Civilizational identity: from the Inception of Islam to the digital Age
-Historical approach-

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Abstract:

This paper explores three main issues in relation to cultural identity in the Arab Muslim world 1- Muslim identity since the inception of Islam to the establishment of a unique cultural identity 2- Identity and the threat of globalization 3- The issue of identity in the digital age.

Keywords:

Identity; Globalization; Digital age; Cultural identity.

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Introduction

In the Arab Muslim world, identity is generally defined as the real essence of a person (it is, therefore it is). The identity of the individual, culture or a whole civilization is its real core and quintessence. 'It is a constant that evolves and regenerates rather than changes. Identity is as unique as a human fingerprint and so it is easily distinguished from the other. Therefore, it rejuvenates but can never be supplanted' (Omarah, 1999).

Contrary to public belief that as a result of the rapid material and technological developments in our modern times there has been less concern with issues of identity and cultural constants and references, and there have been serious attempts to explore these issues and their by-products like language, history and traditions. These are even now considered not only as sensitive national and humanistic concerns but also factors deeply connected to general development and progress.

However, this recurrent concern with the issue of identity in the Muslim world is indicative of a crisis that has existed for over 200 years. It started with the realization that there was an evident technological gap between them and Europe or what is often referred to as the 'shock of modernity.' It was a time for rediscovering the western world and all its modern intellectual, cultural, economic, scientific and urbanization products. The west was not only a crusading, colonizing, morally bankrupt but also a civilization that boasts technology, democracy and human rights. It is probably safe to say that the West defines our cultural identity as the 'I' is only recognized in relation to 'the other'. In this case, it is an 'other' that is constantly present in our own culture; an other that is worthy of our admiration as much as of our concern and trepidation. Colonization also made clear that

cultural identities and distinguishing features do not vanish but rather rejuvenate and get more entrenched especially in times of crisis (Alsalami, 1998).

However, our identity, as a product of our culture, has never been averse to contact with other civilizations. It is generally characterized by its openness, synthesis and rejection of the dominance of a closed culture. Consequently, it assimilated the rationality of the Greeks and the spirituality and systems of governance of the Persians. It synthesized parts of these two great civilizations into its various cultural products such as philosophy, rhetorics, Sufism, jurisprudence and linguistics and even gives them wider and more novel perspectives. For example, Muslim scholars employed Democritus' atomism to proof creationism and the existence of God as opposed to the way the Greeks utilized the same theory to dispel their fears of natural phenomena (Alsalami, 1998).

It is argued that nations that do not possess ancient cultural reference face assimilation, choking or isolation when confronted with an identity crisis (see Ghlyoon, 1992). For a civilization to choose to be closed is paramount to committing cultural suicide. That is because it is in the nature of any civilization to be actively present as part of humanity's shared history. Therefore, the fact that we are still concerned with the issue of identity is indicative of a vibrant intellectual activity. This is the driving force that enables the Arab nation to re-evaluate its identity and reassess its capabilities and goals. This does not mean doubting the constants and roots of our culture or

considering changing or abandoning it; rather it is an attempt at revisiting these constants and utilizing them in the best way possible (Alsalami, 1998).

Identity is self-awareness which is a prerequisite for understanding the world and establishing good relations with other cultures within a framework characterized by an understanding of cultural references and particulars. The Quran stresses this idea in the following verse:

'O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allâh is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa [i.e. one of the Muttaqûn (pious - see V.2:2). Verily, Allâh is All-Knowing, All-Aware.'[1]

It is the conflict between two cultures that exasperates the identity crisis; one embraces destruction in the name of uncontrollable globalization that leads to the disappearance of the individuality and identity of the different cultures, and an another that cocoons, immersing itself in the past, and is preoccupied with its events and intellectual products which renders it ineffective and unable to rejuvenate.

