# THE IMPACT OF NATIONALISM ON CIVILISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN SECURITY: WORKS OF SAID NURSI AND MUSA JĀRULLĀH

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**Abstract**: This essay is an attempt to outline the ideology of nationalism, its types and impact on the well-being of societies from the viewpoints of two Muslim intellectuals, Said Nursi and Musa Jārullāh. Based on the predictions of these two scholars and the current political developments, it identifies the ideas of negative nationalism and racism to be one of the main reasons behind moral corruption, social, political and economic injustice prevalent in the modern world; and it offers some solutions to bring compassion, security, peace and harmony to humankind. The essay suggests that the universal principles of peace, fairness and virtue derived from the revealed religions can produce true civilisations, and offer true happiness and harmony to all members of the society regardless of their ethnic or ideological backgrounds. It also suggests that modern methods of studying political and social developments in the Muslim world should be urgently revised.

## Introduction

Awareness of common identity, political solidarity, and a sense of belonging and loyalty to a certain community have existed throughout human history. Nationalism in its modern form, however, is a new phenomenon, which was invented in Europe during a period of turmoil – when the French revolution of 1789 had destroyed the traditional political structure and social order in France. It offered a remedy for the negative consequences of the revolution such as human alienation, oppression and impoverishment of the spirit. Nationalism rapidly gained popularity among European peoples during the nineteenth century of the Common Era; and, afterwards, it was introduced to other places, including the Muslim world, by Europe's expanding imperial reach.

In the 1930s, a Hungarian-born journalist, Hans Kohn (1891-1971), quite optimistic about the positive role of nationalism in the Muslim world, developed a theory that Muslim countries were going through a secularisation process similar to that seen in Europe. He noticed that, "Just as in Eastern Europe the nations without a history had been roused in the nineteenth century to self-consciousness and the endeavour to play an active part in history, so now the peoples of the Orient were roused from a period of medieval feudalism and religion to one instinct with the watchwords of nationalism and middle-class capitalism."[1] On the basis of his observations, Hans Kohn formed a 'universal sociological theory' in the

study of social change which he saw as signifying the transition from medieval to modern forms of organisation, concluding that "religious groupings lose power when confronted with the consciousness of a common nationality and speech."[2] Harvard Professor Rupert Emerson (1899-1979) was influenced by this idea and formulated another theory suggesting that "the rise of nationalism coincided with a decline in the hold of religion."[3] Later scholars in the field, including some scholars of Muslim origin, became profoundly influenced by the ideas of Hans Kohn and Rupert Emerson on the role of nationalism in the Muslim world and its ultimate victory over the traditional *ummah* identity. In 1967 Bernard Lewis, one of the most influential postwar scholars on the Middle East, for instance, while discussing the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh), stated that, "Another such struggle is being fought in our time – not against Al-Lat and Al-'Uzza [names of pre-Islamic objects of worship] – but a new set of idols called states, races, and nations; this time it is the idols that seem to be victorious."[4]

The first nation-state to emerge from the ruins of the last Islamic caliphate was the Turkish Republic, and it formally proclaimed its sovereignty on 29 October 1923 following the Treaty of Lausanne. Following the decolonisation strategy of the post-World War II period, various nation-states began to emerge in the Muslim world in the name of ethnic nationalism. At present, there are more than fifty Muslim states, extending from the Atlas Mountains in the West to the Malay Archipelago in the East, and from Sub-Saharan Africa to the steppes of Central Asia. Yet the legacy of colonialism continues to shape and reshape their politics, tactics, economics as well as societies. Colonialism also survived in the forms taken by state ideologies, political visions, and institutions.[5]

In fact, the colonial division of Muslim territories, in principle as well as along the lines that were initially introduced, has been largely accepted by the successor Muslim states and has been institutionalised in the international system. But many of these divisions were problematic. Some were carried out arbitrarily to accommodate local colonial officials without respecting their impact on inhabitants and resources. Other divisions reflected the needs of colonial powers to resolve diplomatic tensions among themselves. Vali Reza Nasr, a leading expert on the Middle East and Dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington D.C., observed that in many cases, colonies were thus created to satisfy disgruntled European allies or to serve as buffers against expansionist ones. For instance, concerns about France after 1798 led to British occupation of Egypt, which in turns warranted British control of Palestine after World War I. While discussing colonialism's legacy for the development of the Muslim states in the twentieth century, Reza Nasr noticed that strategic decisions and economic interests finally led to the creation of new colonial territories, which more often than not became the bases for future states.

British interests in Persian Gulf oil, as Reza Nasr pointed out, led to the creation of Kuwait for instance, and a similar attempt at creating an "Arabistan" out of Iran's Khuzestan province in the early twentieth century. Decades later, similar economic considerations led Britain to encourage Brunei not to join Malaysia.[6] In sum, the authorities, who were responsible for drawing the territorial borders of the nation-states in the Muslim world, paid almost no attention to ethnic peculiarities and the wills of the peoples living within these particular boundaries.

Borders created the shape of these Muslim states but did not guarantee their viability as well. Territorial divisions have been a source of tension between various Muslims states that claim mutually exclusive rights to the same territories. Reza Nasr further noticed that colonial powers drew boundaries but did little to unify the peoples that fell within those boundaries into a national culture. At times they did the opposite; namely, the colonial powers sought to maintain control by encouraging competition between ethnic, linguistic, religious, or tribal groupings.[7] Unresolved tensions between peoples and regions continue to be one of the main problems in the modern Muslim world, frequently leading to bloody clashes that have escalated sharply in the last several decades.

