muslim world or the coloured races on the other. Muslim responses to the invasion of Tunisia and Egypt in the early 1880s were different from their response...
to the invasion of Algeria about 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, pro-Western liberal intellectuals of Japan such as Fukuzawa Yukichi began to perceive the threat from the West as much greater in the 1890s than it had been the 1860s, because – despite the fact that Japan was militarily stronger at the latter date – westernization was now accompanied by increasing disparagement of Japan’s yellow race identity.

Both Ottoman and Japanese elites perceived the late 19th century European discourses on the yellow race, the Muslim world and Orientals, in connection with the predominant notions of Darwinism and other scientific paradigms, as a judgment that they could never perfectly fulfill all the required standards of civilization due to defects in their racial makeup, religious beliefs or cultural character. In addition to the infuriatingly racist anti-Muslim speeches of British Prime Minister William Gladstone and anti-Yellow race expressions of German Kaiser Wilhelm, popular writings in the European media and more scientific writings of well-respected European scholars on human diversity and progress led to objections and disillusionment on the part of non-Western elites. Many Western educated Ottoman and Japanese elites 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 centers to which they had been looking for inspiration. Nevertheless, these non-Western elites did not give up on the ideals of progress and one universal civilization.

It was in this context that Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian ideas were developed by the Western educated generation of Meiji Japan and the Tanzimat era of the Ottoman state: 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 and Muhammad ‘Abduh, in the early 1880s. Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, whose reign from 1876 to 1908 overlapped with the most turbulent period of European imperial expansion, began to be identified with either Pan-Islamic sympathies or Pan-Islamic peril, despite the fact that he continued a cooperative diplomacy towards the Western powers. Similarly, the first Pan-Asianist organization, «Kôakai», was established in 1880. The first major book on Pan-Asianism, The Theory of Uniting the Great East, was written in 1885 by Tarui Tokichi. From the early 1880s, many in Europe and Asia spoke of the potential

---


8 Tikhonov, «Korea’s First Encounters».

9 Suzuki Tadashi, «Profile».
peril or benefits of Asian and Islamic solidarity. 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 later Pan-Europeanism. Yet, for a long time, the political projects of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Asianism, as a challenge to the Eurocentric world order, were not officially endorsed by the governments of the Ottoman and Japanese Empires. In accordance with traditions of Meiji diplomacy or Tanzimat diplomacy, these two governments 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. They believed that it was in many ways better for the national interest of the Japanese and Ottoman Empires to dispel fears of the yellow peril or the Muslim peril in European public opinion. The ideas of Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian solidarity, which were themselves partly responses to yellow peril or Muslim peril discourses in Western public opinion, were seen as likely to confirm and strengthen the same peril discourses.

Reformist elites of the Ottoman and Japanese Empires had a shared interest, however, in challenging, modifying and revising predominant European notions of Oriental inferiority. From the 1880s to the 1910s, there was never a blanket rejection of European originated «scientific» ideas of race or civilizational relations. Yet, most non-Western intellectuals offered internal critiques and revisions of these theories, where possible in dialogue with European intellectuals. It is in this context that the very flexibility of the concepts of Asian, Eastern, Islamic civilizations, and their contents in relation to the idealized European civilization, allowed non-Western intellectuals to inject their own visions and subjectivity into these notions that had originated in Europe. Ottoman and Japanese intellectuals accepted that they belonged to an Asian, Islamic, or Eastern civilization different from the Western civilization, yet they did not have to concede that their civilization was morally inferior and eternally backward. It should be underlined that both the notions of «Asian civilization» and «Islamic civilization» were products of the second half of 19th century. There had been a strong Muslim identity, and

10 For an example of the appeal of Pan-Islamic ideas in Morocco, outside of Ottoman domains, in this same period, see E. Burke, «Pan-Islam and Moroccan Resistance to French Colonial Penetration, 1900–1912», The Journal of African History 13,1 (1972), 97–118.

