



IDEAS AND POLITICS IN HISTORY ИДЕИ И ПОЛИТИКА В ИСТОРИИ

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The three faces of caliphatism: ideas of the caliphate among islamic thinkers of the late 19th — early 20th centuries

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Abstract. The study undertakes a rigorous examination of the process of shaping the image of the caliphate and caliphal institutions in the central and peripheral regions of Islamic world in the late 19th century and the first third of the 20th century. To this end, it provides a look at specific examples of creative and political thought, drawing upon the works of prominent Muslim intellectuals and ideologists — Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1855–1902), Abd al-Aziz Javish (1876–1929) and Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958). The Ottoman Empire decline accompanied by successful colonization of Muslim lands by Europeans compelled Arab, Turkish, and Indian thinkers to refer to the Ottomans' experience in the caliphal capacity. Discussions around the duties of the Caliph and conditions for his legitimacy raised a wide range of political, cultural, and philosophical issues. They revealed contradictions in the interpretation of unity within Muslim community (umma), on the question on whether the caliphate and the secular model of social development could coexist, and on the prospects of overcoming the dependence of Muslim peoples on foreign colonial powers. The study sheds light on generational and regional features in the way Muslim intellectual elite regarded the tasks and legitimacy of the rule of the last Ottoman sultans. It reveals historical arguments and ideological attitudes of those who supported and opposed the concept of the 'Arab caliphate' ('caliphate of the Quraysh'), while the concept itself is evaluated in the light of geopolitical change that followed the Young Turk revolution of 1908–1909 and the Ottoman decline after the First World War. This study makes it possible to question the widespread view of caliphatism as a comparatively systematic, logically sound and non-evolving worldview system.

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Три облика халифатизма: представления о халифате исламских мыслителей конца XIX — начала XX в.

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Аннотация. На конкретных примерах творческих и политических подходов мусульманских интеллектуалов и идеологов: Абд ар-Рахмана ал-Кавакиби (1855–1902), Абд ал-Азиза Джавиша (1876–1929) и Абул Калама Азада (1888–1958) — рассматривается процесс складывания образа халифата и института халифской власти в центральных и периферийных районах исламского мира в конце XIX и первой трети XX в. Упадок османского государства и успешная колонизация мусульманских территорий заставили арабских, турецких и индийских мыслителей дать оценку опыту Османов в деле использования халифской власти. Дискуссии вокруг обязанностей халифа и условий легитимности его правления подняли широкий спектр проблем политико-культурного и философского свойства. Они проявили противоречия в трактовке признаков единства мусульманской общины (*уммы*), возможности сосуществования халифата и секулярной модели общественного развития, перспектив преодоления зависимости мусульманских народов от иноверных колониальных держав. Выявлены поколенческие и региональные особенности в понимании интеллектуальной элитой мусульман задач и степени законности правления последних османских султанов. Показаны исторические аргументы и идеологические установки сторонников и противников концепции «арабского халифата» («халифата курайшитов»). Дана оценка этой концепции в свете геополитических перемен, последовавших за младотурецкой революцией 1908–1909 гг. и ослаблением османских властных порядков после Первой мировой войны. Проведенное исследование позволяет поставить под сомнение распространенный тезис о халифатизме как сравнительно стройной, логически обоснованной и не подверженной заметной эволюции мировоззренческой системе.

Ключевые слова: младотурецкая революция, Первая мировая война, Ближний Восток, Северная Африка, Южная Азия

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Introduction

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the Muslim world has experienced mounting pressures of social, political and cultural modernization. Active colonial expansion of European states and the Ottoman Empire's decline, accompanying this process, gave rise to complex and often contentious questions for Islamic thinkers regarding Muslim tradition and its relevance for further development. Following the end of World War I in 1918 and subsequent military, spiritual, and political collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the question of the essence and legitimacy of the institution of caliphate¹ became a central point of public debate. Concurrently, Islamic political and philosophical thought gave rise to a plethora of contradictory and occasionally inconsistent ideas concerning the potential of the Muslim community (umma) to benefit from centuries-old experience of caliphal leadership. This was predicated on the premise that modernity was being introduced into social fabric of traditional societies in a forced and coercive manner, rather than following their natural development.

The article expounds upon three distinctive views on the significance of the post of Caliph and the set of tasks that the Ottoman padishah faced in his caliphal capacity, as developed by Islamic thinkers of different generations, beliefs, values and geographies. Notwithstanding their differences, these scholars were unified in their concern for the fate of the Ottoman statehood. The Ottomans represented the most significant political identity for the populations of the Middle East and South Asia, providing an ideological refuge in the face of colonial domination by foreigners and serving as a cultural bulwark for the legacy of Arab-Muslim civilization.

¹ Caliphate (Arabic: al-khilafa) — a state headed by a caliph; the period of the caliph's rule. Caliph — originally the title of a secular and spiritual head of an Arab state, later — the title of a ruler who claimed the leadership of the Muslim world.

Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi: a New Page in Interpretation of Caliphate

Caliphatism as an ideological and political construct resurged in the early 20th century, when a treatise ‘Umm al-Qura’ (‘Mother of Cities’ — a generally accepted name of Mecca in the Islamic world)² swiftly garnered widespread acclaim with Arabic-speaking public. The treatise was authored by a Syrian ideologist Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1855–1902), one of the brightest representatives of the Arab Renaissance (al-Nahda), an ardent critic of Ottoman absolutism — a position expressed in his work ‘Tabai al-Istibdad wa-Masari al-Isti‘bad’ (‘The Nature Of Despotism and the Struggle against Slavery’)³. He was also renowned as a staunch supporter of the Arab Caliphate cause, with his unique vision of this institution as the basis for Arab national resurgence. These two landmark works determined his pan-Arab acclaim although they were not published until his late years of life.

In order to understand why al-Kawakibi’s legacy — that of a man who stands out in the history of Arab social thought as ‘the father of Arab nationalism’ — is essentially limited to no more than two works, let us take a brief look at his biography [1. P. 64].

Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi was born in 1855 in Aleppo into a respectable family whose many members were prominent figures of Islamic religious and administrative elite in Syria. He was educated at home and in a number of educational institutions, including a family school (al-madrassa al-Kawakibiyya) founded by a member of his family. Having shown a keen interest in journalism from a young age, Abd al-Rahman started working as an editor of a local weekly newspaper ‘Al-Furat’ (The Euphrates) at the age of 20. However, the fact that the paper was strictly official and rigorously censored weighed on al-Kawakibi, and he soon left this job to plunge headlong into administrative, social and business endeavors. As honorary secretary, he joined a committee on education; ran a printing house; served as sharia judge (qadi) and inspector of the Régie tobacco monopoly, headed an agricultural bank and the city chamber of commerce, and in 1892 took prestigious office

² Al-Kawakibi, Abd al-Rahman. *Umm al-qura li al-sayyid al-Furati wa huwa dabt mufawadat wa mukararat mu'tamar al-nahda al-Islamiyyah al-mun'aqid fi Makka al-mukarrama sanat 1316* (Mother of Cities by Mr. al-Furati: Minutes of Negotiations and Resolutions of the Congress of Islamic Revival Held in Noble Mecca in 1316 AH) (In Arabic). Cairo: Al-Matba'a al-Misriyya bi-l-Azhar, 1350 AH (1931).

³ Al-Kawakibi, Abd al-Rahman. *Tabai' al-istibdad wa masari' al-isti'bad*. Cairo: Mu'assasa al-Hindawi, 2010. Translation into Russian: *Al-Kawakibi, Abd al-Rahman*. The Nature of Despotism and the Struggle against Slavery. Translated from Arabic and researched by ZI Levin. Moscow: USSR AS, 1964.

of municipality head (ra'id al-baladiyya) of Aleppo. Al-Kawakibi's high esteem and popularity as a manager who promoted the interests of ordinary people were reflected in an honourable nickname bestowed upon him by the populace of Aleppo — Abu du'afa' ('father of the weak', i.e., of the destitute). At the same time, he was trying to pursue journalism, but its prospects in his native Aleppo were not bright. Al-Kawakibi's first weekly, 'Al-Shahba' (one of the names of Aleppo), where he intended to speak openly on topical issues, was closed following the release of its second issue (1877), and two attempts to resume this publication came to nothing. In 1879, the stubborn al-Kawakibi launched another weekly newspaper 'I'tidal' (Moderation) (i.e. meant to manifest justice and responsibility) where on the front page of the first issue he stated that it was intended 'to expose the abuses of officials, bring public needs to the attention of authorities, and educate the people' [2. P. 34]. However, it quickly suffered the same fate as its predecessor.

The hyperactive Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi increasingly irritated the authorities with his critical attitude and relentless initiative. To get rid of the unwanted troublemaker, the authorities falsely accused him of anti-state activities; he was imprisoned and sentenced to death. However, when his fabricated case was reviewed by the High Court in Beirut, it collapsed in an instant and al-Kawakibi was acquitted. Yet he suffered substantial financial losses that made his already precarious financial situation extremely difficult. When he faced a threat of a new round of persecution, al-Kawakibi decided to flee Syria. In 1898, he secretly travelled to Egypt, which had been under British control since 1882, that is effectively beyond the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire. There, he met an influential group of Syrian émigré intellectuals and made many supporters and friends. One of them was sheikh Ali Yusuf (1863–1913), publisher of the largest Egyptian newspaper of the period, 'Al-Mu'ayyad' (The Assistant). On its pages al-Kawakibi published a series of strongly anti-absolutist essays, which, brought together, were later published in 1901 as a separate edition entitled 'The Nature of Despotism and the Struggle against Slavery'. Thus, the corpus of anti-tyrannical literature of the East was enriched with one of its brightest examples created in the late Modern era [3. P. 151]. His another work 'Umm al-Qura' was published in 1900, the one that he wrote mostly in Aleppo and completed in Egypt⁴.

Following this well-trodden path of reaching a wide readership, al-Kawakibi decided to publish the work in parts in the press, this time in another influential periodical, the mouthpiece of Islamic reformers, 'Al-Manar' (The

⁴ Al-Kawakibi published both books under the pseudonym ar-rahkhal K. (traveller K.).

Lighthouse)⁵. Al-Kawakibi's personal experience in independent journalism was quite modest: it comprised several unsuccessful ventures early in his career and occasional articles he published, usually anonymously, in various Arab newspapers in the 1880s and 1890s.

In the last two years of his life, al-Kawakibi travelled extensively and enthusiastically through the cities and regions of Islamic world, visited Ethiopia, Somalia, and crossed the Arabian Peninsula on a camel. However, a trip to India became his last for the 47-year-old al-Kawakibi: he suffered a sudden death in June 1902. A thorough biography written by his grandson Sa'ad Zaghlul suggests that Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi was poisoned. Someone put poison in his cup of coffee when he was spending time with friends in Cairo's café 'Istanbul'⁶. It remains unknown whether his sudden demise had anything to do with the hires of the Egyptian khedive Abbas Hilmi II (ruled 1892–1914), whose ambitions to become caliph al-Kawakibi did not support, or with secret agents of Sultan-Caliph Abdul-Hamid II (ruled 1876–1909), who strictly banned Al-Kawakibi's works, although there were rumours that this was the case. Or, as the author of a new al-Kawakibi's biography Itzhak Weisman writes, al-Kawakibi might not have survived an ischemic stroke [2. P. 63].

Anti-Ottoman sentiment of Al-Kawakibi's, who was convinced that the despotic regime of Sultan inexorably impeded the progress of Arab world, largely determined the course of his thought on the future of Dar al-Islam⁷, which he associated with the revival of the caliphate in its Arab interpretation (as discussed in his treatise 'Umm al-Qura').