Shortly after the establishment of these nation-states, Islam returned to influence the values and goals of state politics. In recent years, the movements with apparent Islamic modes have redefined the nature and essence of politics in the majority of Muslim states, while affirming the power in some states such as Iran, Turkey, Egypt or Tunisia on the basis of the free choice of the populace.

Accordingly, this article makes three arguments. Firstly, it casts doubts on the accuracy of the well-established idea in mainstream scholarship that the rise of nationalism in the Muslim world coincided with a decline in the role of religion. More to the point, it argues against the social scientists' consideration of nationalism as an inevitable stage in the universal ideological development. Lastly, it proposes that ethnic nationalism was the wrong answer to the calamities existing in the colonised Muslim world, and brought about more enmity and antagonism, contributing greatly to sectarian, ethnic as well as ideological conflicts in the contemporary Muslim *ummah*. At the same time, this article does not aim at revising the definitions of nationalism in an inclusive manner. Rather, it offers a fresh outlook from the perspectives of two Muslim scholars, Said Nursi (1877-1960) and Musa Jārullāh (1875-1949).

Said Nursi, a famous Muslim thinker of Kurdish ethnic origin, was born in the territory of modern Turkey. He lived during a time when the idea of nationalism had became one of the principal ideologies in the modern world, successfully spreading Europe's colonial impact throughout Muslim lands and offering an alternative to the traditional *ummah* identity. This led to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.The ghastly events of the First and Second World Wars

demonstrated how devastating the consequences of the ideology of nationalism could be. His ideas on nationalism and its impact on civilisational improvement and human security are elaborated in his *magnum opus*, *Risale-i Nur* (Epistle of Light).

Musa Jārullāh Bigiyev was a Muslim Tatar religious scholar, journalist, politician, educator and prolific writer who devoted his entire life to reconciling Islam with modern progress. He was born in 1875 in Novo-Cherkassk, a Russian city near Rostov-on-Don. He published more than sixty books on Islamic jurisprudence, *ʿaqīdah*, sciences of the Qurʾan, sciences of the *ḥadīth*, literature, economics, law, politics and history.[8] In this article, in order to elucidate his views on ethnic nationalism, we consider two works written in 1920, i.e. *Islam Milletlerine* (To Muslim Nations) and *Muraja'at* (Address to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey). Before opening the core discussion on nationalism from the viewpoints of Nursi and Jārullāh, let us highlight some important aspects of mainstream scholarship on nationalism.

## Discussions on Nationalism

The term nationalism (*nationalismus*) was coined by a German philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), in the 1780s. Since then, the concept of nationalism, underlying motives behind its emergence, as well as its influence on the socio-political spheres of the modern world, particularly the Muslim world, were interpreted differently. Focusing primarily on the inspiring role of nationalism in independence movements and the emergence of nation-states, Anthony D. Smith has defined it as "an ideological movement, for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation' like others."[9]

Hans Kohn has described nationalism in more comprehensive terms as being

a state of mind, permeating the large majority of a people and claiming to permeate all its members, it recognises the nation-state as the ideal form of political organisation, and nationality as the source of all creative and cultural energy and economic well-being. The supreme loyalty of man is therefore due to his nationality, and his own life is supposedly rooted in and made possible by its welfare.[10]

Adhering to the same position, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines nationalism as a modern ideology based on the premise that the individual's loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests.[11] Nationalism in mainstream scholarship was mainly interpreted as a belief, creed or political ideology of modern times that involves a voluntarily accepted or coercively imposed form of identification with individuals and a nation. Social scientists

depicted it as distinguishing modern times from the Middle Ages, an inevitable stage in the universal ideological development. Being assured that Western culture was a contemporary pinnacle in that social evolution, researchers mechanically adopted the approach of 'modelling' Europe for every small or big event occurring in the other parts of the globe without paying any attention to regional, cultural and historical peculiarities of these particular cases. While discussing the European observations on the emergence of nationalistic aspirations in the early twentieth century Muslim world, Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities* indicated that, "European scholars, accustomed to the conceit that everything important in the modern world originated in Europe, too easily took 'second generation' ethnolinguistic nationalisms (Hungarian, Czech, Greek, Polish, etc.) as the starting point in their modelling, no matter whether they were 'for' or 'against' nationalism."[12] The ideology of nationalism was consequently applauded for enabling Muslim nations to enter, from an "insignificant corner," the age of "social progress" and "middle-class capitalism."[13]

Hans Kohn, for instance, having an absolute confidence that Western culture was the peak of social progress, introduced a strongly moralistic distinction between a good nationalism (civic), which he associated with the West, and a bad nationalism (ethnic) allegedly typical for the non-Western world. In Kohn's view, nationalism in the West was linked to civic ideals such as libertarian and democratic values, whereas in the East this did not occur. The West was the first to develop nationalism, argued Kohn, and it subsequently became a model and teacher for the rest of the world. By the Western world, he meant a narrowly defined geographical area, namely Great Britain and British dominions, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United States.[14] However, when nationalism spread to other regions of the globe, according to Kohn, it degenerated and became dangerous, violent and vicious. Ultimately, it found its culmination in Hitler and the World War II.[15]

Kohn's definition of "liberal, civic Western" and "illiberal, ethnic Eastern" nationalisms has been greatly influential in mainstream scholarship in providing a framework for studying different forms of nationalism. Some scholars, however, detected the signs of blind idealisation of the West and an obvious antipathy toward the East in Kohn's approach.