11 There was a policy vision of Muslim solidarity during the reign of Abdulhamid II, but this mainly aimed to solidify the citizenship base of the Ottoman Empire among various Muslim ethnicities. Abdulhamid II was very cautious about not directly challenging the legitimacy of the Eurocentric imperial order. Even the idea of Islamic solidarity within the Ottoman Empire, at the expense of Christian subjects, was not official, since this would have been a violation of a policy of Ottomanism. For Abdulhamid II’s concern about the civilized image of the Ottoman State, see S. Deringil, The Well-Proected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909 (London, 1998). For an assessment of Abdulhamid II’s policies from a world historical perspective, see E. D. Akarli, «The Tangled End of Istanbul’s Imperial Supremacy», in: Modernity and Culture from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, 1890–1920, ed. L. Fawaz and C. A. Bayly (New York, 2002), 261–284.

https://doi.org/10.17104/1611-8944_2006_2_204
Generiert durch IP '54.70.40.11', am 10.02.2019, 20:09:38.
Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.
intra-Islamic world interaction before the 19th century, via trade, education and pilgrimage networks. Yet, this pre-19th century religious identity had not carried the same connotation of the term «Islamic Civilization» as which was to set in during the late 19th century. The famous 14th century world traveler Ibn Batuta, for example, who had visited all the major centres of the Islamic world at that time, could converse with educated Muslims in Arabic all the way from Morocco to India and China. Yet, his pride in the cosmopolitan Muslim networks of the 14th century had not involved any conception of a «civilization» defined in relation to its inferior or superior others. In contrast, writings of Pan-Islamic travelers of the late 19th and early 20th century such as Abdurreşid Ibrahim exhibit a strong consciousness of belonging to an oppressed Islamic-Eastern world in relation to a Western other.

Similarly, despite the fact that there had been a long tradition of education or pilgrimage oriented travels within the Confucian or Buddhist lands of Asia, it was the late 19th century Asian travelers who exhibited a new notion of belonging to Asian, Buddhist or Confucian civilization, defined in relation to its Western counterpart.

Muslim intellectuals in the era of late 19th century imperialism rightly viewed Ernest Renan as the most representative name of the new European Orientalism, in which Renan championed the intellectual trend to «Hellenize Christianity and Semitize/Arabize Islam». Before the 1870s, Muslim reformists had assumed that the Muslim world shared the same cultural legacy as modern Europe (namely, Hellenism and monotheism), and thus believed that they had strong innate capacities for progress and civilization along European lines. After all, they reasoned (echoing dominant European views of world history at this time), it was the Arabic-Muslim civilization which had preserved the Hellenistic legacy of science and philosophy and transferred it to modern Europe, thereby directly contributing to the birth of European modernity, while illustrating the fact that there was nothing contradictory in being a Muslim and being civilized and progressive. If Muslims had once been great in producing science and philosophy, their religion could not be an intrinsic impediment to adopting and excelling in modern science and thought as well. In response to these optimistic Muslim modernist ideas, Ernest Renan argued that science in the medieval Muslim world had developed despite Islam

13 For the civilizational consciousness in the extensive travels of a prominent Pan-Islamist activist all over Asia, see A. Ibrahim, Alem-i Islam ve Japonya’da İntisari İslamiyet (İstanbul, 1910–1911).
16 M. Adas, Machines as the Measure of Man: Science, Technology and Ideologies of Western Dominance (Ithaca / N. Y., 1989), 11–12.
and the Arabs, not because of them. Already famous for his claims that Christianity had been Hellenized despite its Middle Eastern and Semitic origins, Renan argued that Islam, as the religion of Semitic Arabs, could never be compatible with modern progress, and that Muslims had to shed their religion in order to adapt to modern life. As a student of Islam, Renan noted that if there were great scientific and cultural achievements in medieval Islam, this was due either to Christian Arabs, whose Hellenistic Christian faith had controlled their Semitic Arab side, or to Iranian Muslims whose Aryan race had cancelled out the negative aspects of their Semitic faith.

Muslim intellectuals perceived Renan’s well-publicized speech and writings 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. Muslim intellectuals not only responded to Renan directly by publishing refutations of his ideas; they also searched for venues and means to engage in a dialogue with European intellectuals in general. Leading Pan-Islamic figure of that time, Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani sent his response to Renan to the same French journal that had published Renan’s speech, in which he endorsed Renan’s thesis on the clash between religion and modern science but vehemently rejected the claim that Islam or Muslims were inferior to Christianity or Christians in their attitude towards modernity. Congresses of Orientalist scholars in Europe presented good opportunities for various Muslim intellectuals to address European scholars directly and to convince them that the Muslim world was indeed capable of civilizational progress. The Ottoman government sponsored trips to these congresses by prominent intellectuals such as Ahmed Midhat Efendi, and at other times sent bureaucrats to read semi-official papers. For example, the Ottoman bureaucrat Numan Kamil presented a paper at the 10th Orientalist Congress in Geneva in 1894, criticizing the anti-Muslim writings of Volney, Chateaubriand, Renan and Gladstone, and asking the European Orientalists in the audience to be «objective» in their judgments about the question whether Islam was the «destroyer of civilization» or


