Pan-Islamism. Attempt of Political Islam in the Restoration of Caliphate a Century after its Abolition in 1924

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Abstract

The phase of geo-political developments taking place in the Middle East as the aftermath of so called Arab Spring has entered the region into a new era of imbroglio transition. One of the peculiarities of the ME new era is the major event of emergence of the Islamic State proclaiming the re-establishment of a new Caliphate. Moreover, the restoration of Muslim *Ummah* as ever continuing discourse is not limited to IS. It has its crucial fundamental nostalgic origin in the Political philosophy of Islam, which wishes to form the *Ummah* under the doctrine of Caliphate system, which has long history since the emergence of Islam in the seventh century. What is remarkably important to pan-Islamists is that in their view the reconstruction of the *Ummah* is a reaction of political Islam to the Sykes-Picot agreement.
This paper individuates itself by examining the socio-political manifestation of caliphate from perspective of Islamists struggling to restore the institution of Caliphate since its destruction in 1924.

Keywords: Caliphate, *Ummah*, Political Islam, Pan-Islamism, Sykes-Picot agreement.

1. Abolition of Ottoman Caliphate: end of an era and beginning of a trauma

In 1922 the Ottoman Empire totally disappeared from the world map. However, the institution of Ottoman Caliphate still existed until 1924.

In making a modern secular state, Mustafa Kemal, the founder of the newly formed Turkish Republic, on the occasion of the Turkish National Assembly held on 1 March submitted a new proposal.

according to which the Assembly abolished the institution of the Caliphate–literally successor to the Prophet of Islam–which was allegedly obtained by Ottoman Sultans since 1517. Consequently, in secular Turkey every element of the Islamic era such as the Sharia courts, the office of the Shaikh al-Islam (the Garand Jurist) and the Ministry of Justice and Islamic institutions were abolished too (Schulze, pp. 66, 67).

What is crucially significant is the abolition of the last Muslim Caliphate

which was considered the flag holder of the Islamic Ummah.

This must not be perceived as the cessation of other political systems in the world. Due to the formation of new Arab states, the demolition of the Ottoman Caliphate is perceived as "the end of an era" (Pankhurst, 2013, p. 31) imposing the nation-state system on the Ummah state which "created a feeling of alienation among the peoples of this region" (Ali, 2015, p. 83).

In his book *Recalling the Caliphate*, Sayyid describes a Muslim without Caliphate as a "Muslim without history" (Sayyid, 2014, p.2).

In the same vein, Mona F. Hassan describes the absence of the Caliphate from the Muslim's public consciousness as a "trauma" happened twice in Muslim history: the first time in 1258 through the collapse of Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad; and the second time in 1924 through the destruction of Ottoman Caliphate (Hassan, 2009, p. 2).

However, the difference is that the last trauma of the Ottoman dissolution had and still has lasting consequences on Muslim politics leaving behind a feeling of "identity crisis" and "power vacuum".

Pan-Islamists consider this crisis as the cause of political weakness, social instability and cultural ignorance.

In this regard, a video published on YouTube by the pro-Caliphate Islamic party of Hizb-ut-Tahrir of Britain tells us much about how they see the situation of the Ummah after the dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate. Hereby it is stated:

> Brother and sisters! Ever since the destruction of our Caliphate system in 1924 our Umma has not witnessed a single day of happiness. Our lands were divided. Our fathers humiliated. Our brothers disheartened. Our mothers and sisters dishonored. Our Umma had to face occupation, disunity, colonialism. Brothers and sisters! The problem is the lack of Caliphate system. It is not that we lack resources. It is not that we lack people. It is the absence of Islam. It is the political system that exists today…You never solve the problem without the Caliphate.

As is seen, this view–in Sunni Islam and not Shia Islam– presents the existence of a very enduring and incisive attachment to the Caliphat, because it is assumed that Muslim's flourishing and advanced period – known as the Golden Age of Islam–wa sthe time in which God rained down all his mercy and blessings on Muslims through economic, philosophic, scientific, cultural and military strength. They see in the

Caliphate a correlation between their faith and their worldly success.[1]

However, once in July 1798, French under Napoleon Bonaparte with stunning ease conquered Egypt under Ottomans and Muslims gradually came to realize they have no longer such advanced past.

During the following centuries, under European colonialism the contrast between Muslim's medieval successes and the more recent tribulations measured in terms of military strength, political stability, and economic development shaped a trauma in question: who did this humiliation to Muslims?

