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THE USES AND ABUSES OF HISTORY

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What is History?

History, allegedly inspired by the muse Clio, would evolve to be a domain of inquiry, involving as much science as art; the former in establishing the elements of a historical narrative, and the latter in presenting it. It has, by necessity a grounding in epistemology⁽¹⁾, as well as in teleology⁽²⁾ and metaphysics, since metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that deals with concepts such as being, knowing, identity, time, and space.

I come from Egypt, a land as old as time, and where historical records were first known to have been kept. Indeed Herodotus, often referred to as the father of history, has famously described Egypt as the “Gift of the Nile”, and the Egyptians as “...the most learned of any nation of which I have had experience” because of their practice of keeping records of the past.⁽³⁾

⁽¹⁾ Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, including scope, validity and methods, and the ability to distinguish between opinion and justified belief.

⁽²⁾ Teleology (from Greek) is the philosophical study of nature by attempting to describe things in terms of their apparent purpose. The name comes from the Greek “telos”, meaning goal or purpose. Thus historical actions are assumed to be serving a purpose for those engaged in them.

⁽³⁾ Cited in Burrow. JOHN, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century*, Vintage Books, Random House, NY, 2007. p.3.

But why are these early priests who recorded the history of Egypt stretching over millennia not considered the first historians? It is because they were more like archivists who maintain records but do not subject them to the systematic test of inquiry, nor did they produce a historical narrative over the course of more than one or two kings. Annals and maybe some chronicles are the best that can be said of the historical records preceding Herodotus. This would also be the reality of most countries, even those where modern historians have been most active.

Historical narratives are built upon these records and commentaries; they are buttressed by evidence, even if by necessity they involve selection and bias.

There were, of course, narratives that permeated ancient cultures⁽¹⁾. From *Gilgamesh*⁽²⁾ to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, these narratives were epic poems that were mostly recited and sung, with variations and no effort to buttress the narrative with historical evidence.

Homer's masterpieces, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are clearly not fact, even though Troy did exist, and the Trojan War did take place. Homer's enormous narrative did nourish the impulse of many others to write history. But the fact that Homer's narrative is a story, it would be a mistake to think of it only as a story of the fall of Troy, even if that was the climax of the narrative. The story is rich, offering many perspectives, and narrative can be capacious as well as directional. Great narratives go beyond having a point to having a presence that creates an atmosphere, brings to life a culture and an epoch, and inspires readers (or listeners) to reflect. Looking beyond Homer, can

⁽¹⁾ Arguably, the religious narratives are the most powerful to have affected humans throughout our history. But the discussion of religious narratives and historical research is a vast and different subject which is not included in this short essay.

⁽²⁾ From ancient Mesopotamia, the epic of *Gilgamesh* is an epic poem dating from circa 2100 BC, probably from the third Dynasty of Ur. It is usually regarded as the earliest surviving great work of literature.

one look for a “point” in Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian Wars* (431 B.C.E) or even Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* (1869)?

Evidence is what distinguishes the historical. Evidence such as the Stela of Narmer which states that the kingdom of Egypt was unified around 5150 years ago when King Narmer (Mena) unified the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Egypt and, since that time, Egypt has been a single country with a central government, the oldest such case in the world. The Pyramids attest to the presence of the fourth dynasty of the Egyptian rulers in the third millennium BCE. Primary documents and monuments are given much weight in the writing of history, much more than secondary sources that report undocumented hearsay.

So, by general consensus, Herodotus was the father of History as a field of study and endeavor. Herodotus, a contemporary of Socrates, lived in the fifth century BCE (c. 484–c. 425 BC), moved the writing of history from the romantic popular epic of the Homeric tradition to an inquiry (*historía*) to determine the facts behind a narrative describing past events. He subjected the record of the past to a method of investigation. He collected material, subjected it to a critical evaluation, and having accepted it, he organized that material into a powerful historical narrative.