a «servant of civilization». It was in the same spirit of dealing with Orientalism that all the major Pan-Islamic books on the international order felt obliged to devote sections to Islam and modernity, and often to say something apologetic about the situation of women, polygamy and other cultural differences of Islam, while being very assertive about the compatibility between Islam and modern civilization in general. Parallel to this apologetic effort, which conceded Europe’s superiority in civilizational progress but insisted that Muslims have the racial and religious capacity to emulate this progress, Muslim intellectuals gradually developed a discourse that underlined the moral and aesthetic vitality of Islamic civilization.

Non-Muslim Asians also struggled with similar discourses about Christianity’s superiority to Buddhism and Hinduism, or the white race’s superiority to the coloured races. Hence, prominent Buddhist and Hindu intellectuals of Japan and India appeared at the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893 to assert the equality and comparability of their religions to Christianity. In fact, the generation of very Westernized Japanese intellectuals during the 1890s, such as Miyake Setsurei and Inoue Enryō developed powerful anti-Christian notions of world civilizations and progress. This mood of challenging European imperialism, which used critiques of Orientalism and of European discourses on race, in order to affirm the universality of Eurocentric civilization and modernity, characterized the writings of all Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thinkers until World War I. These Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian engagements with Orientalism and race ideologies demonstrate that Orientalist notions were omnipresent but not omnipotent. They could be re-defined and re-employed for purposes very different from those intended by the original European formulators of the universalist claims of western civilization. And concurrently with this non-Western challenge to the contradictions of the «modernist» version of the civilizing mission ideology, the ideas of Asia «romantic» traditionalists in Europe and America were also appropriated by Asian intellectuals. The Pan-Asian ideas of Okakura Tenshin and Rabindranath Tagore, for example, cannot be understood without considering the influence of European

---


25 Halil Halid, one of the most prolific Pan-Islamic thinkers in Europe, consistently wrote in European papers about the issue of Islam and modernity, and attended the 14th Orientalist Congress in Algeria in 1905. See S. Tanvir Wasti, «Halil Halid: Anti-Imperialist Muslim Intellectual», Middle Eastern Studies 29, 3 (1993), 559–579.
and American pessimists who condemned Western civilization but searched for a solution to humanity’s crisis in the spiritual traditions of Asia.  

This Euro-American influence on Pan-Asianism and Pan-Islamism may perhaps appear as little more than yet another form of Western influence on the East. Starting from the late 1890s, however, Muslim intellectuals began to perceive international relations as a global encirclement of the Muslim world by the Christian West in an illegitimate manner. While European authors perceived emerging 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. Around the same time East Asian intellectuals were increasingly emphasizing the conflict between «the white and yellow races». It is during this period that Pan-Islamist and Pan-Asian thinkers began to develop the narrative of a sinister Western expansion in Asia since the 18th century, employing Hegelian notions of continuous conflict between East and West. 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 (dôbun-dôshu in Japanese). 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. It was not the legacy of common culture, history or religion, but the geopolitics of Western imperialism that was shaping the imaginations of non-Western intellectuals to conceptualize an anti-Western alliance. A similar expansion of the 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 allowed them to link the destinies of China and India.

29 For the development of shared Eastern identity in different parts of Asia around the turn of the century, see R. Karl, Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century (Durham, 2002). For the development of cooperation between Japanese Asianists and Muslim activists around the notion of shared Eastern identity, see S. Esenbel, «Japan’s Global Claim to Asia and the World of Islam: Transnational Nationalism and World Power, 1900–1945», The American Historical Review 109, 4 (2004), 1140–1170.
Japan with their own. The emerging Muslim admiration for Japan is a good example of this change in the imaginative construction of transnational identity. This growing embrace of an Asian identity by Muslim intellectuals had grave consequences for the Ottoman Empire, because, parallel to the development of a pro-Western Hellenistic Christian identity among its Greek and Armenian citizens, the divergence between Muslim and Christian subjects of the Empire grew larger.