In addressing the question pan-Islamists, such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir, often lay the blame on the termination of the "divine" institution of Caliphate.

In other words, they lay the blame of Muslim's failure today and lose the so-called past greatness by falling away from authentic Islam under the divine Caliphal institution. They do not see the cause of this loss in the deficiency of Caliphate office in modern world.

Recalling the flourished Muslim Golden Age under the Caliphal system, the notion of reviving the past grandeur and return to imagined pristine Caliphate as a nostalgic dream holds attraction for many Islamists particularly *Salafists* who look for their future in the past (Esposito, 2004, p. 275).That is why such a nostalgic dream has always been playing a significant role in inspiring Muslim intellectuals and activists in search for glory they had in order to alleviate themselves from the current suffering situation.

2. Pan-Islamism: one Ummah, one government

The fragmentation of Ottoman's Arab lands into small state lets left behind two anti-colonial reactions: pan-Arabism based on common

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[1] In her book *"God's rule"* Patricia Crone characterizes the Golden Age of Islam as a romanticized mythical and utopia never existed. Also in her insightful work *"Salafi Utopia: The Making of the Islamic State"* Maryam El-Shall reiterates that the so-called Golden Age of Islam is "purely imaginative status". She argues that "the memory of Islam's Golden Age is complete fantasy, delusional and a product of selective memory…never really existed, except in the contemporary Salafi imagination". See http://clogic.eserver.org/2006/el-shall.html#note8 (accessed 3 October 2017)

language and shared history and pan-Islamism based on the notion of the restoration of Muslim unity in the format of "one Ummah, one government".

Pan-Arabism-also called Arab Nationalism-with slogans of "one nation Arab state" reached nowhere due to the artificial nature of the countries created in the Middle East (See: Dawisha, 2016).However, pan-Islamism has gradually become of popular appeal for a wide range of social norms, political movements and significantly militant Jihadist groups in the twentieth century.

The term pan-Islamism is used to refer to the intellectual and institutional tendency appealing to the Muslim traditions to solidify Muslim unity.

Unlike the ethnic identities emphasized in pan-Arabism, however, pan-Islamist tendency took shape as a result of socio-political challenges that emerged in Muslim societies during colonialism and dominated the Muslim world through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Maryam El-Shall describes the politicization of Salafi movements as "a response to colonialism" (El-Shall, 2006).

As a Movement, historically, pan-Islamism started in the mid–nineteenth century in Ottoman Empire and continued until today. It was a socio-political project proposed by Muslim reformer Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (1839–1897) and launched by Sultan Abdul Hamid II(1842-1918) in order to hold the Ottoman State together in the battle against the European powers.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,t hey began to win back territories that had been lost to the Ottomans during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The climax of the Ottoman decline became clear in 1798 when Egypt was easily occupied by French.

As a series of Ottoman reforms occurred throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, James Piscatori holds that pan-Islamism we know today is another form of reform which came as a reaction to the "double assault of imperialism and decentralisation on the Ottomans in the late nineteenth century" (Piscatori, 2006) when the Sultan Abdul Hamid launched his project of pan-Islamism believing that the Caliphate of Ottomans was the strength of Islam in the face of West. "He utilized pan-Islamism as a tool to hold the Ottoman State together in the face of Western

encroachments and internal divisions against merging nationalism" (Pankhurst, p. 23). Also, he had perceived that the so-called divine institution of the Caliphate could be used as a political means against the European colonial powers holding a vast number of Muslim colonies.

3. Islamism and pan-Islamism

The phenomenon known as political Islam –also Islamism– has gradually had a major presence and is the central point of reference for a wide range of cultural models, social norms, militant agenda, global media, academic arguments and political movements[2] in the twentieth century.

Also, political Islam's presence in IR literature can be easily traced through numerous invented terms in world politics and literature such as *political Islam, Islamism, pan-Islamism, Islamophobia, Islamic state, Islamic awakening, Islamic revival, Islamic resurgence, Islamic reformation, Islamic movement, revolutionary Islam, progressive Islam, jihadist Islam, militant Islam, fundamentalist Islam, moderate Islam, reformist Islam, maximalist Islam, political philosophy of Islam, transnational Islam, cosmopolitan Islam, globalized Islam, Islamic block, Islamic identity, Islamic Ummah, Islamic republic, Islamic terrorism, Islamic modernism, Islamic socialism, Islamic Republicanism, Islamicate, Islamdom, house of Islam (dar al-Islam)*. A century ago almost none of these political terms could be found in IR literature.