Similarly, Manetho would therefore qualify as the first truly Egyptian historian. He lived about a century after Herodotus, during the Ptolemaic era in the early 3rd century BCE, in the age of the great Library of Alexandria. He is the one who presented the history of Egypt in his monumental *Aegyptiaca*, where he classified the rulers of Egypt into dynasties, a classification that we still use to this day. Later Rome, too, had its great historians, from Plutarch (46-126 AD), a Greek who became a Roman citizen, to Pliny⁽¹⁾, we still refer to them to this day.

⁽¹⁾ Pliny the Elder (23 CE–27 CE), was an ancient Roman nobleman, scientist and historian. He is best known as the author of *Pliny's Natural History* (1850)".

I submit that historical narratives are extremely important in shaping a person's identity, in the self-awareness of a community, and the self-perception of a nation. The talk of a national identity has its roots in culture, shaped by a shared past, a shared language, a shared religion, but all of that is enhanced – or diminished – by the power of the prevalent historical narrative. You cannot begin to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian problem without understanding the vastly different historical narratives of Palestinians and Israelis.

Historical narratives are based on the work of historians, constructed by intellectuals and spread by writers, artists, politicians and the media. So what do historians do? And when did History become a scientific discipline?

History as a Scientific Discipline

Over time, Annals turned into chronicles which then turned into histories. The difference between Annals which simply record events year by year, and chronicles that keep the chronological organization of the text, but add commentary and detail, adds richness but does bring in the biases and proclivities of the author, just as some persons' diaries are merely lists of appointments, while the diaries of others can be considered as literature and regarded as contributions to the records of history.

Historical writing, built on these records, emerged from late antiquity to the middle ages through the Renaissance and into the age of Enlightenment. Epics, romances, biographies, interspersed the productions of history. Artists and writers would popularize – and in the process transform – much of this historical material, thereby contributing to an evolving historical narrative. Just think of the reach and impact of Shakespeare's history plays and how much more powerful they were than Holingshead's work on which they were based.

In the 18th century, Gibbon produced his classic work on *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*⁽¹⁾ (1776–89). Because Gibbon tried to use primary sources as much as possible and to remain objective the book was considered a model by many historians.

From such beginnings emerged not only the foundations of the modern historical narrative, but also the so-called “Great Man” theory of history, sometimes referred to as the “Whig Theory of History” perhaps best represented by Macauley’s multi-volume *History of England*⁽²⁾ (1848) and Adams’ writings on the history of America.

Whig history, as Butterfield⁽³⁾ explains, was dominated by organizing events in the English past to support a central theme of “progress”. They thus divided eminent figures as either heroes or opponents of progress, and denied any detailed inquiry of these predecessors’ intentions and the challenges they faced.

In these ways, the past, which had once been its own “present,” with its own interests, concerns and urgencies, was sacrificed to modern concerns and turned into a bland and benign anticipation of the present. (Burrow: 443)

Rejection of that view came not only from the professional historians who wanted more rigor and neutrality and less selectivity, but also from great artists such as Tolstoy, who believed that the only reality was the daily reality of life, and that the grand narrative was a superposition that artists created.

According to Isaiah Berlin, Tolstoy, though author of the monumental *War and Peace*, did not believe in the “Great Man” theory

⁽¹⁾ This great work led to Gibbon being called the first “modern historian of ancient Rome”.

⁽²⁾ *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second* (1848) is the full title of the five-volume work by Lord Macaulay (1800–1859) but it is more generally known as *The History of England*.

⁽³⁾ Sir Herbert Butterfield’s classic 1931 book, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, was extremely influential.

of history, convinced as he was that humans do not have the capacity to change the course of history, and that what really counts is the “real life” of each individual, not the so-called historical narrative, a “panoramic view conjured up by historians” which may be elegant and appealing, but is inevitably a fictitious construction⁽¹⁾. In fact Berlin believed that Tolstoy did not want to be seen as supporting the idea of the historical narrative as a proper and useful interpretation of the past⁽²⁾.

The 19th century saw the emergence of History as a scientific discipline, taught and respected in universities. The 20th century would see the historians engage in a profound self-critique and the flourishing of different schools of historiography. But in the end, the powerful historical narratives that moved people and changed the course of nations, from the emergence of Italy and Germany in Europe to “Manifest Destiny” and “the Frontier” in the US during the 19th century to the disastrous mass totalitarianisms of the 20th century, were largely the product of historical narratives articulated by politicians and artists as much as by historians⁽³⁾.