European discourses about racial hierarchies, due to their underlying scientific claims, were harder to challenge than the ideas of Orient and Occident, which were flexible enough to be re-defined and used against the legitimacy of colonialism. In the political domain, the idea of the yellow race’s inferiority, and the discourse of the yellow peril, led Pan-Asianists to respond with their own theories of a «white peril» in Asia. One should remember that one of the most influential Pan-Asianist arguments for Japanese-Chinese racial solidarity was written by Prince Konoe Atsumaro upon his return from a lengthy stay in Germany during the 1890s, at the peak of German yellow peril debates. Konoe 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. Similarly, since the Muslim world was often construed as equivalent to a category of race, even the least religious Ottoman intellectuals, such as Ahmed Riza, felt compelled to write apologetic pieces defending Islam against Orientalist positions. More important for Asian intellectuals, however, was the issue of race classification in the writings of Darwin, Spencer, Gustave Le Bon and others. The first generation of Ottoman and Japanese reformists had dealt with the questions of geographical, climatic, and religious determinism by engaging the writings of Buckle, Guizot, Montesquieu etc.
With regard to new and more scientific ideas on race determinism, Asian intellectuals generally preferred the theories of Herbert Spencer, in particular his notion of racial self-responsibility, because they could accept that in reality the coloured races were underdeveloped, but denied that this was a permanent inferiority. The idea of biological self-responsibility meant that intellectual elites could intervene, by various forms of social engineering and calls for a re-awakening, in order to put an end to the decline of their racial or religious communities.

It should be noted that Pan-Asianists and Pan-Islamists were themselves 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. 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. Thus he objected to their depiction as uncivilized savages in need of colonial intervention for progress and development. Even though Ottoman and Japanese elites insisted on their civilizational equality, at least in potential, with the West, they developed a civilizing mission ideology in their own regions: the Ottomans claimed that they had a mission to civilize backward Muslim regions, while Japan expressed hopes to civilize East Asia.

3. Awakening of the East – Revolt Against the West

It is against the backdrop of this long tradition of engagement among Asian elites with the European discourses of Orient and race, and Western intellectuals’ awareness of this challenge, that the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 became a turning point in the history of decolonization, and thus the political destiny of Western hegemony in Asia. Despite the fact that the Japanese won the war with the support of the British Empire, non-Western elites saw this war as a crucial turning point in their struggle against the civilizing mission ideology of European colonialism. Upon the Japanese victory, all previous European discourses about the inferiority of the Asian and yellow races were proven to be invalid. 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. Against the prevailing vogue for Social Darwinism, the Russo-Japanese War confirmed the earlier preference of non-Western intellectuals (and of many others).

35 H. Halid, *Hilal ve Salib Münazaasi* (Cairo, 1907), 185–188.
westerners as well) for the idea that the existing underdevelopment of Asian or Muslim societies should not be seen as permanent due to race or religion. Following the model of what Japan had done in four decades, Asian societies could awaken, exercise self-strengthening and catch up with the developed societies of Europe in an equally short period of time. In that sense, however, although the Japanese victory was viewed by anti-colonial nationalists as a sign of the awakening of Eastern civilization, or the revival of Asia, it also confirmed the universality of the European inspired vision of progress and civilization. After all, Japan was proving that a single civilization and modernity, which had gained perfection in Europe, was the universal legacy of humanity, and that it could be adopted by and successfully merged with the local cultures in Asia.37

The slogans of the «Awakening of the East» associated with the Russo-Japanese War are indicative of the agency of non-Western actors in the history of decolonization and the end of Western hegemony both intellectually and politically. Western civilization did not have to «decline» for Asia to gain liberation from Western hegemony. A series of constitutional revolutions, partly inspired by the Japanese model, in Iran (1906), Turkey (1908) and China (1911) also signaled the modernist content of the Asian re-awakening.38 It was led by Young Turks, Iranians or Chinese, who were well trained in European thought, and who aimed to reform their societies along European lines, even though an emphasis on cultural authenticity and civilizational values accompanied the process of modernization.