Objectives of the study

This paper explores three main issues in relation to cultural identity in the Arab Muslim world:

Muslim identity since the inception of Islam to the establishment of a unique cultural identity

Identity and the threat of globalization

The issue of identity in the digital age

Muslim identity since the inception of Islam to the establishment of a unique cultural identity

I.i. Cultural identity in the Quran

The Quran is irrefutably the most direct and reliable source to understanding the distinguishing principles and norms of Prophet Mohamed's message to the world. These are not only the reason for its uniqueness but also for its existence, spread and continuity. One of these principles is that the whole of humanity are equal members of the one universal nation, distinguished only by the extent of their faith. Many believed in Islam, other did not. However, the Quran does not draw lines separating people based on faith. Instead, it stressed such values as freedom, tolerance, non-coercion, and non-violence. Even amongst Muslims, it promotes tolerance, mercy and empathy.

In this sense, the Quran does not prescribe to Muslims a specific world outlook or a precise view of themselves and others that they should adhere to regardless of time and place. Perhaps what can be really garnered here are the general principles and guidelines that transcend time and the text of the holy book. These values are the expression of the essence of the eternal message, understood through the reading of the text in its entirety and through awareness of its greater goals.

The Quran is a message directed at humanity at large and especially to those who believe in it. However, humans are social beings influenced by their social, political, economic and cultural environments and naturally interpret this message within these

frameworks. It is also important to note the role these ever-changing conditions play in shaping our experiences and our understanding of the different messages of the Quran. Therefore, the question here is how Muslims have interpreted the Message throughout history and how faithful they have been to the values and principles it preaches (see Belcgasim, 2013)?

I.ii. The Issue of Identity throughout the History of Islam

The study of history, far from being just a simple pastime, has a deeper and more beneficial purpose. Through it, we can explore the human experience and its consequences whether positive or negative regardless of time and place. Circumstances are often similar and factors in play may lead to the same results. This applies also to Muslim history; a history so rich that it offers lessons were they learnt, we wold not have had to repeatedly undergo the same experiences and reach the same conclusions. However, our concern with the results of these events is primarily to set standards against which other results are measured (Alfaqeeh, 2010).

As a traditionally spiritual people, who believe in the Quran and seek inspiration from the first generation to receive the message of Islam (a generation that created an identity for iteself in a world teeming with national identities, philosphies and ideas), Muslims often refer to those first builders of a Muslim identity, certain that theirs is the ideal model.

Identity is ultimately a perception of the self and others. The same applies to the Muslim identity which was characterised by the follwing main features through its development:

Early Muslims formed a unit not only as fellow believers in the same creed but also at the political and social levels. The

Prophet was at the centre of their unity. He sought to instill harmony, closeness and mercy among them in spite of their tribal, racial and national differences and made them think not along tribal but national lines in accordance with the teaching of the Quran: *'You [true believers in Islâmic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad SAW and his Sunnah (legal ways, etc.)] are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Ma'rûf (i.e. Islâmic Monotheism and all that Islâm has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islâm has forbidden), and you believe in Allâh[1]. And had the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) believed, it would have been better for them; among them are some who have faith, but most of them are Al-Fâsiqûn (disobedient to Allâh - and rebellious against Allâh's Command)[2].'*

Early Muslims were also open to embracing those who wanted to be part of their unit with its theological, political and social scope as their faith itself has a global humanistic dimension. The Quran, from beginning to end, addresses all humanity not a particular chosen people, all equal in the eyes of the Creator. The Quran uses words like people, over 241 times, and human beings, 73 times, rather 'my people' signalling an end to national and tribal identities.

The treaty of Medina is perhaps a good source that highlights the characteristics of this Muslim identity, especially its all-inclusive nature that assimilated even those of other faiths and guaranteed them the right to embrace the new national geographic identity if not the theological.

In spite of the bitter conflict between Muslims that started after the death of Prophet Mohamed, they still embraced their Muslim identity in its entirety. Sharing the same faith does not prevent enmity nor does it result in loss of identity. The political strife among the companions of the Prophet, although violent, reinforced their identity, as they disagreed on the means of strengthening this identity among members of the new nation.

After the rule of the companions of the Prophet came the age of dynasties starting with the century-long rule of the Umayyads followed by the Abbasids. However, all Muslim dynasties retained their Muslim identity even when they failed to adhere to the Islamic system of governance and were often headed by incompetent monarchs. For example, they still engaged in various projects such as Muslim conquests, compiling of official records, laying roads, and the translation and Arabisation of ancient science.