The acknowledged initiator of the idea of writing history as a science, neutral and supported by as much as evidence as one can muster, was the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, which began in 1821. It was sponsored by the Prussian statesman Karl von Stein. However, it was its much later successor, the truly monumental multi-volume,

⁽¹⁾ See BERLIN. ISAIAH, *Tolstoy and History*, London: Orion Books Ltd, 1978, p.27.

⁽²⁾ Indeed Berlin referred to Tolstoy's citation of a pejorative description of History as: “nothing but a collection of fables and useless trifles, cluttered up with a mass of unnecessary figures and proper names”. (See V. N. NAZARIEV, ‘*Lyudi by logo vremeni*’, L. N. Tolstoy vospminaniyakh sovremennikov (Moscow, 1955), vol. I, p.52).

⁽³⁾ BLOCH. MARC, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992, p. 42. First published in 1953. cited in Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, London: Oxford University Press, 2002, p.4. Bloch writes in *The Historian's Craft* that the historian “never perceives more than a tiny patch of the vast tapestry of events in this respect, the student of the present is scarcely any better off than the historian of the past.

collaborative *Cambridge Modern History* whose first volume appeared in 1902, produced by teams of specialists under the direction of its first editor, Lord Acton, which truly changed the field of historiography and the public perception of how it should be done⁽¹⁾. In France the towering figure of Michelet stands out⁽²⁾.

In 1929 two major developments were to shape the direction of historical studies. In the UK Namier would publish his meticulous history of Parliament; while in France, Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch founded the journal the *Annales*⁽³⁾ which became the French name of the most influential school of historiography in the 20th century⁽⁴⁾.

But what is the relation between historical narratives and national cultures? While recognizing that people are different, such holistic, historical conceptions of culture implied that there was enough commonalities to think of societies as an integrated whole. This brought connotations of a static unchanging culture where people shared a certain world view or *Weltanschauung* to use sociologist Karl Mannheim's word, and that their interactions, created the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age, against which the interplay of politics would take place. Great theories of cyclical dominance and downfall of cultures were advanced by Toynbee⁽⁵⁾

⁽¹⁾ BURROW, *op.cit.*, p. 425-426.

⁽²⁾ JULES MICHELET (1798 – 1874) was a French historian, whose 1855 monumental *Histoire de France* (1855) is a classic, and his *History of the French Revolution* (1847) remains the essential work on that turbulent period, as well as being a literary classic. Michelet is also the one who first used the word Renaissance ('Re-birth' in French), as a period in the cultural history of Europe. His *Histoire de France* was reissued recently in 16 volumes: J. Michelet, *Histoire de France*, 16 volumes, Editions des Equateurs, Paris.

⁽³⁾ The full name of the Journal was the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* (1929)

⁽⁴⁾ The *Annales* school embraced quantitative methods. In the United States, and Britain too, quantification became increasingly used in historical studies. Not surprisingly, such quantitative techniques became known as "cliometrics."

⁽⁵⁾ See ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE (1889 -1975), whose analysis of the rise and fall of civilizations, *A Study of History* (1946), covered twelve volumes issued between 1934 and 1961, (also known as *History of the World*)

and Spengler⁽¹⁾ among others, and were very popular in their time.

For Marxists, the view was dominated by structure and superstructure. Further refinements would come in the later when Michel Foucault would bring in the concept of “episteme”.

Towards the end of the 20th century and into the current years, vigorous debate prevailed. An influential critic of the Marxist school was Francois Furet, whose narrative of the French revolution⁽²⁾ gave much leeway to the thoughts and motivations of the various actors. However, Fernand Braudel must be recognized as one of the most influential historians of the 20th century, and his three volume work on *The Mediterranean in the Age of Philip II* (1949), as well as his three volume work on *L'Identite de la France* (1986) must be recognized as true classics.

Despite this rich background, the explosion of general media and social media in this century has done much to caricature the notions of historical narrative and open the way for those who would abuse history to suggest that we are either Muslim or European, that we can have only one aspect to our identity and that, therefore, the world is indeed divided into “us” and “them”.