Thus, the subsequent impact of World War I on alternative visions of world order, especially in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thought, has to be considered in relation to 1904–1914 as an era of Asia’s self-conscious revival and awakening. By 1914, Ottoman and Japanese intellectuals had already developed their alternative discourses of civilization, where East and West both carried virtues, and their synthesis or harmony would result in a higher level of world civilization. In fact, members of the Japanese elite insisted that Japan would assume leadership in carrying out this East-West synthesis, thus assuring both its equality with the West and its leadership in the East.39 It was at this juncture that Ottoman and Japanese intellectuals developed highly sophisticated theories about the indispensability of following the European civilization, and the inevitability of this process, while at the same time underlining the insufficiency of the European model in the Asian context. Late Ottoman sociologist Ziya Gökalp, with references to both the Japa-
Chinese example and European theories, formulated a new vision of authentic modernity based on the trinity of Islamic identity, Turkish nationalism and European inspired universal civilization, whose synthesis would be necessary to resolve the tensions between the indispensable and insufficient aspects of Western civilization as a model for Turkish reform.\textsuperscript{40}

The influence of Pan-Islamic ideas, especially the diagnosis of international relations as a modern crusade of the West against the Muslim world under the pretext of civilization, became crucial for gathering Ottoman public support for entering World War I on the side of Germany.\textsuperscript{41} Young Turk leaders of the post-1908 Revolution Ottoman government initially hoped to establish an alliance with the British Empire.\textsuperscript{42} Yet, the invasion of Ottoman Libya by Italy in 1911, and the Balkan War in 1912, which started with an attack against the Ottoman State by an alliance of Christian nations, led to a great disillusionment about the «West» when none of the great powers intervened to stop these violations of international law.\textsuperscript{43} Rising anti-Western emotions in Ottoman public opinion aroused the concern of the leading Ottoman Westernist, Abdullah Cevdet. For example, in a polemic between Abdullah Cevdet and Celal Nuri, it became clear that Cevdet did not want a radical condemnation and hatred of the imperialist West, as this might lead to the rejection of the Enlightenment West as well. In response, Celal Nuri noted that he made a distinction between the «good» Enlightenment West and the «bad» imperialist West, and that his anti-Westernism did not extend to everything about Western culture, much less to modernity.\textsuperscript{44}

Many Ottoman public opinion leaders reasoned that they had to use the intra-European rivalry as a chance to take their revenge upon the modern and secular «crusade» against the Islamic world of the British, French and Russian Empires. This was a drastic change from the 19th century Ottoman foreign policy of cooperation with the leading Western powers while implementing «civilized» reforms. In some ways, the Ottoman insistence on securing a formal alliance with Germany as a precondition for entering the Great War was a continuation of this Ottoman desire to be part rather than outside European diplomacy, and to resist being

\textsuperscript{40} For the subaltern split in the thought of Ziya Gökalp, see A. Davison, «Ziya Gökalp and «Provincializing Europe»», \textit{Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East} 26, 3 (2006, forthcoming).


\textsuperscript{44} For Celal Nuri’s critique of Abdullah Cevdet’s pro-Westernism during the Balkan Wars, see C. Nuri, \textit{Müşlûmanlara, Türklerle Hakaret, Düşmanlara Riyayet ve Muhabbet} (Istanbul, 1914).
treated like the colonies in Africa and Asia. But, beyond this diplomatic calculation, popular notions of Pan-Islamic solidarity provided Ottoman policy makers with the vision that, upon entering the war, they would be able to utilize the contradictions and weak points in the imperial world order by encouraging Muslim disobedience to and if possible open revolt against it. One major problem for the Ottomans in imagining a military confrontation with Britain and France was the sour feeling of fighting against a civilization from which the Ottomans had learned modernity. Indeed, in a patriotic and Pan-Islamic play, *Halife Ordusu Mısır ve Kafkas’da* [Caliphate Army in Egypt and Caucasia], depicting discussions among Ottoman military academy students around the time of the Ottoman decision to join the Great War, there is a scene expressing this Ottoman dilemma. In response to excited anticipation that the war would bring doom to Europe and salvation to the Ottoman State, a student named Subhi, who had previously studied in Europe, asserts that he is not happy to see the «bankruptcy of a great civilization» from which the Ottomans learned so much. The dilemma of Westernized Ottoman intellectuals in advocating a war against the cradle of the modernity that they emulated could only be resolved by the fact that, by 1914, the Ottomans had already made a sharp distinction between the ideal of universal modernity and its specifically western version.

The Japanese Empire, as an ally of the British Empire, was on the opposite side from the Ottoman Empire during World War I, and thus it did not try to mobilize any Pan-Asianist revolt. Yet, Pan-Asianist intellectuals were very active in Japan and elsewhere in Asia during World War I, emphasizing Western subjugation of the coloured Asian races as the main conflict in international affairs, and urging the Japanese Empire to break its alliance with Britain in order to become the natural leader of rising Asian nationalism.