The contemporary Polish social scientist, Krzysztof Jaskulowski, for instance, challenged Kohn's dichotomy between two types of nationalism, saying that, "he reproduced stereotypical views of the West and the non-Western world and simply utilised them in his study of nationalism."[16] Another scholar from the UK, Taras Kuzio, also argued that Kohn's division of nationalism into 'civic Western' and 'ethnic Eastern' types is idealised and does not match up to historical or theoretical scrutiny. According to Kuzio, pure civic or ethnic states only exist

in theory.[17] Kuzio considered that such artificial division of nationalism by geography ignores ethnic and territorial violence that has taken place in Western states. Kohn negatively assessed nationalism in the 'East' by reflecting on their territorial disputes with neighbours, Kuzio stated, but, at the same time, Kohn completely ignored how the 'West' created large-scale overseas empires during that period and he did not discuss the numerous territorial disputes that the West itself was involved in during its state and nation-building projects. In addition, Western states were not neutral in their nation-building projects and these often marginalised national minorities and destroyed local identities.[18]

The famous British academic and intellectual historian, Elie Kedourie, also opposed the dichotomy between 'civic' and 'ethnic' nationalisms. Through studying the development of nationalism both in Europe and in regions outside the European-Christian cultural area, he deduced that nationalism was simply an unfortunate historical accident dating from the early nineteenth century and giving rise to imperialism, war and ultimately fascism.[19]

It follows that Kohn's framework for studying nationalism is theoretically, ethically and historically frail. The idolisation of European culture and its development, 'modelling' for every minor or sizeable event in other parts of the world is, in most cases, incapable of producing any reasonable or scholarly account. Accordingly, this article spotlights the existence of a gap between the theoretical image of nationalism and its real appearance in the Muslim world, and underlines the need for an alternative approach to studying nationalism and other political and social developments occurring in the Muslim world. In the following pages, the paper reviews the ideology of nationalism from the viewpoint of the 'ethnic' East.

## Nursi and Jārullāh on Nationalism

To grasp the thoughts of Said Nursi and Musa Jārullāh on nationalism, several principal aspects should be taken into consideration. Firstly, the words 'nation' (in Turkish: *millet*) and 'nationhood' (in Turkish: *milliyet*) in the writings of Nursi and Jārullāh were used in accordance with their Arabic and Old Turkish meanings to denote a religion and membership of it as a synonym of the word *ummah*. In 1923, for instance, Jārullāh began his *magnum opus*, *Islam Milletline*, with a clause proclaiming that, "All Muslims of Russia, united by their language, literature, religion, nature-temperament and goals, constitute one united *millet*."[20] At that particular point of time, Russia had a Muslim population of no less than twenty million, composed of various ethnic groups of Turkic, Iranian and Caucasian origin.

Secondly, the views of Nursi and Jārullāh on nationalism reflect the standard characteristics of traditional Islamic political thought. Western political thought,

based on the principles of competition and interclass conflict, is directed towards the analysis of social change. Nursi and Jārullāh, on the other hand, tried to expound the ideology of nationalism through its relationship with the universal values of rights, justice, equality and mutual assistance, principles which are essential for maintaining peace, social stability and human security.[21]

Jārullāh interpreted the meaning of nationality (*milliyet*) accordingly:

> Nationality is a set of peculiarities such as religion, custom, temperament and history. In nationality, unity by blood, unity by religion, and unity by historical-social conditions are respected. Unity in moral (cultural) values is a more respectable element in nationality. Such qualities are much more important than the nature of nationalism.[22]

At least two important points could be derived from the statement above by Jārullāh. Firstly, in his definition of nationality, he puts more emphasis on religious, moral, cultural and linguistic aspects, rather than on the territorial-political aspirations of a particular national group. Secondly, Jārullāh considered moral and religious elements as the fundamental components uniting peoples into a certain nation. Based on *ayat* 24 of *sūrah* al-Taubah of the Qur'an, Jārullāh proclaimed that brotherhood by religion is equal to brotherhood by blood, and the former to be superior even to the latter.[23]

The western ideology of nationalism (*fikr-i milliyet*), on the other hand, is a term used by Jārullāh and Nursi synonymously with racism (*fikr-i unsuriyet*). In fact, both of these scholars divided sentiments of nationalism (*milliyetçilik*) into two, i.e. the "positive" and "negative" types or levels. In his work entitled *Sünuhat* (published in 1919), Nursi stated that the "awakening of nationalism is either positive, in which case it is aroused through compassion for one's fellow men, and is the cause of mutual recognition and assistance; or it is negative, in which case, being aroused by racialist ambitions, it is the cause of antipathy and mutual hostility. And this Islam rejects."[24]

Accordingly, the possession of sentiments of belonging to a certain group for Nursi was a natural phenomenon: "it arises from an inner need of social life and is the cause of mutual assistance and solidarity; it ensures a beneficial strength; it is a means for further strengthening Islamic brotherhood."[25] However, if these natural sentiments begin demanding the superior loyalty of population over religion, or claim for superiority of a certain nation over other nations, it moves on to its non-natural level, the negative level of nationalism or racism.