In an endeavor to better understand this phenomenon, some scholars call it *Global Political Islam* (Mandaville, 2007) or *International Relations of Political Islam Movements* (Al-Khazendar, 2009). The phenomenon is also known as *Islamic Revival* or *Resurgence of Islam* (*ihya* in Arabic) which in Peter Berger's words is "vast in geographical scope affecting every single Muslim country from North Africa to South-east Asia" (Berger, 1999, p. 7).

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[2] Some examples are: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey's Refah party, Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front, Tunisa's al-Nahda party, Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, Islamic Movement of Nigeria, Islamic Movement of Tajikistan, Yemen's Islah party, Jordan's Islamic Action Front, Kuwait's Islamic Constitutional Movement, Bahrain's al-Wefaq, Dar al-Islam Movement of Indonesia, America's Nation of Islam, al-Qaeda, Egypt's Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, Hamas, Daesh, etc.

Oxford Islamic Studies Online defines it as "return to Islam in its purest form as the solution for the ills of Islamic societies"[3].

Notwithstanding, when it comes to pan-Islamism it is more restrict than Islamism. Oxford Islamic Studies Online define it as a political ideology "calling for sociopolitical solidarity among all Muslims posing the sultan as a universal Caliph to whom Muslims everywhere owed allegiance and obedience."[4] Moreover, Sohail Daulatzai (2012) calls it "Muslim international" and Jack Miles (2002) describes it as a discourse in which lays the foundation of Muslim's "potentially global ambition".

Here comes the difference between Islamism and pan-Islamism. In spite of the fact that both are political ideologies looking for *Islamization* of Muslim societies, pan-Islamism as a political movement advocates the unity of Muslims under one single Islamic state (Ummah) in the only form of a Caliphate (Demant, 2006, pp. 20, 23),while Islamists hold that the reconstruction ofthe Ummah can take the form of an Islamic international organization, with democracy and elections, for example, within the current countries and borders; not necessarily in the formation of one single Muslim state. They argue that "the Caliphate's political mission may have passed, but the idea of Islam's political mission has not. The unity of the Ummah is not simply synonymous with the Caliphate" (Piscatori, 2006, p. 6).In the restoration of the Ummah, re-building the institution of the Caliphate is not their first priority, while they focus on the implementation of pre-modern Sharia law.

Also, while implementing the Sharia (Shariatism) is the final goal in both, the other distinction is that pan-Islamism qualifies itself by holding that *Jihad* is the way in re-building the Ummah. In this respect, all pan-Islamists are Islamists but not all Islamists are pan-Islamists.(It is the same with Muslims. All (pan)Islamists are Muslim but not all Muslims are (pan)Islamist.)

The Egyptian scholar Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), who advocated armed jihad in the advance of Islam, is known as one of the most influential contemporary theorists of pan-Islamism. He argues that Islam is a perfect
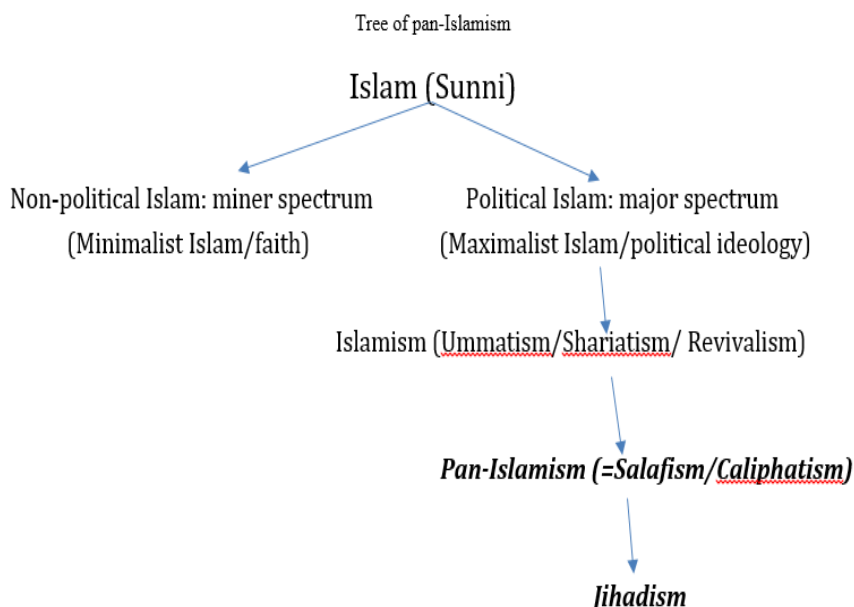
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[3] Retrieved from http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t253/e9 (accessed 3 October 2017)