Competing Historical Narratives

Today, we are concerned by the conflicts between Muslims and the West, including the fear of the non-Muslim majority in the west of what the Muslim minority in their midst may do. The cleavages lie within the Muslim world as much as between the Muslims and the non-Muslims. Let us briefly look at the competing historical narratives

⁽¹⁾ See OSWALD SPENGLER, *The Decline of the West*, translated by Charles Francis Atkinson, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926 (vol 1) and 1928 (vol 2).

⁽²⁾ See FRANCOIS FURET, *Penser la Revolution Francaise*, Paris, Gallimard, 1978 (*Interpreting the French Revolution* (1978, trans. 1981).

between the West and the Muslims, including the perceived narrative of the Crusades and beyond.

The history of the Muslim World has its stellar practitioners as well as its partisan foes who would try to bend a historical narrative to give more support and legitimacy to the political point of view they support. Just as Christianity's major split existed between Catholicism and Protestantism, with many subsidiary differences and arguments; Muslim history would also largely turn around the Sunni/Shia split, and would also have many subsidiary differences and arguments.

Regretfully, Europe's views of the Muslim World would largely be shaped by the narrative of three episodes: The original Muslim Conquests that would bring Islam to the Iberian Peninsula and be stopped at Poitiers by Charles Martel; the narrative history of the Crusades; and then the Ottoman invasions and occupations of parts of Europe. Sadly, that narrative of enmity largely stops there in the European consciousness, while for almost all the Muslims, the most important chapter of enmity with the West would be the Western colonization of almost all the lands of Islam in the 19th and 20th centuries. These earlier episodes are underplayed in relation to the Golden Age of Islam and the flourishing Islamic civilization which was largely tolerant and open to science and debate at a time when Europe was in the so-called Dark Ages⁽¹⁾.

But whatever the parameters one chooses, there is no doubt that Andalusia under the Muslims was a tolerant place especially when measured by the standards of its time. This was also true of most of the Muslim empires and kingdoms of the time, again especially when measured by the standards of the time. Thus, Maimonides, the great

⁽¹⁾ A period of about a thousand years stretching from the fall of Rome (fifth Century CE) to the fall of Constantinople (15th Century CE). This approximately corresponds to the period covering the rise and glory of Muslim civilization (approximately from the seventh to the late sixteenth centuries CE).

Jewish scholar of the middle ages was able to find refuge and the space to think and write in the tolerant arms of the Muslim state. And as Amartya Sen notes:

[when] Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in Campo dei Fiori in Rome, the Great Mughal emperor Akbar (who was born a Muslim and died a Muslim) had just finished in Agra, his large project of legally codifying minority rights, including religious freedom for all.⁽¹⁾

But surely today, with the powerful new tools that historians have at their disposal, and with the enormous amount of inter-academic discussion and debate that exists between all cultures of the world, we should be able to redress these imbalances in inherited narratives and establish a better perception of the other. Sadly, politics of fear and hate are present everywhere, and the murderous merchants of hate in the Muslim world have abused history to try to give support to their terrible political agendas.

Our Common Enemies: The Abusers of History

So here we are...

The extremist Jihadists who wage war on both our civilizations are a prime example of the abuse of history. A historical narrative is fabricated to support a political agenda. Identity is reduced from its natural multi-layered complexity into a single, uni-dimensional identity that allows all others to be rejected as “the enemy”. The real study of history gives no support to such views.

The insistence of the extremist terrorist Jihadists and the western public media to refer to these terrorists as “Muslim extremists”, foments the view that Muslims and Westerners have nothing in common. It is a behavior that calls for the idea of a “Clash of

⁽¹⁾ The Annales school embraced quantitative methods. In the United States, and Britain too, quantification became increasingly used in historical studies. Not surprisingly, such quantitative techniques became known as “cliometrics”.