In his *Address to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey*, Jārullāh also differentiated two types (levels) of national sentiments. The first type of national feelings, as he mentioned, is a divine phenomenon that enters the hearts of nations through divine books. It is a gift of nature (*fiṭrah*) and religion as a means thrusting (in the meaning of a healthy competition) towards civilisation. This,

according to him, is an innate force for peoples, which motivates them to further progress. Some individuals of a certain nation or the nation itself may have special abilities, particular perfections which propel them to develop and progress in the face of competition. This type of national sentiment, concluded Jārullāh, is not only desired but essential. But the second type of national feelings, through which rights of others are trampled and antagonism between nations arises, according to Jārullāh, is absolutely not desired and there is no necessity for it at all.[26]

Another important aspect shaping the views of Nursi and Jārullāh is that nationalism for them was a universal phenomenon, and not particular to a specific period or place. They did not consider it to be a distinctive element in transition from medieval to modern forms of organisation. Nationalism, in the forms of tribalism or racialism, has existed throughout human history. It was Islam, Nursi acknowledged, that abrogated the nationalism and tribalism of pre-Islamic Arabia and replaced such divisive tendencies with a holy, positive Islamic fervour.[27] He supported this view with the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (pbuh) who said that, in Islam, there is no difference between an Abyssinian slave and a leader of Quraish, once they have accepted Islam.[28] Even so, Nursi stated, negative nationalism returned and played its disastrous role once again, causing untold harm in the history of Muslims, during the Umayyad rule.[29]

At the same time, Jārullāh and Nursi acknowledged the fact that a most powerful and widespread wave evoking of nationalistic sentiments had surged forth in their times and was spreading rapidly among Muslim peoples who for centuries had identified themselves simply as Muslims. Nursi said, "The cunning European tyrants in particular awaken this among Muslims in a negative fashion, so that they may divide them and devour them."[30]

In his *Address to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey*, Jārullāh opposed the ideas of Pan-Turkism and the 'Proletarian Internationalism' policy of the Soviet Union as myths and artificial remedies, which were unable to improve the social conditions of people. He said, "I know, before and during the European war, national sentiments were boiling in Turkey, Turkistan and in other countries with the aim of provoking sentiments of Pan-Turkism in the hearts of the youth; in that spirit novels were written, and that was blended with Islam, but all this was alien to the doctrines of Islam. All this was a myth."[31] Jārullāh further described the phenomenon of evoking nationalist ambitions in such an unnatural way as being a great sin against humanity. Islam refutes this form of national sentiments, said he, but Islam is not against the first natural type of national feelings.[32]

In his *Risale-i Nur*, Nursi saw the negative type of nationalism as equivalent to racism and strongly condemned it as an artificial conception that destroys harmony in society, and results in inequity and injustice. Let us elaborate these views in the following pages.

## Negative Nationalism, Civilisation and Social Order

Jārullāh and Nursi considered negative nationalism as an artificial force that destroys true human civilisation and ruins the aspirations of people for social progress. Nursi regarded it as something "inauspicious, and harmful, it is nourished by devouring others, persists through hostility to others, and is aware of what it is doing. It is the case of enmity and disturbance."[33] For him, nationalism was a force responsible for spreading discrimination, rivalry and injustice in society. In his *Letters*, he affirmed that the principles of racism and nationalism do not follow justice and right, they impose tyranny toward other races. For a ruler of racialist leanings, said Nursi, prefers those of the same race, and cannot act justly. Therefore, "the bonds of nationalism may not be set up in place of the bonds of religion; if they are, there will be no justice; right will disappear."[34]

To demonstrate the harmfulness of nationalistic ideas, Nursi offered several examples from the past as well as from the contemporary times. Due to their combining ideas of nationalism with their politics, the Umayyads vexed the world of Islam, and, in addition, drew many calamities on themselves.[35] By planting their state on tribalism and putting the bonds of nationalism before those of Islam, as Nursi pointed out, they caused harm in two respects. Firstly, they offended the other nations and frightened them off. Secondly, since the principles of racialism and nationalism do not follow justice and right, they imposed tyranny toward other races. Nursi consequently concluded that this negative type of nationalism "flourishes through harming others and is nourished through devouring others."[36]

Observing the political events of his time, Nursi condemned nationalism in disturbing harmony and security in European society and causing the growth of injustice, enmity and racial discriminations among nations, which eventually led to World War I overwhelming Europe. While elaborating the main foundations and values of Western civilisation, Nursi came to the conclusion that its guiding principle, for relations between peoples and communities, was nationalism and racialism, effectively considering a particular race to be superior, and prioritising race over religion. In *The Twenty-Fifth Word* Nursi stated that:

> By reason of its philosophy, present-day civilization accepts 'force' as the point of support in the life of society. It takes as its aim 'benefits,' and considers the principle of its life to be 'conflict.' It considers the bond between communities to be 'racialism and negative nationalism.' While its aim is to provide 'amusements' for gratifying the appetites of the soul and increasing man's needs. However, the mark of force is aggression.[37]

Nursi further emphasised that a system, in which the bonds between peoples are based on negative nationalism or racialism, could not establish equality and justice within society:

And since the benefits are insufficient to meet all needs, their mark is that everyone tussles and jostles over them. The mark of conflict is contention, and the mark of racialism, aggression, since it thrives on devouring others. Thus, it is because of these principles of civilization that despite all its virtues, it has provided a sort of superficial happiness for only twenty per cent of mankind and cast eighty per cent into distress and poverty.[38]