The treatise describes fictional events that are exclusively the fruit of the author's inexhaustible imagination, although looking extremely believable. The text represents twelve protocols of meetings of an imaginary congress, which allegedly took place in Mecca in 1898 during the Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. The text also features the charter of the Association for the Guidance of Muslims (Jam'iya ta'lim al-muwahhidin), also designated as the Society "Umm al-Qura" (Jam'iya Umm al-Qura). The congress is presided over by a Meccan, and the author himself, under the pseudonym 'al-Sayyid al-Furati' ('the gentleman from the Euphrates'), assumes the role of organizer and secretary of this forum.

⁵ Published in 'Al-Manar' from April 1902 to February 1903, the treatise has been republished several times since its reprinting as a book in 1904 with commentary by Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935), the editor of 'Al-Manar'.

⁶ Al-Kawakibi, Sa'ad Zaghlul. *Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi: al-sirah al-zatiyya* (Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi: Autobiography). Beirut: Bissan, 1998. P. 181. See also: [4. P. 85].

⁷ Dar al-Islam ('the abode of Islam') — the territory where, according to the norms of Muslim law, the shariah as a legal system reigns supreme.

The structure of this imaginary caliphate in the interpretation of al-Kawakibi can be presented as follows⁸. Its center and the headquarters of the caliph is Mecca, a sacred place for all Islamic followers. The caliphate is exceptionally headed by a Qurayshit Arab, a representative of the Prophet Muhammad's native tribe. The caliph's lineage being traced to the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad's descendants, known as the Sharifs, who traditionally enjoy profound respect in the Muslim world, would, according to al-Kawakibi, strengthen his authority and emphasize his spiritual connection to the Messenger of Allah.

The post of Caliph is not a matter of hereditary succession. The Caliph's term of office is initially set at three years, a period that may be subject to official extension. However, should a breach of office be committed or a manifest inability to cope with the duties entrusted to him be demonstrated, the Caliph may be deposed earlier.

The Caliph's territorial administrative jurisdiction is limited to Hijaz, the homeland of Islam, but even within its borders the Caliph does not exercise unlimited powers, since his decisions are overseen by the Special Consultative Council of Hijaz (Shura hassa Hijaziyya). Within the framework of Dar al-Islam, the Caliph is legitimized only as a supreme religious authority, which is confirmed by the fact that in the Muslim sermon — khutba — his name is mentioned first. The Caliph has no right to directly interfere in the politics and administrative affairs of sultanates and emirates within the Caliphate, limiting himself only to providing expertise (In such a way religion is separated from politics). The Caliph is assisted by a special body, the General Muslim Consultative Council (Hay'a al-shura al-'amma), made up of 100 representatives of the countries where Islam is professed. The Council convenes on an annual basis prior to the Hajj and deals only with religious policy issues. Its functions also include the election of Caliph and extension of his term of office every three years. The Caliph himself is endowed with the formal right of investiture of heads of Muslim states — sultans, emirs, etc.⁹

According to al-Kawakibi's plan, the revived caliphate, initially consisting exclusively of the Arabian Peninsula emirates, should eventually transform into a full-fledged Islamic Union (al-ittihad al-Islamiy) — an alliance of Muslim states. Thus, we are not looking at a single state entity, but at a 'confederal' caliphate, where political power is retained by the rulers of its constituent territories. As for the peoples that this hypothetical caliphate absorbs, Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi evaluates them on a basis of their distinctive "racial" qualities. Turks contribute to the process of achieving Islamic unity as curators

⁸ A step-by-step plan for political revival of the Muslim world is outlined in 'Umm al-Qura' in the form of a draft proposed by an emir present at the Congress (Umm al-Qura... pp. 198–210).

⁹ Al-Kawakibi, Abd al-Rahman. *Umm al-Qura*... pp. 207–209.

of political and diplomatic sphere, Egyptians — as moderators of social sphere, Iranians and Indians are made responsible for the progress of economy and science, while Afghans and Caucasians together with Moroccans and Negroid peoples of Black Africa become guarantors of military power. Al-Kawakibi assigns the role of spiritual guides to the Arabs living in the cradle of Islam — Arabia — where principal Muslim shrines are located. Concurrently, he accentuates the enduring significance of Hijaz as the locale where “the light of Islam was ignited” and Hijazis as “the cornerstone of unification for all Muslims”¹⁰.

The idea that the Caliph should be an Arab became the cornerstone of al-Kawakibi’s conceptual framework. He insistently pursued the idea that the Arabs ranked first in the family of Muslim nations and are entrusted with a responsible mission to unite the Dar al-Islam and breathe new life into the institution of caliphate, illegally usurped by the Ottomans. Al-Kawakibi’s passionate advocacy for indisputable merits of Arabs earned him fame as the forerunner of Arab nationalism. When restored, the caliphate itself was to help the world of Islam emerge from its deep decline and overcome its existential crisis.

Another important aspect of al-Kawakibi’s views on the caliphate was his own interpretation of the principle of separation of religion and politics — inherently secular by nature — as a quest for middle ground that would enable both politics and religion to fulfil their designated roles in the Islamic revival.

Outlining initial steps towards Muslim unity and a full-fledged caliphate that would extend across Islamic lands, including the Ottoman Empire, Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi advocated sweeping administrative changes based on decentralization in the Ottoman Empire, which he regarded as a particularly egregious example of despotism and arbitrary rule.

Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi repeatedly came under fierce criticism from his opponents — supporters of the Ottoman caliphate, which would persist for almost a quarter of a century more (until its abolition in 1924 by Turkey’s republican leaders). Those who supported Sultan-Caliph Abdul-Hamid II saw the Arab caliphate movement as an imperialist project of Britain, consistent with its ‘divide and rule’ Middle Eastern policy. Notably, Ali Fahmi Muhammad, a prominent pro-Ottoman Egyptian politician (1870–1926), acknowledged al-Kawakibi’s status as ‘an independent thinker and respected scholar’. However, he also criticized al-Kawakibi’s perceived simplicity of thought and lack of nuanced political thinking, which he believed impeded his ability to accurately assess the realities of the Islamic world. According

¹⁰ Al-Kawakibi, Abd al-Rahman. *Umm al-Qura...* pp. 192–195.

to Ali Fahmi, this failure enabled the British to ‘seduce’ al-Kawakibi and win him over to their side, and the thinker himself to inflict serious damage to the interests of Dar al-Islam¹¹.