[4] Retrieved from http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1819 (accessed 3 October 2017).

way of life and governance, whose sharia laws and principles should be the sole basis of governance (Roy, 1994, p. 41).In short, pan-Islamists are:

- Revivalists believing in Islamization of society.
- Ummatists believing in the Ummah as nationality (denying borders and nation-state).
- Caliphatists believing in the restoration of Caliphate as political system.
- Shariatists believing in Sharia as constitution and perfect law.
- Jihadists believing in Jihad as military strength in the restoration of Ummah.

Many of these elements can be traced, for example, in the Muslim Brothers's mottos declaring that "Islam is the solution, Allah is our objective, the Quran is our constitution, the Prophet is our leader, jihad is our way; and death for the sake of Allah is our wish" (Helbawy, 2009, p. 65).

Tree of pan-Islamism

Islam (Sunni)

Non-political Islam: miner spectrum
(Minimalist Islam/faith)

Political Islam: major spectrum
(Maximalist Islam/political ideology)

Islamism (Ummatism/Shariatism/ Revivalism)

Pan-Islamism (=Salafism/Caliphatism)

Jihadism

4. Pan-Islamism and its call to the Caliphate

The Caliphate and its call play a major role in the discourse of pan-Islamists who advocate the idea of Muslim single government. They assert that the Muslim Ummah deserves the loyalty and adherence of believers wherever they are in order to regain their lost and ignored glory through the restoration of new Caliphate to unite the Ummah (Mandaville, p. 12).Applying a "back to basics" approach, the core of the notion is the reconstruction of the past in the present.

For example, in his magazine al-Manar, Rashid Rida, the Egyptian Muslim thinker, states that "the Islamic Caliphate is the best system known to man" through which "the Muslims were the greatest nation when they established it" (Pankhurst, p. 54).

In their discourse they argue that throughout Muslim history the institution of Caliphate is not merely the substitution to prophet hood but also a political system. It is not only as a symbol of Muslim's unity but also the strength of the Muslim world. It is a shield by which they experience Islam as a united strong Ummah.

In their overarching discourse the Caliphate is conceptualized as the centralized political system of government representing both unity and leadership of the Muslims. Throughout history of Islam, therefore, the Caliph as the successor to the Prophet of Islam was the head of state at the highest level both in religious and the social spheres of Ummah. The Caliph's main duty, therefore, is to protect both religion of Islam and Islamic state (the Ummah).

Here is why pan-Islamists firmly intend to resurrect the institute of Caliphate. They believe that only under a unified Islamic government the lands and people of Islam can be reunited once again. In fact, the Caliphate movement–as in the example of the *Khilafat Movement* in British India(1919–24)–is based on a theological vision of a state in which the Caliph guarantees both religious and secular spheres of a Muslim's life.

To perceive the central role of Caliphate office in history of Islam, one just needs to recall that from the prophet of Islam's death in 632 A.D. until the dissolution of last Caliphate in 1924, there was almost always an office of Caliphate ruling Muslims over the course of thirteen centuries. The list of Caliphate offices below illustrates that one or another Caliphate office and

even sometimes two parallel Caliphates were ruling the Muslims not only in Central Asia, the Middle East or North Africa but also in Córdoba in Andalusia, Spain:

1. Rashidun Caliphate (632–661);
2. Umayyads Caliphate (661–750) continued as Emirate (756–929) and Caliphate of Córdoba (929–1031);
3. Abbasids Caliphate (750–1258) continued as Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo (1258–1517);
4. Fatimids Caliphate (909–1171);
5. Ottomans Caliphate (1453–1924) the longest surviving Caliphate in Islamic history.

Despite the fact that the Caliphate under later Turkish office was different in many ways from the one under Arabs, the central role of the Caliphate institution in all of them cannot be denied. This is because the leader carrying the title of Caliph was considered a religious vicegerent to the prophet of Islam and a political leader of the entire Muslim Ummah. In his book *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate* Hugh Kennedy observes the unity of Muslim Ummah as one of the considerable achievements of the Caliphate. He writes:

> Another remarkable achievement was the maintenance of the unity of the Muslim community in the face of regionalist tendencies. Despite their differences, almost all Muslims believed that they should be governed by a single Caliph and despite the vast geographical dispersal, they kept a common religion and a common culture (Kennedy, 1986, p. 81).