 Accordingly, Nursi deemed the ideas of nationalism and racialism to be among the main reasons behind the social, political and economic injustice prevailing in the modern world. He believed that injustice and inequality inevitably lead to disunity, enmity and antagonism among different groups of society. Discord and antagonism, in turn, lead to weakness and, consequently, to the collapse of civilisations.[39] In 1921 he asserted that "the mark of negative nationalism and racialism is ghastly clashes, disastrous collisions, and their result, annihilation."[40] Nursi consequently called it a "fatal poison," a "European disease."[41]

Musa Jārullāh criticised two forms of the most widespread nationalistic tendencies in his time, Turkism and proletarian internationalism, for disturbing social stability and harmony. By 1920s, the leadership of Turkey, which was envisaged in the thought of Jārullāh to be the leader of the entire Muslim *ummah*,[42] became ethnocentric and began to give a more definite shape to its own version of nationalism. In 1921, Jārullāh sent his works, *Islam Milletlerine* and *Address to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey* to Ismail Subhi Soysallioglu, a member of the Assembly. In these works, Jārullāh warned the Turkish leadership about the long-lasting harmful consequences of the spread of racial ideas in the form of exalting a certain nation while completely neglecting the rights of other citizens with different ethnic peculiarities to social stability, unity and well-being of the entire nation.[43]

The Soviet form of nationalism, i.e. proletarian internationalism, according to Jārullāh, was more erroneous and disruptive than any previous racial ideologies. The formal standpoint of the communist regime towards the national question was formulated by Nikolai Bukharin, the main ideologue of communism, in 1919 in his well-known ideological piece entitled *Azbuka Kommunizma* (The Alphabet of Communism), which expounded the political programme of the Russian Communist Party. In this programme, the nationalistic sentiments of minority nations were considered as historical phenomenon or national superstitions, which have to gradually disappear. Although they provisionally tolerated the existence of more or less advanced nations, 'backward' and 'savage' nations, according to the Bolshevik ideologists, must be satisfied with only insignificant autonomies. In future, these 'savage' nations shall have to be assimilated by more civilised nations, such as the Russians. At the same time, the Bolsheviks did not support the idea of offering these 'backward' nations equal rights at par with

the more progressed ones.[44] In this way, the theorists of communist ideology completely ignored the first type of national sentiments, identified by Jārullāh as divine and natural, something essential to the further progress of human society.

The theorists of the communist programme presented their alternative type of nationalism, proletarian internationalism. Bukharin declared that all resources of the world should belong to the worldwide working class, and, according to him, "if national superstitions and national covetousness will stand on the path of internationalisation of industries and agriculture, down with them all here, there and everywhere."[45] On the issue of rights of nations for self-determination, he asserted that, "The will of nation is represented by workers, who constitute the majority of that nation, but not by its bourgeoisie class. For that reason, we recognise not rights of nations for self-determination, but rights of workers, the majority of the nation."[46]

Jārullāh disputed these ideas of proletarian internationalism, considering them immoral and disruptive in two aspects. Firstly, class-based civil uprisings and enmity destroy true human civilisation, ruin any aspiration for social progress; they develop only the desire to promote personal interests in individuals, they improve nothing in human society and they do not offer any benefit for the worldwide proletariat.[47]

Secondly, Jārullāh considered the ideas of the Bolsheviks on the national question to be chauvinistic and xenophobic and extremely harmful for multicultural and multi-religious countries like Russia. He absolutely disowned the Soviet scheme of offering privileges to "more progressed" nations while ignoring the rights of other 'backward' communities. According to Jārullāh, such chauvinistic ideas were myths established by artificial means in order to gain political advantage. He believed that only the protection of the natural rights of nationalities and offering universal equality among all nations would provide the world with real progress and social harmony. For Jārullāh, there was only one system capable of bringing equality to all small and big nations in their rights and dignity, namely Islam.[48] The last section of the paper evaluates the solutions for peace and human security expounded by Nursi and Jārullāh.

## Solutions for Peace and Human Security

Nursi and Jārullāh lived during the crucial age when nationalism began confidently reshaping the traditional political and societal structures of the Muslim realms. Nationalistic tendencies had gradually been admired by Muslim-educated circles for their effectiveness in the struggle against Western colonialism and imperialism. At the same time, the ideas of nationalism had been postulated to constitute a solution to long-lasting political and economic backwardness, and a remedy for social sicknesses prevailing in the Muslim world. Nursi and Jārullāh,

however, defined nationalism as a source of antagonism and enmity between nations and communities, rather than it being an impetus for social progress. They consequently warned the political, religious and intellectual elites of the Muslim world of the harmful impact of nationalistic tendencies on social well-being and human security. They both deemed the actual remedy for the evils of hostility, discrimination, violence and antagonism to be the establishment of a system whose fundamental principles are based on revealed laws. The main essence of revealed religions, as Nursi and Jārullāh believed, was to convey the universal concepts of peace, security, human dignity, concord and justice to mankind. Only revealed laws can produce true civilisation and offer true happiness and harmony.[49] Nursi consequently stated that, "The revival of religion is the revival of the nation. The life of religion is the light of life."[50] Thus all human beings, regardless of their ethnic or social differences, can find peace, happiness and salvation in the principles of revealed religions.