Did al-Kawakibi contemplate the prospect of collaborating with this or that European power to advance his interests? It is possible. At least, he is known to have had contacts with Italians during his sojourn in Egypt [5. P. 228–229]. It is evident that Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi occupies a position of prominence among the vanguard of religious and political thinkers of his era, particularly renowned for his detailed caliphate project, which, though illusory, is noteworthy for its affirmation of life.

Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish: a Modernist Theologian and an Ottoman Caliphate Advocate

Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish (1876–1929) substantiated his take on the role of caliphate in Islamic history on a very different perspective. He was born to a Tunisian migrant father and Turkish mother in Alexandria, and his life was marked by a series of unexpected turns. He studied at al-Azhar and Dar al-‘Ulum in Egypt, and later at Borough Road College in London and even taught at Cambridge University. On his return to Egypt still under British occupation, Jawish took up journalism, and together with an influential Egyptian politician, Muhammad Farid (1868–1919) joined the National Party (al-Hizb al-Wataniyyah). Along with the party’s founder Mustafa Kamil (1874–1908), Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish believed that its consolidation was in the best interests of the Ottoman state [6. P. 6]. Following the death of Mustafa Kamil, Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish was appointed head of the editorial board of the party’s newspaper ‘Liwa’ (‘Banner’), which became a principal anti-British platform in Egypt [7. P. 105–106]. The newspaper employed more than 150 workers, with its circulation reaching 18 thousand copies [1. P. 334]. However, his steadfast opposition to British colonial policy ultimately led to his conviction and subsequent expulsion to Istanbul, where he assumed the role of editor for pro-Ottoman newspapers ‘Al-Hilal’ (‘The Crescent’) and ‘Al-Hiddaya’ (The Kite), published in Arabic [8. P. 608]¹².

¹¹ In 1911. Ali Fahmi wrote in this regard: ‘The British are very good at seducing naive scholars like him ... [but] today [the Ottoman caliphate] need not fear rivals. Nevertheless, foreign governments sow discord among us and set us against each other in order to ... break our unity.’ — Ali Fahmi Muhammad. *Al-Hilafa al-Islamiyya wa-l-jami'a al-'usmaniyya* (The Islamic Caliphate and the Ottoman Community). *Hilafet Risaleleri*. Vol. 3. Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2003. P. 96–97.

¹² Since the 90s of the 19th century anti-British sentiment in Egypt combined with Khedive Abbas Hilmi II's aspirations to achieve the status of caliph, which led to an discreet conflict between Istanbul and Cairo [9. P. 25–29].

Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish’s views on the essence and legitimacy of the caliphate took a long time to develop and proved to be contradictory. When contemplating the tasks of the caliph in relation to the community, Jawish adhered to modernist positions. At the same time, he emphasized limited spiritual authority of the padishah and attached more value to his socio-political function. In his treatise ‘Al-Khilafa al-Islamiyya’, he further elaborated on this position, stating that the role of the caliph encompasses the ability to engage in warfare, enlist and train troops, defend religion, and preserve Muslim society. Consequently, the caliph is expected to possess the capacity and the authority to effectively manage the affairs of the state and society. Moreover, he is required to demonstrate proficiency in the art of politics and to demonstrate expertise in the implementation of Islamic principles of governance.¹³

This approach coincided with ideological and political views of the Young Turk leaders who, following the 1908–1909 revolution, perceived the institution of caliphate not as a divine given, but as a formal legal contract between the Padishah of Istanbul and his subjects. Arab nationalist thinkers had similar views on the mission of sultan-caliph. For example, Jawish’s opponent Muhammad Rashid Rida called to rethink the idea of a caliphate in the context of Western dominance over the Islamic world. Nevertheless, Rida’s position was not entirely divergent from Jawish’s in terms of a modernist interpretation of the functions of the Ottoman caliph. Rida contended that while the caliphate was ‘sanctioned by religion’, the caliph had no authority over the beliefs of Muslims or their connection with Allah. The caliph’s authority over Muslims was inferior to that of the Pope among Catholics. Therefore, the caliph, according to Rida, should adopt the role of a modern ruler governed by a constitution¹⁴. This constitution, he argued, would serve to limit the caliph’s authority to worldly affairs, obliging him to provide a detailed account of his policies to his subjects¹⁵.

While criticizing certain aspects of Ottoman caliphal rule, Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish remained its consistent and staunch defender throughout his career. Years of struggle against British presence in Egypt convinced him of the need to defend caliphal functions of the padishah against both the intrigues of European colonizers and the claims of the Arab national movement.

¹³ Jawish A. *Hilafet-i İslamiye. Hilafet Risaleleri*. Vol. 4. Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004. p. 251.

¹⁴ Rida, Muhammad Rashid. *Al-Khilafa, au al-Imam al-'uzma* (The Caliphate, or Supreme Imamate). Cairo: Al-Matba'a al-jadida, 1975. P. 142–143.

¹⁵ Rida, Muhammad Rashid. *Zafar at-turk bi-l-yunan wa salluhum 'arshat daulat 'Uthman wa ja'luhum al-khilafa al-islamiyya sulta ruhāniyya adabiyya* (The triumph of the Greeks over the Turks, their abduction of the throne of the Ottoman state, and their transformation of the Islamic caliphate into a moral and spiritual dominion). *Al-Manar*. 1922. Vol. XXIII. № 9. P. 717.

With the onset of the First World War, the French government and colonial circles, represented by L.-H. Lyautey (1854–1934), a founder of the French protectorate in Morocco, and Foreign Minister T. Delcassé (1852–1923) developed a project of the ‘Maghreb caliphate’. The rationale behind this plan was to challenge the legitimacy of the caliphal rule of the Ottomans and to demonstrate France’s patronage over Islam. Lyautey nominated Sultan Moulay Yusuf ibn Hassan (1912–1927), the ruler of the Far Maghreb (Morocco), as caliph. Lyautey wished to preserve original traditional ways of life in the North-West Africa and to spare Moroccan culture and society of destruction that accompanied the colonization of Algeria [10. P. 141]. He once again brought up the idea of building a colonial empire, which ‘captivated him as an idealist, romantic, humanist and missionary’ [11. P. 53].