Such achievements under the Caliphate have roots in political philosophy of Islam in which the sovereignty is for God, then His prophet Mohammad and his successors (the Caliphs) (Najjar, 1996, p. 5).

In the doctrine of pan-Islamists, therefore, the Caliphate is not merely a political system, but rather a divine institution representing the Prophet who in turn represents God.

To the pan-Islamist way of thinking, once the Prophet of Islam died, his legacy as an ever-valid pattern for Muslims to emulate was not his religion but rather *"the perfect Ummah brought forth for Mankind"* (Quran, 3:10) which protects the religion.

Pan-Islamist strong call to the re-construction of the Caliphate is due to the role it plays in protection of Islam. In their view, Islam without the Caliphate has no effective existence. Muslin scholar al-Nabhani (1909-1977), the founder of pro-Caliphate party of Hizb ut-Tahrir, firmly holds that:

> It was incumbent on Muslims to set up the Islamic state because Islam has no effective existence without the state and because their lands are not *dar al-Islam* (house of Islam) unless an Islamic state governs them.(Al-Nabhani, 1953, p. 46).

Conclusions

Having said that the destruction of Ottomans is seen as the end of an era the paper examines some socio-political aspects of pan-Islamism as a Muslim movement which gradually became a popular appeal in the region and beyond. It was said that the fragmentation of Ottoman's Arab lands into the ME artificially constructed Arab states left behind a trauma. From the pan-Islamist perspective, the official decline of the Ottoman, the guardian of the house of Caliphate, was a major geo-political turning point that transformed the ME of Islam's dominance to the ME of Western's influence.

According to the pan-Islamist way of thinking, the destruction of Ottoman caliphate is constructed and diagnosed as a fatal blow to the Muslim Ummah identity throughout the world. Also, it is perceived as the imposing of the system of nation-state on the Ummah state.

The term pan-Islamism as a movement denotes the intellectual and institutional tendency appealing the Muslim traditions to solidify Muslim unity in the form of "one Ummah, one government".

According to pan-Islamists, the unity of the Muslim Ummah is not determined by territorial locality, nationality, ethnicity, color, blood, language or race. It is based on common confessional identity of Islam. They explicitly express that there should not be Muslim nations. In their political philosophy, the Ummah itself is a nationality for it is an entity and identity that comprises all Muslims throughout the world, no matter what their national origin is.

Moreover, the restoration of Muslim Ummah as the ever-continuing discourse of pan-Islamists has its fundamental nostalgic origin in the Political philosophy of Islam.In its Sunni version, it wishes to form the Ummah under the doctrine of the Caliphate system, whose long history dates back to the emergence of Islam in the seventh century until the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924.

Pan-Islamists holds that the Ummah must be under only one authentic sovereign state. In this respect, pan-Islamism is more restrict than Islamism. In spite of the fact that both are political ideologies looking for Islamization of Muslim societies, pan-Islamism as a political movement launched by Ottoman Caliph Abdul Hamid advocates the unity of Muslims under one single Islamic state (Ummah) in the form of Caliphate office only. This is while Islamists hold that the reconstruction of the Ummah can be in form of an Islamic international organization, with democracy and elections, for example, within the current countries and borders; not necessarily in the formation of one single Muslim state. They argue that the Caliphate's political mission may have passed, but the idea of Islam's political mission has not.

On the contrary, pan-Islamists advocate the notion of returning to the Islamic Golden Age. That is why such nostalgic dream has always been playing a significant role in inspiring Muslim intellectuals and activists in search for glory they had in order to alleviate themselves from the current suffering situation. In this appeal the call to the Caliphate is an ongoing discourse and a notion in motion since the day the Ottoman Caliphate is dismantled.

In this sense, the removal of Ottoman Caliphate was not merely the dissolution of a political system like many others. It was seen as dissolution of an institution every Muslim has duty to protect it and owes allegiance even through armed jihad as suggested by the Egyptian scholar Sayyid Qutb.

It was also examined that pan-Islamist firmly hold that a true revival of Muslim society depends on the re-establishment of the Islamic state under the Caliphate.

In other words, the most credible political call in the Islamic political philosophy is resuscitation of the Caliphate in order to regain the so-imagined lost dignity of Muslims. According to the pan-Islamist way of thinking, once the Prophet of Islam died, his legacy as ever valid pattern for

Muslims to emulate was not his religion rather his Ummah which must be protected by the institution of Caliphate.

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