For Jārullāh and Nursi, revealed religions were the supreme source of egalitarianism, absolute justice and moral enhancement. Jārullāh assumed that, unlike the principles of nationalism and racism, Islam saw all ethnic groups to be equal peers. He consequently believed in the equality of all the peoples of the world regardless of their religious and ethnic peculiarities, or the ideologies they follow. According to him, the words of Allah *As long as these stand true to you, stand ye true to them: for Allah doth love the righteous*[51] constitute the basic principle of Islam for relations of Muslims with other peoples. Adhering to this, Jārullāh called for equality between all nations living in Russia and the entire world, all genders and social groups, in terms of rights and responsibilities.[52]

In the *Letters*, Nursi pointed out that the wisdom of humans as being created by Allah into different nations and tribes was in favour of "knowing and assisting each other" instead of conflict, hostility and killing. He interpreted the Qur'anic verse of "*O mankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other*"[53] accordingly: "I created you as peoples, nations, and tribes, so that you should know one another and the relations between you in social life, and assist one another; not so that you should regard each other as strangers, refusing to acknowledge one another, and nurturing hostility and enmity."[54]

Nursi subsequently saw that, in the present Muslim world, when the peoples and tribes of Islam are most in need of one another, and each is more oppressed and more poverty-stricken than the other, and they are all crushed beneath European domination, to regard one another as strangers due to the idea of nationalism and to consider one another to be enemies is an indescribable calamity:

> O my Turkish brother! You watch out in particular! Your nationhood has fused with Islam and may not be separated from it. If you do separate them, you will be finished! All

your glorious deeds of the past are recorded in the book of Islam's deeds. Since these glorious deeds cannot be effaced from the face of the earth by any power, don't you efface them from your heart due to the evil suggestions and devices of Satan![55]

Nursi repeatedly asserted that the nationhood of Muslims is only one, Islamic nationhood; and Muslims, in order to withstand European domination and the divisive influence of negative nationalism, should be united around this common nationhood. He considered the unity of Muslim nations around their common *ummah* identity to be the only force competent to enable all Muslims, regardless of their ethnic, financial and social differences, to enjoy equality, justice and security. While deliberating on hopeful remedies for the current state of backwardness, failure, despair and weakness of the Muslim world, Nursi stated in his *Emirdag Lahikası*, "Against these terrible forces of destruction, only and solely the Islamic Unity surrounding the truths of the Qur'an can endure. And it is the only way to save this land from the occupation of foreigners and this nation from falling into anarchy, and the means to save mankind from these dangers."[56]

Jārullāh acknowledged that disunity, and sectarian and ethnic (tribal) hostility among the contemporary Muslim nations were the main reasons behind their colonisation by the Western powers: "Numerous Muslim nations, which are like grains of sand, are separated from each other like the grains of sand; and, therefore, the majority of them became enslaved by the civilised world [Western powers]."[57] He subsequently suggested that the main secret behind the strength and success of the Islamic *ummah* in the past was in unity and solidarity among its members. This strong sense of unity existing in the hearts of the Believers was the real power and essence of Islam. Consequently, Jārullāh as well as Nursi saw that the key to rescuing Muslim nations from economic and social backwardness, and from the widespread antagonism and strife amongst followers of different *madhāhib* and schools of thought, could be found in bringing them all together under the common banner of Islam. They considered the re-establishment of Islamic unity to be the most important obligation of their times.[58]

In reality, Nursi and Jārullāh advocated not unity of Muslims alone, but the cooperation of all religious peoples of the world against the destructive forces of racism, nationalism, atheism and secularism. Nursi always urged his students to act tolerantly and peaceably toward followers of other paths and to return any criticism or aggression with good will, and above all to not allow political differences to cause disunity and so aid irreligion. Nursi encouraged cooperation with believing Christians as well and he personally initiated contacts with Christian leaders. For instance, he sent copies of *Risale-i Nur* to the Pope in Rome; and, in response to this, received a letter of thanks from the Vatican dated 22 February, 1951. Moreover, during his stay in Istanbul in the spring and summer of 1953, Nursi visited Athenagoras, the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Istanbul.[59]

When the Baghdad Pact was signed in February 1955 between Turkey and Iraq, and was subsequently joined by Pakistan, Iran and Britain, Nursi sent a letter of congratulation to the Prime Minister of Turkey, Adnan Menderes and the President, Celal Bayar. In this letter Nursi explained that the greatest danger for the country lies in racialism. It had caused harm to the Muslim peoples in the past, and there were again signs today that it was being exploited by 'covert atheists' with the aim of destroying Islamic brotherhood and preventing the unification of Muslim societies. The true nationality or nationhood of both Turks and Arabs, Nursi felt, was Islam; their 'Arabness' and 'Turkishness' had fused with Islam. The new alliance (The Baghdad Pact), according to him, would repulse the danger of racialism. Besides gaining for the Turkish nation "four hundred million brothers," it would also gain for them the "friendship of eight hundred million Christians."[60] Nursi appreciated this alliance as an important step toward global peace and reconciliation, of which all were in such need.

Nursi strongly believed that present-day civilisation, based on racism, conflict and aggression, would change form, and its system would fall apart. Then the true civilisation, founded on the positive truths of revelation, would emerge.[61] As for Islam, Nursi was very optimistic about its positive role in building such a true civilisation: Islam has the capacity to progress and comprises everything necessary to achieve true civilisation. Nursi assumed that, "God willing, through the strength of Islam in the future, the virtues of civilization will prevail, the face of the earth will be cleansed of filth, and universal peace will be secured."[62]

In sum, from the viewpoints of Nursi and Jārullāh, the main remedy for the evils of present-day hostility and antagonism was the creation of a system, based on revealed principles, which propagates global peace, unity, compassion, solidarity and actual progress.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The article made two original analyses of the academic literature on nationalism. Firstly, by evaluating the views of several intellectuals from the West and East, it identified the methodological and theoretical weaknesses of mainstream scholarship on the role of nationalism in the Muslim world. Secondly, the paper presented an original study of nationalism from the 'ethnic' Eastern point of view as an alternative approach. After exploring the thoughts of Nursi and Jārullāh on nationalism, the paper suggests the following concluding remarks and recommendations.