Such a project was not illogical. Moulay Yusuf belonged to the Alawi dynasty, a lineage that traced its roots to the Prophet Muhammad, whereas the Sharifs in Morocco were venerated and politically active [12. P. 93–94]. Besides, in the 17th–19th centuries Moroccan rulers were protecting their independence, often facing challenges to their sovereignty from Istanbul [13. P. 108–109]. Therefore, in 1914–1918, neither the ideas of pan-Islamism, nor the Young Turk agents sent to Morocco for anti-colonial subversive activities received any support from local urban and tribal leaders, not to mention official Alawi structures [14. P. 17]. Furthermore, the Muslims of North Africa exhibited minimal enthusiasm for Sultan Mehmed V’s (1909–1918) call to jihad against the Entente, while the British were planning the Dardanelles operation for the winter of 1915–1916. The operation stipulated the seizure of Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire ultimate defeat. Similar arguments guided British intelligence in their attempts to persuade the Sharīf of Mecca, Husayn ibn ‘Ali (1853–1931) and his sons to side with the Entente. In 1916, they launched a revolt against the Ottoman rule in Hijaz, inspired not only by the idea of an ‘Arab kingdom’, but also by the slogan of an ‘Arab caliphate’ [15. P. 182–183; 16. P. 129–130].

In response to these challenges, Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish’s research and propagandistic writings defended the concept of the Ottoman caliphate as the only legitimate form that Islamic statehood could take in the Middle East and North Africa. His arguments represent a remarkable example of both traditional theological and political thought of an early 20th century Muslim intellectual.

Condemning Moulay Yusuf’s co-operation with the French, Jawish accused him of ‘dissociating the caliphal authority’, which, in his opinion, was allowed neither in the Qur’an nor in the prophetic tradition. He criticized the Fatimid (10th–11th century) and Almohad (12th–13th century) dynasties for appropriating the status of caliphs and competing with the Abbasid caliphate. This, as Jawish believed, was

why the medieval Muslim community (ummah) disintegrated¹⁶. He also referred to the discussion over the candidacy of the first caliph, held between those who converted to Islam in Mecca and relocated to Medina (the Muhajirun) and Muslims of Medina (the Ansar). The proposal put forward by the Ansar entailed the election of two caliphs simultaneously, with one being selected from each group. However, this proposal was ultimately rejected by the majority, resulting in the election of Abu Bakr¹⁷ as the caliph. Finally, Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish drew parallels between the French colonialists, who exerted their influence over the sovereign of the Far Maghreb, and the pagans of Mecca, who had inflicted harm upon Muslims in various ways in the community’s early history. He further elaborated on the hadith, a collection of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, which instructs Muslims to refrain from cooperating with pagans and cautioned Maghrebis against placing their trust in a government that, in his estimation, is no less an adversary of Islam than the Meccans of the early seventh century¹⁸.

Regarding the revolt of Husayn ibn ‘Ali and his sons, Jawish unequivocally sided with Istanbul. He regarded an armed uprising against the Ottoman caliph at a critical juncture of a global conflict as a flagrant transgression of Allah’s commandments and established Shari’ah norms.¹⁹ Furthermore, Jawish dismissed the legitimacy of Husayn’s claim to power, citing his lack of authority among Muslims outside Arabia, in contrast to the Ottoman sultan, who derived his legitimacy as caliph from the empire’s military and political strength, sufficient to unify the Islamic world. As Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish articulated, ‘Muslims are cognizant of the fact that Mehmed V does not resemble the puppet figures installed and shielded by France in the Maghreb or Britain in Egypt as false caliphs. He embodies a genuine sultan, the progeny of sultans, and the ruler of all Muslims. The adversaries remain oblivious to the fact that the legitimate heirs of the Prophet are those who possess the most profound understanding of who on earth is most deserving of the title of caliph’²⁰.

Another subject of theological and ideological criticism for Jawish was a famous hadith on the Quraysh (‘The Imams are from Quraysh’). Arab caliphate supporters and emerging Arab nationalists of the early 20th century substantiated

¹⁶ Jawish A. *Hilafet-i İslamiye. Hilafet Risaleleri*. Vol. 4. Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004. p. 259.

¹⁷ Jawish A. *Hilafet-i İslamiye. Hilafet Risaleleri*. Vol. 4. Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004. P. 259–260.

¹⁸ Jawish A. *Hilafet-i İslamiye. Hilafet Risaleleri*. Vol. 4. Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004. P. 262.

¹⁹ In particular, Jawish referred to the ayat in the Qur’an: ‘Remember Allah’s blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing. ... And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate!’ [3: 103]. In general, the emergence of a pretender to the caliphate under the acting caliph was considered in the Muslim world as a bad omen, and medieval legal scholars insisted that even unjust power in the community was preferable to anarchy, in accordance with the hadith: ‘Imam-despot is better than sedition’ [17. P. 141].

²⁰ Jawish A. *Hilafet-i İslamiye. Hilafet Risaleleri*. Vol. 4. Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004. p. 255.

their arguments on this statement of the Prophet, popularizing the hadith and using it as a tool in their struggle against the caliphal status of the Ottoman sovereign. They maintained that the Ottoman dynasty, being neither members of the Quraysh tribe nor even Arabs, could not claim a significant role in the Muslim community. At the same time, since the mid-19th century this hadith was often used by European colonial administrations to downplay the scope of power of the Ottoman Caliph in their Muslim lands [18. P. 20–21].