Dar al-Hikma, or House of Wisdom, was established during the rule of Alrasheed, and improved upon during that of Alma 'moon, in order to preserve national identity through every means possible. A huge and varied body of knowledge was translated into Arabic as Muslims did not regard language as a neutral means of transmitting knowledge. That is because they understood language to be an essential part of any nation's identity and intellectual activity. Therefore, transmitting knowledge in its original language is nothing short of committing cultural suicide. This is also why Christian Europe refused to simply use scientific sources written in Arabic, in spite of their great need for this knowledge, especially in such fields as medicine, astronomy, mathematics and navigation. Just as the Muslims did, Europe believed that knowledge can only be

transmitted through their native languages, even when limited and insufficient for the task, as language is an essential requisite for the survival of any national identity. After its fall in 1094, Toledo became the main centre for translating Arabic works into Latin. It was Raymond de Sauvetât, Archbishop of Toledo 1125 to 1152, who established the Toledo School of Translators where Andalusian orientalists in particular were the greatest contributors including Dominicus Gundissalinus, John of Seville, and Petrus Alphonsi.

In more recent times, Mohamed Ali Pasha, ruler of Egypt, sent a number of academic missions to Europe, and in particular France, ordering students to translate the books they studied there. According to historians, the Pasha received these students in his dewan at their return in 1826 and gave them a book each to translate into Arabic. He then gave the order that they should not be allowed to leave the citadel and should not be hired into government posts till they finished their tasks of translating books that were mainly needed in royal schools or libraries (Hamadah, 2012).

It is true that tendencies for independence from the center of the Caliphate emerged early in the history of Islam. For example, Yellow Kharijites in 122H, the Omayyads in Andalusia in 138H, Banu Madrar in Sijilmassa in 155H, the Rustamid dynasty in Tiaret in 160H, the Idrisi Alawites in western Morocco in 172H, Alaghalibas in Tunisia in 184H and the Taherian dynasty in Khorasan in 205H. However, none of these political separatist movements diminished the national and

theological identity of the Muslims. In fact these states bore the burden of expanding the realm of Islâm and defending its lands and competed with the heartland as active centres of learning.

A brief glance at the long history of Islam reveals that the affiliation to the faith was not the only determinant of inclusion and identity. Other factors such as nationality, language, sex, color and sect may have interacted to influence an individual's sense of identity. In addition, other ethnic or sectarian labels were used such as Arab, Turkish, Moghul, Maghrebi, Andalusian, Indian, Sunni, Shiite, Kharijite, Maliki or Hanafi; all necessary for integration and identification. However, the basic building blocks of a nation are the people and the message of the civilization regardless of individual differences. The Quran stresses that

'O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allâh is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa [i.e. one of the Muttaqûn (pious - see V.2:2). Verily, Allâh is All-Knowing, All-Aware.'[3]

It is possible then for all, whether Muslim or not, to live in peace, harmony and as an integrated unit in the same land, once justice and righteousness are established and discrimination based on different social practices abolished. This is of course as long as Muslims are not attacked by others. Islam is referred to in the Quran as *Silm*, or Peace, as in the following verse:

'O you who believe! Enter perfectly in Islâm (by obeying all the rules and regulations of the Islâmic religion) and follow not the footsteps of Shaitân (Satan). Verily! He is to you a plain enemy.'[4]

Since the conversion of most of this nation, Islam has become its defining cultural identity. Our customs, traditions, arts, literature, and sciences such as politics, economics, sociology, our philosophical approach to the natural and experimental sciences and our perception of the universe and man's place in it, the self and the other are all influenced by Islam. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that ours is a Muslim culture and that the only standard by which one's legibility for inclusion into this culture is the Islamic standard (Omarah, 1990).