Firstly, the mainstream social scientists' consideration of the emergence of ethnic nationalism as an unavoidable and positive stage in the universal ideological development is historically and theoretically inaccurate. Rather, the modern ideology of nationalism had been formulated in Europe with an apparent

purpose of providing a remedy to negative outcomes of the French Revolution, and to fill an ideological vacuum existing in European societies of the time. In the Muslim world, the ideas of nationalism had spread due to European imperial reach, and the influence of Western educational system and press. The entire process of the creation of nation-states in the Muslim world was profoundly dictated by their colonial masters.

As the proposed evaluation explores, the application of evolutionary theory to the study of socio-political developments occurring in different parts of the globe with no respect to regional, cultural and historical peculiarities of these particular cases gave rise to an Eurocentric belief that western culture was the contemporary pinnacle of social progress. Such attitude may mechanically compel scholars, as seen in the case of Hans Kohn, to adopt a subjective approach with the idealisation of all that is connected with the West and disapproval of everything related to the East.

The article questions the accuracy of the well-established idea in mainstream scholarship that the rise of nationalism in the Muslim world coincided with a decline in the hold of religion. It suggests that Islam did not lose its spiritual, social and political role in the Muslim world in favour of rising nationalism. In every Muslim society, Islam continued to co-exist with ethnic nationalism as a source of identity for more than a century.

Most importantly, the ideology of nationalism was not able to offer sustainable solutions to calamities and hardships existing in the colonised Muslim world. Nor did it bring peace, harmony and well-being to mankind. Rather, nationalism became a real hindrance to civilisational development and human security in many parts of the globe. It brought more enmity, violence and antagonism to Muslim lands and contributed chiefly to the sectarian, ethnic and the ideological conflicts escalating in the contemporary Muslim *ummah*. Based on the ideas of Nursi and Jārullāh, the article proposes that the only force capable to confront the temporary sicknesses of racism, sectarian clashes, extremism, violence and all types of discrimination, is religion, the main source of supreme peace and morality. Only revealed laws can produce true civilisation, and offer true happiness and harmony to all members of society regardless of ethnic or ideological backgrounds. Unity, harmony, and solidarity among society's members enable it to function justly and reinforce further progress. On the other hand, disunity, discord and antagonism lead to weakness and, consequently, to the collapse of civilisation.

The paper also suggests that the concept of Islamic nationhood, which unites all *madhāhib* and schools of thoughts in Islam and is sympathetic toward the followers of other religions, could provide a sustainable platform for reconciliation, global peace, integrity, solidarity and the betterment of humanity. It underlines the need for an alternative approach to studying nationalism and

other political and social developments in the Muslim world. Our aim here was not to dismiss the great contribution of Western scholarship in studying social and political developments in the Muslim world, but, one should admit that the widespread approach of 'modelling' Europe for every small or big event occurring in other parts of the world is, in most cases, inadequate to the construction of any authentic scholarly account.

The paper proposes the following policy recommendations:

- Ultra-nationalistic tendencies considering a particular race to be superior or giving priority to race over religion should be prevented by the authorities as being an artificial conception extremely harmful to civilisational development, the well-being and security of society, global peace, and reconciliation.

- In order to achieve regional and global peace, and human security, Muslim states should consider Jārullāh's and Nursi's concepts of Islamic nationhood, which embrace all schools of thoughts in Islam as equal peers, to be its guiding principle for relations with the followers of other religions based on sympathy and fairness, as a sustainable bond to reconcile all strata of a multicultural society.

- Muslim religious leaders, *'ulamā'*, judges, Muftis and associations should concentrate on achieving a better understanding of the universal Islamic values of peace and amity, and they should publically condemn all types of aggression, antagonism and rivalry among different *madhāhib*, religions, tribes and nations.

- Peace, fairness and security, as the normative principles of Islam, should be the key target of Muslim politicians, policy makers, scholars, social activists as well as ordinary Muslims. Their approach in dealing with 'Others' should be based on compassion and fairness. All types of sectarian and ideological conflicts should be resolved as being foreign to Islamic teachings, and destructive to the well-being of society.

- The media and educational system should be utilised actively for raising public awareness. The Islamic concept of diplomacy and peace-building could be included in school curricula, and textbooks should be prepared to train the Muslim masses to adopt more peaceful and harmonious ways of life.

- The Eurocentric approach in social sciences should be amended, and all ways leading to nepotism and academic arrogance should be sealed shut. Instead of superiority and domination, truth and honesty must be the main components of scholarship. The acceptance of 'Others' as equal peers, and respect for their way of thinking and values, may alone bring harmony and peace to our contemporary multicultural global society.