Jawish set out to challenge the meaning of the ‘hadith on the Quraysh’. The chain of transmitters (isnad) of this hadith was convincing and it was recognized as a reliable (sahih) report of the Prophet’s words. As such, the ‘hadith on the Quraysh’ was not subject to refutation on the basis of doubts over its authenticity. Consequently, Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish endeavoured to reinterpret the hadith, asserting in his treatise ‘Al-Khilafa al-Islamiyyah’ that, despite the authenticity of the Prophet’s words, they had deviated from their original message. A fundamental criterion for the legitimacy of the Caliph in Islam was his possession of sufficient authority and military and political power to support the community and safeguard its interests. However, in the early 20th century, the Quraysh tribe possessed no such authority or power. Consequently, Jawish argued that the restrictions on leadership outlined by Muhammad in the 7th century were no longer applicable in the contemporary moment²¹. This effectively neutralized an important element of anti-Ottoman propaganda and provided the ruling circles in Istanbul with a counterbalance to both Arab caliphatist and nationalist statements, as well as colonial political discourse.

Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish demonstrated unwavering allegiance to the Ottoman imperial ideals throughout the First World War, engaging in operations conducted by the ‘Special Formation’ (Teşkilat-ı mahsusa), an intelligence and propaganda agency under the auspices of the Young Turks. In addition, he provided substantial assistance to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the publication of a journal entitled ‘Muslim World’ (al-‘alam al-islamiy). In 1916–1918, together with other Maghrebi migrants in Geneva, he organized the work of an anti-colonial publication ‘La Revue du Maghreb’ [20. P. 51–52], headed by Muhammad Bash Hamba (1881–1920). Even after the empire surrendered (1918), Jawish continued to work in Istanbul in the interests of Turkey’s republican leadership. He presided over the ‘Scientific Committee’ (Bilimsel Komitet), entrusted with organizing religious affairs in the republic and fostering ties with the Muslim community in the Middle East and North Africa. It was not until Mustafa Kemal (1881–1938)

²¹ Jawish A. Hilafet-i İslamiye. *Hilafet Risaleleri*. Vol. 4. Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004. P. 246–249. In the same way (the Ottoman Empire needs strong power and authoritative ideology), early Young Turks justified the necessity of creating a Turkish political nation [19. P. 34].

and his entourage made a decision to abolish the Ottoman caliphate in 1923²², that Javish returned to Cairo. There, he assumed a position within the Royal Ministry of Education and was elected to the position of vice-president of the Muslim Youth Association [21. P. 96–97].

In these years, pan-Islamism and imperial ideas so dear to his heart were lost in the turbulent atmosphere of state-building and anti-colonial struggles. The transformation of the Ottoman ruins into an Islamic superpower proved to be a pipe dream, and lingering political traumas of the past led Abd al-‘Aziz Jawish to distance himself from the discourse surrounding the notion of a caliphate²³. His modernist ideas on power in Islam underwent a process of painful de-politicization [23. P. 44]. In the years of his philosophical heyday, he wrote: ‘The office of caliph is not a position in which one can expect blessings and favours from heaven. Instead, it is an institution that exists to advocate for the rights of Muslims, to administer punishment, to protect against oppression, to undertake the requisite measures, and to implement modern policies that are beneficial to Islamic society’²⁴.

Abul Kalam Azad: From ‘Apostle of Caliphatism’ to ‘Apologist of Secular Nationalism’

The fate of the Caliphate was of paramount importance for the Muslims of British India — both in terms of defending the interests of the Muslim community before the British colonial authorities, and in the search for political consolidation of the Muslim community of Hindustan, historically fragmented in terms of such factors as ethnicity, confession, and territory [24. P. 294–295].

On the eve and during the First World War, ideologues of pan-Islamism emerged within the Muslim community of British India, advocating collective interests of Islamic adherents across all the Islamic lands (Abul Kalam Azad, Nomani Shibli, Muhammad and Shaukat Ali, Zafar Ali Khan, et al.) [1]. These trends among Muslim leaders can be attributed to public disillusionment with the moderate constitutionalism espoused by prominent figures such as Sayyid Ahmad

²² The last Ottoman Caliph Abdul-Mejid II (1868–1944) was the only caliph in the history of the empire who did not hold the title of sultan after the sultanate was abolished (1922). But in 1924, by a decree of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the caliphate was also dissolved, and Abdul-Mejid left the former Ottoman metropolis.

²³ Prominent Maghribi alims and politicians — Abd al-Hamid bin Badis (1889–1940), Abd al-‘Aziz al-Sa‘alibi (1876–1944), Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi (1883–1963) — actively corresponded with the organisers of the General Islamic Congress for the Caliphate in Cairo (1926) and prepared to participate in it [22. P. 89, 96–98]. Meanwhile, Javish, who lived in Cairo, did not participate in this Muslim forum.

²⁴ Jawish A. *Hilafet-i İslamiye. Hilafet Risaleleri*. Vol. 4. Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2004. p. 251.

Khan, the leader of the Aligarh Movement²⁵, and Agha Khan, the founder of the Muslim League²⁶. Their version of constitutionalism entailed a degree of allegiance to British authorities. The rise of a radical anti-colonial movement was accompanied by a growing interest in religion, with adherents seeking to align their entire lifestyle with the tenets of Islam.

Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958)²⁷ is a prominent figure in the history of pan-Islamic sentiments among Muslims. A leading Congressist, Azad was an associate of Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and a staunch supporter of a united and indivisible India. His political journey commenced with his advocacy of pan-Islamism and the caliphate. A substantial body of research has been dedicated to this period of his life [25–29]. The circumstances of his life predetermined his interest in Islam in the Near and Middle East. Born in Mecca, he resided there for the first seven years of his life, received his education at Al-Azhar, travelled extensively in the Arab East, visited Turkey and Iran, and gained recognition as a connoisseur of Arabic and Persian literature, was fluent in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, and had a thorough knowledge of the teachings and history of Islam. Azad was born into a Muslim family with family connections in both India and the Hijaz, and strictly observed all religious rules. His father was Azad's first mentor in Islam. Later, the family settled in Calcutta, which did not sever Azad's ties with the Middle Eastern community.