It is probably appropriate here to quote Michel Aflaq (1910-1989), one of the most prominent Christian proponents of Arab nationalism. Aflaq's stance on the Muslim nature of Arab culture is a true reflection of how Arab nationalists, Christians and Muslims alike, agreed with the Islamists on this very fact. He clarifies that 'There is no non-Muslim Arab! Islam is our history, our victories, our language, our philosophy, and our view of the universe. It is the unifying national culture of the Arabs of different religions and creeds. In this sense no true Arab, who is free of selfish desires and self-interest, is non-Muslim. When Arab Christians truly embrace their nationalism, they will come to the realization that Islam is their national culture that they must fully absorb, love and care for as much as they do for the most precious parts of their Arabism. Therefore, I am often baffled by those Muslims who do not love the Arabs, and even more so by an Arab who does not love Islam' (Aflaq, 1987).

Identity and the Threat of Globalization

Globalization is central to the issue of identity. It is at the heart of the challenge faced by the Arab Muslim civilization at the start of the new millennium. Consequently, the issue of identity is the focal point to any discussion on the progress of globalization, especially when many view globalization to be a planned purposeful strategy carefully executed to subjugate the world and undermine other native cultures.

Globalization has truly exposed the world to new forms of interaction and confrontation never known before because of its awesome outreach and pace and ability to break down barriers of time and place, touching even the most reluctant hiding in the furthest corners of the world. The prominent sociologist Giddens (1990) defines modernity as a 'juggernaut –a runaway engine of enormous power which, collectively as human beings, we can drive to some extent but which also threatens to rush out of our control and which could rend itself asunder. The juggernaut crushes those who resist it, and while it sometimes seems to have a steady path, there are times when it veers away erratically in directions we cannot foresee.'

Normalization of and surrender to this process of cultural subordination results in losing our sense of belonging to a particular home, nation or even a state consequently leaching

away all the tenants of cultural identity. Globalization is a stateless and nationless world; a world of corporations and global networks, of doers who control it, and subjects, the consumers of products, images, information, movements and even dwellings imposed upon them. However, their home is the cyberspace created by communication networks that contain, control and direct world economy, politics and culture (Aljabri, 1998).

More than ever, there is now a strong need for nations and cultures to find those conditions and characteristics that emphasize their uniqueness and clearly define the relationship between the self and the other. It is to be expected then for the question of identity to be a present and pressing issue especially in response to a fast changing world that has verily turned into a small global village. As borders vanish due to the use of modern technology in communications, transportation and trade, which skew patterns and priorities of development to serve its own purposes, and as alien political, legal and constitutional principles and values are generalized, and Western behavioural patterns spread, slowly eroding the core and content of any

cultural identity, many nations and societies now seek better means to dealing with globalization while much loss or compromise (see Ibrahim, 1999).

It is possible to say that globalization confronts us with two options:

A complete loss of identity through assimilation into the current dominant global culture, while, through a process of self-negation, adopts its behavioural patterns and ways of thinking, which can be viewed as ultimatelly the shedding of all cultural particulars that are the products of customes, traditions and values.

An increased immersion into more immediate and local affiliations whether sectarian or tribal. This is evident in many multi-faith Muslim countries, where the social structure remained to be primarily based on tribal or sectarian affilliation[5]. In this case, assertion of identity is often extreme especially towards cultral components that have been perceiived to be slighted scuh as religion, tribe, clan, sect of language of the community. This seems to be a ready-made option, based on a belief in the concept of the 'holy' on the one hand and that of complete acceptance on the other. Either way, both the expression and protection of one's identity become the essence

of his/her existance and sources of pride and honour (Belgasim, 2013).

This brings us to a very important question that is what can be done about the negative effects and risks that overcast an identity under the compulsions of globalization? Aljabri (1998) proposes that there are two easy and common positions. The first position is to resort to absolute rejection and closure which instigate negative and hostile reactions. The second is the position of full acceptance of globalization and its effects on cultural penetration and clientalism hoisting the banners of 'openness to the present times' and 'betting on modernity.'

It is inevitable to draw the conclusion that both these position are ahistorical means for dealing with threats directed not by a confidant assured reasoning, but rather by a resigned one incapable of finding any other solution but escape whether forwards or backwards, only armed with a rosy view of the world leaping from the real to the unreal.

In contrast, I see that the solution must come, first and foremost, from within the Arab culture itself. This is because outside factors would not have had such threatening effect on our

identity, were it not for the weaknesses within. Our need to rejuvenate, enrich and protect our cultural particulars, while resisting the awesome invasiveness of those who control the media, and hence have the ideological and cultural upper hand, those who possess great science and technology, is not less critical than our need to acquire the necessary tools to modernize and become effectual and independent members of this age of science and technology rather than mere reactive led subjects (see Aljabri, 1998).