## Notes

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1.  Hans Kohn, *Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 18.
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4.  Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 70.
5.  See, S.V.R. Nasr, "European Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim States," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, edited by John Esposito, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online,* <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780195107999/islam-9780195107999-chapter-13> (accessed 13 June 2013).
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9.  Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 2nd edn., 1983), 171.
10. Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, as quoted in Stephen K. Carter, *Russian Nationalism: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), 3.
11. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/405644/nationalism> (accessed 4 July 2013).
12. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2003), xiii.
13. Kohn, *Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East*, 18-22.
14. Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1944), 329-330.
15. See, Krzysztof Jaskulowski, "Western (civic) *versus* Eastern (ethnic) Nationalism: The Origins and Critique of the Dichotomy," *Polish Sociological Review* 3 (171), no. 10, 292-294.
16. Ibid., 298-299.
17. Taras Kuzio, "The Myth of the Civic State: A Critical Survey of Hans Kohn's Framework for Understanding Nationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2002), 20.

18. See, Ibid., 25-32.
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21. See also, Ahmed Davutoglu, "Bediuzzaman and the Politics of the Islamic World in the 20th Century," *Nursi Studies*, <http://www.nursistudies.com/teblig.php?tno=311> (accessed 3 July 2013).
22. Jārullāh, *Islam Milletlerine*, 32. English trans. mine.
23. Ibid., 60.
24. Said Nursi, *Sünuhat*, quoted in Ahmed Davutoglu, "Bediuzzaman and the Politics of the Islamic World in the 20th Century."
25. Said Nursi, *Letters: 1928-1932*, translated by Ş. Vahide (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 2001), 381.
26. Musa Jārullāh, "Obrashenie k Velikomu Turetskomu Natsional'nomu Sobraniyu" in *Nassledie Musy Jarullaha Bigieva*, ed. Aydar Khairutdinov (Kazan: Iman, 2000), 1:27-28.
27. See, Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Ghurbah as Paradigm for Muslim Life: A Risale-i Nur Worldview," in *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, ed. Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 244.
28. Bukhārī, Aḥkām, 4.
29. Nursi, *Letters*, 380-381.
30. Ibid., 380.
31. Jārullāh, "Obrashenie," 1:27. English trans. mine.
32. Ibid., 1:28.
33. Nursi, *Letters*, 380.
34. Ibid., 76.
35. Ibid., 380-381.
36. Said Nursi, *The Words*, translated by Ş. Vahide (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 2004), 745.
37. Ibid., 420.
38. Ibid.
39. For further information on the relationship between nationalism and justice see, Elmira Akhmetova, "Nationalism in the Modern World: From the Viewpoint of Said Nursi," Nursi Studies, <http://www.nursistudies.org/teblig.php?tno=456> (accessed 10 July 2013).
40. Nursi, *Words*, 745.
41. See, Nursi, *Letters*, 379-385; and Said Nursi, *The Rays Collection*, translated by Ş. Vahide (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 2002), 459-460.
42. Jārullāh was a strong advocate of the idea of unification of world-wide Muslims under the leadership of Turkey. According to him, at that time Turkey was the only politically independent country in the entire Muslim world, and also had relatively recent historical experience of uniting Muslims and running the institution of the caliphate. See, Jārullāh, *Islam Milletlerine*, 7-18; and Musa

Jārullāh, "Vozzvaniye" in *Nassledie*, 2:9.

43.  Akhmetova, *Ideas of Muslim Unity at the Age of Nationalism*, 54-55.

44.  On proletariat internationalism, see, Berg G. Fragner, "Soviet Nationalism: An Ideological Legacy to the Independent Republics of Central Asia" in *Identity Politics in Central Asia and the Muslim World*, edited by Willem Van Schendel and Erik J. Zurcher (New York: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 2001), 13-33; and Stephen K. Carter, *Russian Nationalism*, 2-11. In Russian, see, R.F. Muhammetdinov, *Natsiya i Revolutsiya: Transformatsiya Natsional'noi Idey v Tatarskom Obshestve v Pervoi Treti XX Veka* (Kazan: Iman, 2000), 107-108.

45.  As Quoted in Muhammetdinov, *Natsiya i Revolutsiya*, 107.

46.  Ibid., 107-108.

47.  Jārullāh, "Obrashenie," 1:29.

48.  See, Akhmetova, *Mūsā Jārullāh Bigiev*, 61.

49.  See, Elmira Akhmetova, "The Role of the Prophethood in Building of a True Civilization: A Study of the Ideas of Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Said Nursi on the Rise of Civilizations," (Paper presented at International Bediüzzaman Symposium *The Role and Place of Prophethood in Humanity's Journey to the Truth: The Perspectives of the Risale-i Nur*, 22-24 September, 2013, Istanbul).

50.  Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, translated by Ş. Vahide (Istanbul: Sözler Publications, 2nd edn., 2002), 105.

51.  The Qur'an, 9:7.

52.  Jārullāh, *Islam Milletlerine*, 33.

53.  The Qur'an, 49:13.

54.  Nursi, *Letters*, 379.

55.  Ibid., 381-382.

56.  Nursi, *Emirdag Letters II*, as quoted in A. Berghout, "The Concept of *Iman Tahqiqi* as a Founding Element in the Process of Muslim Unity" (Paper presented at the Two-Day Seminar on *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: A Contemporary Approach to Realizing Muslim Unity*, August 2005, International Islamic University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur).

57.  Jārullāh, *Islam Milletlerine*, 7.

58.  See, Jārullāh, *Islam Milletlerine*, 59-61; and Ahmed Davutoglu, "Bediuzzaman and the Politics of the Islamic World in the 20th Century."

59.  Şükran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 241-242 and 317.

60.  Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey,* 325.

61.  Nursi, *The Words*, 745; and Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, 38.

62.  Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, 38.