He cultivated close relations with prominent Muslim figures of dar al-Islam²⁸. J. Nehru, who held Abul Kalam Azad in high esteem, wrote: 'Steeped in the traditions of Islam and possessing many personal connections with prominent Muslim leaders and reformers of Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Iran, he experienced a strong influence of both political and cultural developments in these countries. His writings on the subject garnered him a high level of recognition among fellow Muslims in the Islamic world, arguably surpassing any other Indian Muslim writer on the subject. He was personally witness to the rise of nationalism in Turkey and other Islamic countries, and drew parallels between this experience and the Indian nationalist movement, identifying common features between the two²⁹. He was

²⁵ The Aligarhist movement emerged following the foundation of the Aligarh College (1875), which embodied the idea of modern Muslim education. The Aligarhist leaders were committed to reforming Islam, while adhering to the idea of establishing relations with the British colonial administration.

²⁶ The Muslim League was established in 1906 as an organisation to represent the interests of the multi-million Muslim community at the all-India level. The League was loyal to the British authorities and favoured the idea of introducing a special curia for Muslims in legislative elections.

²⁷ Name in full: Abul Kalam Ghulam Muhiyuddin Ahmed bin Khairuddin Al-Hussaini Azad.

²⁸ Azad's work did not go unnoticed in the Middle East: an Indian-Egyptian cultural centre under his name was opened in Cairo in 1992 (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Center for Indian Culture in Egypt).

²⁹ Nehru J. *The Discovery of India. Translated from English. Book Two*. Moscow: Publishing House of Political Literature, 1989. C. 105.

particularly influenced by the views of Muslim reformers Muhammad Abdo and Jamal al-Din Afghani [30. P. 69–70].

In their search for a concept of Muslim unity, Azad and Indian Muslims in general drew inspiration from the reference to ideological heritage and modern social thought of the Near and Middle East that played a key role in the rise of Muslim socio-political movements and ethno-confessional consciousness in the South Asian region. Azad's perspective on Muslim movements in South Asia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was primarily through the prism of political activity aimed at consolidating disparate groups of people professing Islam, and at inculcating the idea of monotheism in heterogeneous ethnic groups scattered throughout the subcontinent. His ideological evolution was profoundly influenced by pan-Islamist ideas that proliferated in the South Asian region during the late 19th century. Azad's perspective was that these ideas assisted him in overcoming the complex of remoteness from traditional centres of Muslim culture in the Near and Middle East and the loss of South Asia's once high status that resulted from the collapse of the Mughal empire³⁰.

Azad believed that the notion of Muslim identity in British India was being shaped in close connection with political development of the Ottoman Empire. The search for ways to consolidate South Asian Muslims led to the rise of a pro-Ottoman trend in socio-political thought of the followers of Islam in British India, with various Muslim movements and organizations being oriented towards the Ottoman Empire [31]. The partition of Ottoman territories gave rise to concerns in India regarding the future of the Caliph as the leader of the Sunni Muslims and the guardian of Muslim holy places. This concern united pan-Islamic and anti-British sentiments, becoming an integral part of the struggle of Indian nationalists for independent statehood [32–34].

In his writings, particularly in 'The Problem of the Caliphate and the Sanctity of Islam', Azad calls upon Indian Muslims to refer to the authority of the Ottoman spiritual leadership. He noted that following the collapse of the Mughal Empire, India's Islamic community lost the assistance of a Muslim supreme ruler and could not help but feel powerless among the Hindu majority. J. Nehru's 'The Discovery of India' offers further insight into this topic, stating that 'The Mughal rulers did not recognize either the Caliph or other spiritual rulers outside India. It was not until the complete collapse of the Mughal Empire and the advent of the nineteenth century that the name of the Turkish Sultan began to be mentioned in mosques across India'³¹.

³⁰ Azad Abul Kalam. *India Wins Freedom: The Complete Version*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1988. P. XII.

³¹ Nehru J. *The Discovery of India. Translated from English*. Book Two. Moscow: Publishing House of Political Literature, 1989. p. 105.

Abul Kalam Azad was referred to as ‘a theorist of the caliphate movement’ on account of the fact that he regarded it as his responsibility to establish an indisputable system of arguments that would demonstrate the legitimacy of the Ottoman Sultan’s rights to claim the title of caliph. ‘In accordance with the principles of Shariah, Muslims are obliged to have a caliph and an imam. The caliph, as defined by Azad, was to be an autonomous Muslim ruler capable of safeguarding Muslims and their territories from external threats and of implementing Islamic law within Islamic lands. Such a ruler is the sultan of Turkey’, — so Maulana³² Abul Kalam Azad summarizes his conclusions on theological discussions on the caliphate among Ulama theologians, [35. P. 14–15].

Azad was rightfully seen as one of the greatest representatives of Muslim religious and philosophical thought in South Asia. He is particularly renowned for his Urdu translation of the Qur’an (Tarjuman al-Qur’an), to which he appended extensive commentaries.

However, Maulana Azad was not only a scholar of theology. His activities extended beyond academic interests to include consistent anti-British campaigning via his journal, *Al-Hilal* (The Crescent Moon), of which he was the editor. For this, he was imprisoned shortly after the outbreak of war and served a four-year sentence (until the end of 1919). In total, Azad, as a constant participant in all subsequent Gandhist civil disobedience campaigns, was destined to spend a long term of 11 years in British prisons in India [36. P. 57]. Muhammad and Shaukat Ali were also under arrest following their trip to Pashtun areas of India in 1915.

Caliphatist leaders (Abul Kalam Azad, brothers Muhammad and Shaukat Ali and others) supported the ‘Plot of Silk Letters’ — a project to prepare an armed anti-English revolt among the Pashtun tribes with the assistance of Germany and Afghanistan. This project was developed inside the Deoband *dar al-‘Ulum*³³ under the leadership of its head Mahmud al-Hasan and his associate Ubaidullah Sindhi.