Others believe that globalization does not pose the threat of assimilation or annihilation to cultural identities, but rather reshapes or even develops them to adapt to the present. Humanity is now heading towards the possibility of living with multiple identities, and modern societies have become receptive to the accumulation of collective identities in which emotions and feelings merge, and bonds between individuals and groups are strengthened (see Ibrahim, 1999).

In all cases, our perception of globalization needs to be reviewed in a way that would treat it in its entirety as a comprehensive phenomenon. This does not mean simple uncritical acceptance, but rather a more rational way of comprehending the world we live in. Muslims do not need moral protection against globalization. What they need is an

intellectual, rational and scientific protection. The corroding effects of globalization are not the result of its awesome power, but rather it is often the consequence of the Muslims' own poor sense of identity, or to be precise their inability to display the positive elements of that identity.

It is probably appropriate here to apply Malik Ben Nabi Althaqib's concept of 'proneness to occupation' to globalization as it is often internal factors that are the most decisive in such contexts regardless of the strength of any external factors. Both occupation and globalization have stronger reach and effect where there is internal weakness. This is now evident in the way Muslims are dealing with the consequences of globalization. Ja'eet (1995) refers to this as Ehtyaf , a term that he coined to refer to the process through which the occupied retains his relationship with the occupier, even after direct rule has ceased, through all that is global (Ja'eet, 1995).

Both Arab and Western media often promote the importance of the information revolution in order to establish globalization within a strictly Western framework. That is because it managed, through its technological advances, to

diminish psychological, intellectual and lifestyle differences in order to institute a centralized culture along a Western model while curtailing other cultures.

This global culture, stimulated by globalization and imposed on all, does not allow much scope for local cultures to participate in shaping it, unless the latter concedes some of its cultural references and products and, while adopting new values, compromises its cultural particulars and constants. This will eventually lead to a clash of civilizations and not, as claimed, cultural convergence (Alharthi, 2002).

Globalization, because of the tools it has made available, represents a risk, that we need to prepare for, and a potential, that we need to utilize. However, because of the pressures it imposes on cultural identities and particulars, globalization does not result in wealth or give a civilization essence. Therefore, it is our belief that protecting our cultural identity from all that is alien to it, and which contravenes our national culture, except for those cultural products that can be transferred across cultures such as science, technology, and industry, should be conducted according to a careful strategy that invigorates the intellect, raises awareness of the challenges faced and stimulates the production of alternatives. That is 'because civilizations are never built on prevention, pillage and discipline, but rather on

initiative, flexibility, and contribution. Developed nations are the ones that know what they want from their cultural stock, so they arm themselves with it, and are aware of the positive aspects of other cultures, and so adopt them. Meanwhile, they direct their vision to the future to assess what might be needed and what the others possess' (Bakar, 2011).

The Arab society faces serious challenges that threaten its social coherence and its psychological sense of safety and security can be countered by dismantling 'those tools that erase the unique features of its existence and culture; features that shape the elements of its identity and support its essence and survival in this new age of globalization; the age of the triumph of the converged mind, path, intellect, language, economy, culture, and even diet. As Serge Latouche puts it, it is the 'Americanization (Westernization) of the world, and dissemination of identities and cultures. The trademark of globalization is what Castoriadis calls 'general conformity' (in Maqbool, 2017).

It is surprising that some, generally psychologically and culturally defeatists, consider these pressures as nothing but an

inevitable turn of fate that we must accept and get on the bandwagon otherwise we would miss the train. Before the onset of globalization, these same people used to feel the shame for being singled out as models of what is borrowed from the other rather than the inherited. Therefore, they rejoiced in the arrival of globalization, mistakenly believing that this would relieve them of the responsibility to choose and give preference to what is alien. This is because, in their view, there was no choice when all was destined and therefore there was 'no sin' in preferring one model over the other (Omarah, 1999).