Although Japan’s Pan-Asianists were in opposition during World War I, they did conduct a successful public opinion campaign in cooperation with Asianists in China and India, underlining the continuing racial discrimination by whites even against their Japanese allies, and emphasizing that it was better for Japanese national interests to be the leader of a free Asia than to be a second-class member of the all-white superpowers club.

World War I immensely affected the destinies of the Pan-Asian and Pan-Islamic revolts against the West. On the one hand, the visible destruction and barbarity of the Great War in Europe strengthened Pan-Asian and Pan-Islamic discourses, as more and more intellectuals in Asia emphasized the idea of a «declining» Europe.

---


Instead of claiming to civilize others, Europe now needed to learn moral civilization from Asia. In fact, the counter-discourse of the morally superior East saving the West from its own decadence, and thus saving humanity from the West, was shared by <pessimist> groups in Europe as well as by various Asian intellectuals. However, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, on the one hand, and Wilsonian Principles of national self-determination and the League of Nations on the other, undermined the previous notion that Pan-Islamic or Pan-Asian solidarity was the only way to overcome colonialism. There were now two viable «Western» alternatives to the declining imperialist world order. In a sense, Western civilization was offering its own solutions to the globally acknowledged crisis of international order: Either a new sense of normative liberal internationalism, or a socialist alternative.

Thus, Socialist internationalism was calling for a complete end to imperialism, and promised that the unjust Western hegemony over Asia would end both through the agency of the European working classes and the solidarity of Asian nations. Initially, the Bolsheviks tried to benefit from the accumulated anti-Western sentiments of Asian societies and the tide of Pan-Islamic activism by organizing the 1920 Eastern People’s Congress in Baku, where leading Pan-Islamic personalities such as Enver Paşa appeared.

The new Bolshevik government in Russia was also supporting the anti-colonial nationalist movements in the Muslim world. Yet, the Bolsheviks could not accept the idea of an alternative Eastern civilization entrenched within Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian discourses, and gradually socialists distanced themselves from Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian movements, due to their fear that instead of using them, they might themselves become instruments of these two rival internationalisms.

On the other side, the initially positive Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian interest in the Bolshevik revolution also gradually turned into animosity and competition. Both in Japan and the Ottoman State, internationalist visions before World War I had generally concurred on racial and religious identities, but both societies now witnessed the rise of socialist internationalism among their own citizens in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution. Similarly, the Pan-Asianist moment within Indian, Chinese or Vietnamese national movements from 1905 to 1914 was replaced by the attraction of socialist alternatives for nationalists of a newer generation.

49 For the separation between Communism and Pan-Islamism, see T. Malaka, «Communism and Pan-Islamism», What Next: Marxist Discussion Journal 21 (2001), can be found at the following web link: http://www.whatnextjournal.co.uk/Pages/Back/Whatnext21/PanIslam.html.
50 For example, interest in Japan among leading Vietnamese nationalists from 1905 to 1914 was replaced by Wilsonian and Socialist inclinations after World War I. For the pro-Japanese trend in mainstream Vietnamese nationalism, see D. Marr, Vietnamese Anti-Colonialism (Berkeley / Calif., 1971), 113. Ho Chi Minh’s biography illustrates the appeal of both Woodrow Wilson’s principle of self-determination and Socialist internationalism. See M. Bradley, Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919–1950 (Chapel Hill / N.C., 2000).
The relationship between the Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian revolt against the West and Wilsonianism was equally complex. Many Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian intellectuals admired Woodrow Wilson, and saw him as an exceptional Western leader who tried to insert normative principles into international affairs. There was also the paradox of a widespread nationalist utilization of the Wilsonian Principle of the right to self-determination against the imperialist legacy of ‘universalist’ standards of civilization, as seen in the biographies of Ho Chi Minh, Sa’d Zaghlul and other nationalists in Asia. If independence from colonialism was congruent with the natural right to national self-determination, intellectuals of the colonized nations could argue that they did not have to prove that they had the merit of civilization to deserve equal treatment by the Western powers.