Civilizations” to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Every person is endowed with a complex identity that is partially inherited (ethnicity, gender, and mother tongue) and partially constructed (political affiliation, profession, geographic location, etc.). Religion is usually absorbed in youth, and if the person does not choose to convert it bridges the two kinds of attributes. Any effort to reduce these complex identities to a single dimension is not only mistaken, it is also in fact destructive. Amin Maalouf called identities so constructed “Murderous Identities”⁽¹⁾. This is even more so if it is in terms of religion, where feelings are particularly strong for many people. That fact prompted Sen to observe:

The religious partitioning of the world produces a deeply misleading understanding of the people across the world and the diverse relations between them, and it also has the effect of magnifying one particular distinction between one person and another to the exclusion of all other important concerns.⁽²⁾

Neglecting the plurality of our affiliations and the need for dialogue and mutual respect, pushes us in the direction of the terrifying prospects portrayed by Matthew Arnold in “Dover Beach” and cited by Sen:

*And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight
Where ignorant armies clash by night*⁽³⁾

As we think of developing a new historical narrative, there is a real task for the historians. They must confront the abusers of history: from

⁽¹⁾ MAALOUF, AMIN, *Les IdentitesMeurtrieres*, Grasset , Paris.

⁽²⁾ Amartia Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, Penguin Books, 2007 (c. 2006), p.76.

⁽³⁾ Amartia Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, Penguin Books, 2007 (c. 2006), Prologue p. xiv.

the Holocaust deniers to the artisans of xenophobia and hatred. And as Lukacs said in defining the task of the professional historians:

This is their particular task: the struggle against all kinds of falsifications, against many kinds of untruths, detecting and exposing them for the sake of us all; aware that the pursuit of truths involves, ever and ever, hacking your way through a jungle of untruths ...⁽¹⁾

Towards a New Historical Narrative

It would be very sensible for us to develop a somewhat different view of the historical narrative that would create potential opportunities for mutual understanding in Europe and across the Mediterranean. Allow me to hark back to Braudel and his work, and remind us that he insisted that the Mediterranean area is also a unity, despite its diversity.

So having established that we face the same enemies on both sides of the Mediterranean, I hope to establish that by better understanding our cultures and revising the historical narratives that undergird our sense of identities, we will help create opportunities for mutual understanding and cooperation, including the better engagement and inclusion of the European Muslims, even those who are resisting “assimilation” and undertaking programs of “self-exclusion”.

We must teach a different historical narrative... I believe that Europe and the East, especially Egypt, have had an interlinked destiny. And the crusades notwithstanding, that common destiny, intertwined throughout our histories, has been constructive and enriching. See the torch of reason and learning passed from hand to hand and culture to culture on both sides of the Mediterranean. ...

⁽¹⁾ LUKACS. JOHN, *The Future of History*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2011. p.23.

We can start by saying that for millennia Egypt carried the torch of advanced knowledge, with other parallels in what is Iraq today, and a claim for the Minoan culture of ancient antiquity, but nothing rivaled ancient Thebes in its heyday. Then the torch passed to the golden Greeks who have erected a structure of thought and produced a cultural legacy that dazzles us to this day. Alexander then briefly united the world and changed it forever. The torch passed from Greece to Alexandria. It stayed there until Rome was to make the Mediterranean the “mare nostrum”, and establish the largest empire the world had yet seen. But Rome soon fell, and from the sacking of Rome to the fall of Constantinople, Europe would be in the dark ages. But the sun of Islam was rising, and the torch of learning and culture was passed to the Muslims and Arabs whose dominions stretched from Andalusia to India and from the Caucasus to Africa. The last manifestation of that great culture and its decline was to be the Ottoman empire which coexisted with the start of the Renaissance and was to pass the torch once more to Europe which has held it up high since that time.

European civilization in its modern form emerged not from the Renaissance but from the scientific revolution that followed. That was accompanied by the emergence of the values of the enlightenment that would characterize the west in the last three centuries. Obviously, American morals and culture as well as American power and technology played a major role in global affairs from the second half of the 19th century. But, for our purposes today, let us say that western civilization and culture is largely European civilization and culture.

That European civilization dominated the world in the last four centuries... Jared Diamond famously attributed that to “Guns, Germs and Steel”. This enormous growth of European dominance had also a lot to do with the adoption of the scientific outlook, the rapid advance of scientific knowledge, the swift expansion of technological developments and the continuing progress in Western institutional

structures and performance. Many of the elites in the developing countries, the colonies, studied in European universities and admired European institutions.