The Caliphate Movement intensified after the British attacked Afghanistan in 1919. In September 1919 Azad initiated the convention of first All-India Caliphate Conference in Lucknow. The Conference decided to establish the All-India Caliphate Committee, approved its charter and elected its leaders. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who had returned to India from South Africa, actively participated in the movement actions. It was at the session of Caliphate Conference held in Delhi in November 1919 that he first announced his anti-colonial program

³² Maulana — (Arabic lit. our lord), a title of Muslim scholarly theologians adopted among followers of Islam in South Asia.

³³ The Deoband movement developed on the basis of the Deoband *dar al-‘ulūm* (Arabic lit. house of knowledge), the largest Muslim religious and academic centre in Hindustan, founded by Ulama theologians in 1867, and advocated a traditionalist set of values, led by its leader Mahmud al-Hasan.

of ‘non-violent non-cooperation’ based on massive all-India campaigns of civil disobedience against the British. The fact that Caliphate supporters participated in civil disobedience campaigns of the early 1920s and Gandhi’s close ties with the leaders of this movement aid the foundation for joint action by the two major religions, Hinduism and Islam. In September 1920, the Congress session in Calcutta expressed support for the Caliphate movement³⁴. In this regard, it is noteworthy that Azad and his associates actively participated in all the Gandhian endeavors and became proponents of Hindu-Muslim unity in South Asia, a stance that stood in stark contrast to the Muslim League, which was increasingly distancing itself from the Congress.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the dissolution of the caliphate, Azad shifted the focus from the concept of a unified Muslim global community to the revival of the caliphate in its ‘Arab’ interpretation, associated with the development of Arab nationalism on a territorial basis. Notably, Azad’s stance differed from that of the Arab nationalists, who advocated the selection of the future caliph from among the Quraysh Arabs. The ideas of Arab nationalism led him to view Indian nationalism on the basis of a common territory, thus becoming an advocate of a particular form of unity: Hindu-Muslim brotherhood within a united and indivisible India. He became a consistent opponent of the idea of partitioning British India into two dominions based on religion and the creation of Pakistan as a state of Indian Muslims. Moreover, Azad distanced himself from further development of the movement for the revival of the world caliphate, in which many Indian Muslim caliphate supporters continued to participate, and showed a waning interest in contributing to the pan-Islamic congresses held in Cairo, Mecca and Jerusalem.

Abul Kalam Azad’s life was intricately interwoven with the Congress and India, of which he became the chairman during the crucial period of the struggle for independence (1940–1946). He stated: ‘If an angel descended from heaven and from the height of Qutb Minar declared that India would achieve swaraj at the expense of Hindu-Muslim unity, I would refuse such independence and would never sacrifice Hindu-Muslim relations, for if swaraj is delayed, India will suffer, and if Hindu-Muslim unity suffers, all mankind will suffer’³⁵.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who remained in the INC after partition and became Minister of Education in the government of Jawaharlal Nehru, has been

³⁴ Azad Maulana Abul Kalam. *India Wins Freedom. An Autobiographical Narrative*. Bombay — Calcutta — Madras — New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1959. P. 51–52.

³⁵ Cited as in: Muzammiluddin, Syed. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958): A Revolutionary Journalist. *Boloji*. 19.03.2005. URL: <https://www.boloji.com/articles/936/maulana-abul-kalam-azad-1888-1958-a-revolutionary-journalist> (accessed 20.12.2024).

held in high esteem by political circles of modern India. He is consistently included in the list of ‘top five’ builders of the foundations of independent statehood based on the ideas of all-India nationalism, along with M.K. Gandhi, J. Nehru, V. Patel, S.Ch. Bose. His birthday (11 November) is celebrated in India as Education Day, whereas in Pakistan, his name is forgotten [37. P. 33–34].

Conclusion

Biographies and intellectual heritage of Islamic thinkers at the crossroads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries give reason to reflect on the role of the concept of caliphate and the revivalist caliphate ideology in shaping Muslim self-identity in the pre-war and inter-war era. None of the figures discussed in this article was a lifelong supporter of the caliphate. Moreover, Abd al-‘Aziz Jawīsh and Abūl Kalām Azād abandoned the idea of the caliphate in favour of nationalism in the 1920s, while Abd al-Rahmān al-Kawākibī, who died in 1902, saw the caliphate as a means of glorifying the ‘Arab cause’.

The interest that Islamic ideologists took in the history and legitimacy of the Caliph’s powers did not prevent them from offering a vivid and controversial assessment of the four hundred years of Ottoman rule. Thus, al-Kawakibi was reputed as a zealous denouncer of Ottoman despotism and arbitrariness. For al-Kawakibi, the ‘Arab caliphate’ represented a means of implementing divine will, fostering harmony and mutual assistance within the community in the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad and the ‘righteous caliphs’. In contrast, Javish demonstrated unwavering loyalty to the Ottoman throne. He believed that the line of power established by Mehmet II the Conqueror (1444–1446, 1451–1481), Selim I the Terrible (1512–1520), and Suleiman I the Magnificent (1520–1566) was viable and only needed to be adapted to the challenges of the 20th century. He regarded the ‘Arab’ caliphate projects as machinations of European colonial circles and intelligence services. For Azad, the caliphate cause was merely a step towards realizing the core value of his life: Hindu-Muslim unity as the basis of India’s independence and historical success.

It is noteworthy that all the three thinkers, in order to conceptualize their versions of the caliphate, resorted to a kind of ‘invention of tradition’ in the sense that British historian E. Hobsbawm put into this notion [38. P. 1–14]. When rethinking the events of the early history of Muslim community, they were able to foresee (al-Kawakibi) or correctly assess (Javish and Azad) the drama of separation of the Ottoman monarchy and the institution of the caliphate (1922), followed by the abolition of the posts of Caliph and Sheikh-ul-Islam by the Turkish leaders (1924). From that moment on, the idea of the caliphate finally became

a “dream memory” [39] that gave birth to caliphatism as a new political subculture. It was used repeatedly throughout the 20th century as an alternative to the idea of building a nation-state and as the basis of Islamic ideas of a ‘civilization state’.

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