In the context of the Ottoman defeat in World War I, Muslim leaders of the Ottoman State found Wilsonianism to be a means to gain independence and secure a new national state in areas where Muslims were a majority. Hence, some of the most articulate advocates of Pan-Islamism in the Ottoman State, such as Celal Nuri İléri, became founders of the «Wilsonian Principles Society» in Istanbul and asked for American intervention and a mandate for a national Turkey against a potential ‘imperial’ settlement of cross-national Ottoman lands. Yet, the demands of the Ottoman Muslim leadership to have the Ottoman State recognized as the national home to its Muslim majority was rejected by the Paris Peace Conference, again with arguments about the civilizational inferiority of the Turkish Muslims. It was in this context (of the Conference’s endorsement of Greek, Armenian and Kurdish nationalism and its rejection of Ottoman Turkey’s Wilsonian demands) that the Turkish national movement became the focus of a new post-World War I era Pan-Islamism, a development most clearly embodied in the «Khilafat Movement» of India.

Established by Indian Muslims, and supported by leading Hindu nationalists such as Gandhi, the «Khilafat Movement» symbolized a paradoxical merger between the ideals of Islamic solidarity, anti-colonial nationalism and Wilsonian notions of legitimacy. While collecting enormous sums of material donations for the Turkish war for independence, the «Khilafat Movement» leaders asked the British government, the colonial rulers of India, to recognize the right to self-determination of the Muslim majority in Turkey. Even though the name of the movement was «Khilafat», implying that it aimed to liberate the seat of the Muslim

---

caliphate in Istanbul from allied occupation, it was sending its aid to the national government in Ankara and it received the moral support of non-Muslim Hindu nationalists. Ultimately, the fact that the Turkish national movement achieved its goals was partly due to moral and material support from the Pan-Islamic movement. Nevertheless, the elite of the new Turkish Republic decided to abolish the caliphate and disavow its Pan-Islamic claims to leadership in the Muslim world, thus indicating their own self-conscious preference for a Wilsonian direction in the interwar international order. Turkey remained outside of the League of Nations for another decade, perceiving the League as a new way of justifying British and French colonial interests in the region. Yet, its decision to abolish the caliphate ended the high moment of post-World War I realpolitik Pan-Islamism. It is important to note that, at this crucial moment of abandoning the Pan-Islamic discourse of civilization and world order, the leaders of the Turkish Republic did not abolish the discourse of civilization itself. Instead, they emphasized that the Eastern-Islamic civilization could not be a true alternative to the West in terms of carrying out concrete modernizing reforms, and that a secular national Turkey could and wanted to be a member of Western civilization. In many ways, Kemalism demonstrated the triumph of the Eurocentric concept of a singular and universal civilization embedded in earlier anti-imperialist thought. Kemalist thinkers continued to depict the Western powers as sinister, unreliable and untrustworthy, but nevertheless identified with the superiority of the Western civilization in carrying out radical projects of transforming a Muslim majority society into a «civilized» modern one.

Pan-Asianist responses to Wilsonianism traveled along a similarly twisted road. When the Japanese government, partly under the influence of earlier Pan-Asianist propaganda, proposed a Race Equality Clause at the Paris Peace Conference, Japanese Pan-Asianists were mobilized in support of this proposal, suggesting that it would be the litmus test for the sincerity and credibility of the moral principles underlying the League of Nations. The rejection of the Race Equality Proposal was indeed depicted by Pan-Asianists as a proof of the continuation of white supremacist ideology and Western hegemony under the mask of the League. On the other hand, the Wilsonian idea of national self-determination, in inspiring the Korean national revolution and the «May 4th Movement» in 1919, revealed the contradictions between nationalism and Pan-Asianism in Japan, as

---

54 For examples of the post-World War I Pan-Islamic movement and its ideas, see S. M. H. Kidwai, The Future of the Muslim Empire: Turkey (London, 1919); S. M. H. Kidwai, The Sword against Islam or a Defence of Islam’s Standard-Bearers (London, 1919); G. Minault, The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India (New York, 1982).


most of the Japanese Pan-Asianists in their vision of Asian solidarity had imagined that Korea would forever be part of the Japanese Empire. In that sense, Wilsonian internationalism weakened the Pan-Asian challenge to Western hegemony in Asia. Ideas of Asian solidarity survived throughout the interwar era, with effective critiques of both the League of Nations and the Socialist internationalism. Yet, the Pan-Asian revolt against the West, too, became overshadowed by the two Western alternatives to the crisis of Western imperialism, namely Wilsonianism and Socialist internationalism.