In a conference on globalization in Cairo, Alhamad (1998) claims that: 'globalization is the phenomenon of cultural and economic unification that is taking place in today's world. We should also consider the political and social factors. Western modernity in general and current globalization in particular, with the new culture it has produced, are progressively becoming a truly global culture. This cannot be halted, while traditional cultures will stand helpless in their attempts to fend off this global culture that cannot be deterred by borders, whether we liked it or not, acquiesced or not (Alhamad, 1998).

In order to deal with this challenge, we need to revive the nation's memory in order for us to differntiate between 'dealing with reality,' which is what we need, and 'accepting reality,'

which exasperates this tragedy. The Islamic civilization only achieved such amazing feats in all fields because of a strong motivating identity that changed reality, and did not simply accept it. It succeeded in changing the reality of centuries old Greek and Roman colonization of the East rather than accept it. So did the Muslim Persian, Nori, Ayoubide and Memluk states that changed the reality of two centuries of the crusades (1096-1291) and a 'reality' where Jerusalim became a Latin colony and Al-Aqsa Mosque was turned into a Latin church for 90 years. The nation did not accept a 'reality' where the crusaders reigned Cairo and imposed taxes on its inhabitants, where, under the French occupation of Egypt (1798-1801), Alazhar mosque was turned into horse stables, or where Algeria became a French colony for over 130 years, and where the whole of the Arab Muslim world fell under Western occupation, safe for Mecca (Omarah, 1999). Furthermore, this nation, armed with a strong sense of identity, deep-rooted traditions, and deep understanding of reailty has not simply accepted what can be perceived as de facto situations, rather it thrust forward, liberating its lands and performed miracles.

Another view sees identity as an illusion not based on real life. In this age of global economy, culture and lifestyle, that which produced a 'nationless' world, the issue of idenity becomes irrelevant not worthy of discussion and results in nothing but closeness and the alienation of others. Porponents of this perspective believe in an absolutist global view, championing the demolition of individual and national differences. Their arguments are characterized by a desire to nullify any identity and to be liberated of any cultural particulars (Ghalioun, 2000).

'The call to resist globalization lacks in good reason as modern globalization is the destiny of all nations and the whole world. Therefore, resistance cannot be in the form of rejection, but through transforming Arab societies from consumer, subordinate societies to productive ones that possess unique chracteristcs that distinguish them. The creation of this reality is dependent on the instigation of a new awakening based on self awarenes and a sense of belonging to a homeland with its own traditional, cultural and linguistic identity only through which it expresses its intellectual and creative products. It is also because of this awareness that the nation could regain its vitality, liberating the Arabs of the afflictions of dependence, humiliation and fascination with the other, while attempting to contribute to

the creation of a new global civilization that would preserve its existence, role and identity' (Nasir, 2014).

The Issue of Idenity in the Digital Age (the Case of History)

In recent years media outlets have been compelled to reach their audience through the world wide web and scrambel to take advantage of modern telecommunications and social media[6]; all modes of communication that have undermined previously secure official policies. In a recent study on the subject, the authors used the analogy of the mite that gnawed Solomon's stick to describe the effects of the internet now that oppressive regimes are struggling to survive and have to resort to deception and violence.

A careful review of the past thirty years reveals that many of the ideologies, whether liberal, nationalist or Marxist that purported that they represented the future deemed it possible to initiate a leap into modernity through mere imitation and the superficial import of concepts, ideas and methods extracted from their natural context in the West. This is because proponents of these ideologies believed that it was feasible to simply achieve

progress, liberty and democracy while avoiding the weighty issues of history and deep rooted traditions. It is probable that these deluded few of those who believed in such fantasies due to a lack of a sense of history and to the misconception that we share the same circumstances with the west merely because we live at the same age. However, the disappointment was as grand as the dreams (see Saleh, 2010).

However, as we look back to the past to learn from its lessons, we must admit that it is full of landmines that need to be dismantled, that is if we truly wish to break the boundaries of history and find a successful formula for progress and modernity while avoiding loss of identity and the risk of being marginalized. It is a process very similar to self-conflict, as our history is entrenched inside us, in our blood, and dictates our reactions.