Practically all the Muslim majority countries of today were at one time or another colonized by Europeans who left their legacies on the nations and peoples of those lands. Coming out of colonialism into independence in the 20th century, the Muslim majority countries sought to reassert their national identities but with a mixed part of European culture added, frequently modeling their institutions on European institutions.

But like the wave that has gone on the beach as far as it goes and draws back to the sea, so Europe has felt the counter currents as immigrants poured across Europe post WWII, and then post decolonization in the 1960s and 70s, to be further enhanced by the economic migrants attracted by the phenomenal success of the European Community in the 1980s and 1990s. Today Islam is Europe's second religion, and growing.

That historical narrative gives the Muslims and those who come from both sides of the Mediterranean a positive role in the construction of the culture that we share. It does not ignore the conflicts but downplays them in terms of the contributions to the common culture. After all, that is what Europeans have done with the historical narrative of Europe itself⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ A consensus about the general outlines of a narrative does not require full agreement on all the details. The broad narrative can incorporate contradictions. There will always be competing versions of truth, and we each must choose which to embrace. There is no absolutely correct interpretation of the past, but "the act of interpreting is itself a vicarious enlargement of experience from which you can benefit". Gaddis Page 10 Indeed, as Kierkegaard put it: "Absolute Truth belongs to God, not to us: what is given to us is the pursuit of truth", cited in LUKACS. JOHN, *The Future of History*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2011, p. 26.

The overwhelming majority of humanity has rejected the ideas of racially pure, ethnically unique or homogenous religious societies. Those who promoted that by genocide and ethnic cleansing have been defeated. But the corollary, the acceptance of pluralism, is proving exceptionally difficult to implement. Diverse communities may indeed be enriching the mosaic of a multi-cultural society, but they also generate a sense of unease among the population. We have witnessed disasters in the Balkans and Rwanda, and dissolution of the State in Yugoslavia and the Sudan... all reminders that pluralism is difficult to implement, even in the democratic societies of Europe, without verging into separation. Belgium is at a crossroads today, while Czechoslovakia underwent a peaceful separation between Czechs and Slovaks.

The task therefore is to rejoice in our diversity, while we hold on to the universal values that we believe in, and that create the common binds for consensual social actions.

But for us in the Middle East, war is still a daily reality. In a few states, the steps towards democracy are nascent and still uncertain, while in Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria and Iraq, chaos reigns as states collapse and extremist movements like Da'ish and Al-Qaeda advance on their murderous rampage.

We must redouble our efforts to reach out to youth and listen to their concerns as we craft our own agendas for discussion. In undertaking this task, it is imperative that we act, and act quickly. As we speak, there is violence in our streets, aimlessness amongst our youth, anxiety among our elders, and a virtual despair among the many who see no prospect for a peaceful and prosperous life.

On our side of the Mediterranean, despite the horrors and the dislocations, the countless victims and the millions of displaced people; despite the merchants of hate and the fear and the intimidation they deploy, there are some of us who have taken up the challenge of fighting ideas with ideas. In Europe, there are many voices

that reject the politics of hatred and fear, there are many who stand up for the ideals of European civilization and reassert the primacy of human rights and democratic governance. Can we build bridges to link the two?

- I believe in the devotion and hard work of all those who give of themselves to building these elusive bridges of understanding...
- Those who believe in that worthy goal, and confront the inevitable setbacks by picking up the pieces and starting again.
- Those who are armed with the conviction that ultimately there is no way forward but to seek a common language for understanding.
- Those who believe there can be no understanding without mutual respect for our differences, no salvation other than peace based on justice and fairness for all people.

To all of those who believe in fighting extremism and xenophobia with tolerance, skepticism and openness; those who believe in fighting these destructive ideas with ideas of our enriching diversity and the multi-layered reality of our identities, to them history speaks as a living reality, a definer of identity and a frame of reference. Its variegated landscape is a source of pride and enrichment rather than a cause of conflict or a claim to supremacy. They know how to use history without abusing it.

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