A counter-discourse of civilization around re-defined notions of an East-West distinction thus survived World War I, and became dominant in the interwar period, though interpreted very differently. Even though political activism in the name of Asian or Islamic solidarity did not have much of an influence in international politics during the 1920s, the visions for a revival of Asia, the idea of Eastern and Western civilizations, and the diagnosis about the conflict of civilizations began to be shared by many Japanese intellectuals. It was this legacy of civilizational thinking and anti-Western historical memory that the Japanese elites of the 1930s were able to utilize, to meet moment of crisis in Japanese imperialism. Japan’s so-called «return to Asia» and its challenge to the remaining European hegemony in Asia was not an outgrowth of the long-standing Pan-Asian movement but rather an appropriation of those earlier ideas by various state agencies during the 1930s. Similar to that earlier Pan-Asianism, which had emerged during the era of European high imperialism (1882–1914), Japan’s official Asianism displayed an ambivalent attitude to the idea of Europe’s universality. While claiming to overturn modernity and to end European colonialism in Asia, the Japanese Empire in fact embodied a most radical experiment in modernization.

4. Conclusion
The story of the Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian revolt(s) against the West illustrates the ways in which non-Western elites contributed to the process of decolonization by challenging the legitimacy of Eurocentric world order with values inspired by the idea of a universal West. In this process, non-Western elites became active subjects in the appropriation of European ideas of history, race and civilization, forming their own counter-narratives, and refashioning their own visions of modernity.


and universality. Their re-employment of Orientalist knowledge categories of East and West for anti-colonial and nationalist purposes brought about the somewhat paradoxical emphasis on the Islamic, Asian, yellow race, or Eastern identities at a time when these elites were self-consciously Eurocentric in their vision of reform and modernization. During the interwar period, both the Turkish and Japanese were familiar with the discourses of the «decline of the West», but this did not lead them to abandon the Eurocentric notions of civilization and modernity. In Turkey, the elites who once mobilized the ideals of a Pan-Islamic revolt against the West during World War I, in turn became staunch Westernizers, contributing to the confidence of Europeans who believed in the universality of their own experience. Similarly, Japanese Pan-Asianists were proud of Japan’s achievements in appropriating Western modernity, and spreading the merits of Western civilization in underdeveloped Asia. Even when the Japanese elites of the late 1930s utilized ideas of Pan-Asian solidarity as a solution to the crisis of their imperial expansion in East Asia, Japan’s achievements in Eurocentric modernity were presented as the reason for its leadership in Asia.

In short, non-Western elites delegitimized the Eurocentric imperial order by re-orientoing European discourses of civilization, Orient and race. Yet, in all of these non-Western challenges, the idea of Europe’s universality was preserved and re-created, to the extent that Europe was re-born in non-Western discourses at a time when European pessimists were declaring the «decline of the West». It is in this spirit that peaks of anti-Western and anti-imperial emotions and ideas in Asia were also moments of powerful pro-Western ideological trends, such as in the aftermaths of the Russo-Japanese War and World War I.
Jenseits der Zivilisation: Panislamismus, Panasiatismus und die Revolte gegen den Westen


Au-delà de la civilisation: pan-islamisme, pan-asiatisme et révolte contre l’occident

L’article a pour sujet le paradoxe crucial qui s’est imposé aux élites non-occidentales depuis la fin du 19e siècle: comment critiquer les fondements intellectuels de l’ordre eurocentrique et impérialiste en Asie, alors même que la légitimité et l’identité de ces élites étaient profondément marquées par les concepts eurocentriques de «civilisation» et de «modernité». L’article compare la pensée pan-islamiste dans l’empire ottoman et les représentations pan-asiatiques au Japon. Il met en évidence que les élites critiques – y compris celles qui adhéraient aux discours anti-occidentaux – n’étaient pas prêtes mettre en question l’idée de l’universalité de l’Europe et de son rôle comme modèle pour les réformes sociétales. À partir des années 1880, le succès des élites ottomanes et japonaises dans la transformation des idées européennes de civilisation, de race et d’orient, s’est fondé sur le maintien du principe des lumières à l’occidentale – défendu même quand elles mettaient en scène des identités particulières: islamiques ou asiatiques, raciales ou orientales. Ce dialogue critique avec la représentation de l’universalité de l’Europe permet aussi de mieux comprendre l’accueil ambivalent que la thèse de «la chute de l’Occident» a reçu dans l’entre-deux-guerres parmi les intellectuels turcs et japonais.

Prof. Cemil Aydın
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Garinger 128
9201 University City Blvd.
Charlotte, N. C. 28223–0001, USA
e-mail: caydin@uncc.edu