I believe that this digital age can provide us with the means to achieve this. However, there are numerous obstacles in our way:

The globalized digital age is an expression of a belief in centralization deeply entrenched in the Western and American consciousness based on racism and a desire for hegemony and domination? Their means to achieving this is the creation and extrusion of such concepts as globalization, the end of history,

the clash of civilizations, the communications revolution, and the world as a global village, all produced in the west, intended to establish the control of the center over those on the margins.

The internationalization of means of communication coincided with the emergence of two contradictory trends in thought systems about national identities; a trend calling for creative diversity, the culture of difference, the dialogue of civilizations, and the end of totalitarian rationalism, and a centralistic monopolistic tendency, dictated by capitalist globalization, that promote the culture of single thought and forced unification under the banner of Western democracy.

The ideology of globalization and advertising, which utilizes digital audiovisual and information technology, which can psychologically condition the recipient to adhere to a purely commercial logic, which means the bankruptcy of culture, while falling into the trap of supply and demand, and the disappearance of identity.

Expressing awareness of the challenges we face by conscious engagement in the information community. This does not mean surrendering to media globalization and the principle

of static symmetry that reduces human values in a process of reification. In contrast, it fundamentally means linking the principle of sovereignty, homeland and identity with the culture of modernity as an outcome of the achievements of the human mind (Bulashab, 2010).

The absence of history in the media as those concerned with the issue of identity are merely deluded consumers of the media.

History is often excluded from advertisements, except when they are produced for commercial tourism.

History and cultural museums are soulless and ineffective.

The devaluation of history among the youth especially through linking the study of history to poor future job opportunities.

Using history as an excuse for inflaming tribalism and sectarianism as for example what happened in Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Limiting the broadcast of history programmes to only during the month of Ramadan.

Much of the historical material available on the internet and digital media does not reflect our rich heritage and history and is not based on a reliable source or a clear proof, making them a source of trivial surface knowledge.

The ideological and sectarian interpretation of history in numerous research papers and articles, which makes it difficult to use history to learn the valuable lessons it can offer or to better human actions.

Employing history in political and sectarian propaganda which renders it a subjective tool

In order to overcome these obstacles we need to:

Launch an Arab program for stimulating a national digital revolution that would result in the production of an Arab historical content that will be a comprehensive reference to Arab and Islamic history and civilization. This can reduce the digital divide and produce content and spread knowledge of our history across cultures, peoples and nationalities.

Design 'cyber-historian' websites in order to accurately explain and determine dates of historical events, correct erroneous perceptions and learn the lessons of history.

Turn Arab internet users of the internet to producers rather than passive consumers of digital content. The most serious challenge to our cultural identity today is the effective

distinction between those who produce and utilize information and those who simply consume it.

Monitor the digital content and rectify historical errors and dubious statements, while reaching beyond the traditional identity to a new identity capable of achieving harmony between the constants of heritage and the mentality of the digital age. However, cultural constants are part of the present and we can only afford to live in the present.

Create a national vision for information and databases, invest in the mind, the economy of intelligence and community of knowledge, while taking into consideration that identity is the real sign of modernity, the question of the future and the method of relying on critical scientific thinking to confront ignorance, superstition and the traps of globalization.

Compile attractively produced abridged booklets on History and hold competitions on the subject.

Present historical events in a simple way through different media, while maintaining historical accuracy through the use of reliable methods.

Provide maps and charts electronically especially those that give historical characters, place names, dynasties, crafts and industries, Islamic art, etc.

Digitalize and archive documents, manuscripts and diagrams of ancient and modern monuments in a timely manner before their destruction by terrorists or oppressive regimes.

Utilize social media to inform the public of national, regional and international historical events.

Cooperate with telecommunications companies so that they provide a special SMS service whereby subscribers receive daily text messages with historical events that took place on that day so that our collective memory remains refreshed, active, and alert. There is no doubt that the evocation of the past illuminates the path of the present.

Margins:

[1] Hujarat: 13

[2] Âl-'Imrân: 110

[3] Hujarat: 13

[4] Al-baqarah: 208

[5] For example Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen

[6] Social Network is a term that refers to a set of websites that allow people to communicate within a virtual community, united by common interests, country, school or other forms of affiliation.

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