

## **From Andalusia to Pan-Asianism to the Arab Spring: The Caliphate between East and West<sup>1)</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

The changing landscape of the Middle East, North Africa and wider Muslim World as a result of the Arab uprisings at the beginning of 2011 opened up the opportunity for discussion of different polities which would better serve the political aspirations of the people of the region. Though much of the debate has been monopolized by a “democratic” discourse as well as the hegemonic status of the nation-state as the only post-colonial form of government, this article explores one of the alternatives as understood from a reading of Islamic history and political theory, placing the Caliphate as an alternative appropriate due to its historical precedent, cultural compatibility and global nature as most closely matching the political aspirations of the population.

**Keywords:** international relations, political theory, Islam, pan-Asian

Post World War Two, there were a series of coup d'états across the Arab World. Apparently change had come. Egypt, Syria and Iraq all saw the military overthrow the monarchies and establish Arab republics. It was an era of nationalism, pan-Arabism – the idea of a secular unity based upon the Arab identity devoid of religious elements. It was a period of change, not one driven by the people but by individuals in the military. Those who studied the Islamic movements of the period, such as Professor Richard Mitchell – the foremost Western scholar of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimeen) – widely believed that the era of Islam as a political force was effectively over by the 1960's, seen off first by the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 by Mustafa Kemal of Turkey, and then the emergence of the socialist pan-Arab ideology as embodied by the foremost pan-Arab leader from Egypt, one of the Free officers who overthrew King Fu'ad-Gamal Abdul Nasser.<sup>3)</sup>

A half century has passed, and with the benefit of hindsight, it can be seen just how inaccurate such a prediction was. As people in the West in particular are once again beginning to question some of their previously held convictions, such as the old enlightenment narrative that the world has been moving in a Darwinist evolutionary fashion to one form or other of

secular liberalism. In actual fact, religion has not gone away, and specifically Islam is not a spent force in politics, but rather – it is often discussed either as the greatest threat to world stability or the greatest hope for it, depending on your standpoint. Whatever the case, as Professor Talal Asad has mentioned “if anything is agreed upon, it is that a straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular is no longer acceptable.”<sup>4)</sup> Rather, this narrative looks like it is being reversed, as the increase in identity politics generally, and Islamic politics specifically is a current that is explicitly recognizable globally.

### **Concern about the Caliphate**

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At the same time, to talk about the Islamic Caliphate – in other words to talk about Islam and Politics on a Global level, as a global entity affecting global issues, is a topic which is extremely provocative, heated and in contemporary terms is occupying the minds of many politicians, thinkers and academics particularly in the West at the moment. This is due to many factors, including misconceptions about Islam, various prejudices and historical tensions, but mainly to do with entrenched geo-political considerations of major powers such as the United States which invariably view any change to the global status quo that they constructed post World War Two as a threat to their strategic interests. So while the straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular may no longer be acceptable, it is still not acceptable, in particular but not limited to Western circles, to talk about the legitimacy of a Caliphate, or the legitimacy of an Islamic State, or the legitimacy of the application of Islamic *Shari'a* law.

This is taking place in the atmosphere of economic problems within Europe, and the general rise of anti-Islamic sentiment. We have already witnessed the banning of the building of minarets in Switzerland, the banning of the Niqab, or face veil, in France. Towards the end of 2010, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel talked about how the attempt to build a multicultural society in Germany, the idea of different communities living side by side in harmony, had in her words “utterly failed.”<sup>5)</sup> The new German interior minister publicly talked about how Islam has no place in German society, stating that “that Islam is part of Germany is a fact that cannot be proven by history.”<sup>6)</sup> Like most other European countries, the new Conservative government in the United Kingdom led by Prime Minister David Cameron has also taken the same approach, dictating values to the Muslim community living in the country by excluding them and labelling them as extremist if they simply believe in the right to establish a Caliphate and to have *Shari'a* law applied, not in the UK, but in their home countries. These cases show that in fact the secular Western models, which have long claimed to be paradigms of neutrality, are actually becoming more totalitarian in nature due to their inability to cope with alternative ideas and values within their societies.

This has reached such an extent that the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) has expressed serious concern that there is a growing trend in expressions of populist sentiments by

mainstream political parties across Europe. Meanwhile across the Atlantic in March 2011, US Congressman Peter King has pushed ahead with a series of congressional meetings to discuss the threat of homegrown terrorism from the Muslim community. On one interview he explained that “the main goal is to show the extent of radicalization within the Muslim-American community, how dangerous that is, how serious that is,” with it being considered “a growing threat.” At the same time, opponents have accused him of carrying out a “McCarthyite witch-hunt” against America’s Muslims due to its exclusive focus on the Muslims living there at the expense of all other threats – leading John Esposito, a professor of Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, to state that “the hearing will be a platform for Islamophobia draped in the American flag, reinforcing ignorance, stereotypes, bigotry and intolerance in the name of national security.”<sup>7)</sup>

These apparent domestic agendas against Islam cannot be looked at in isolation, or as the internal affairs of these countries and how they deal with the immigrant population. Rather, they have everything to do with geo-political considerations, and the perceived threat by Islam to what is called the “International Order” set up by America post World War Two, and the threat to control over the huge energy resources found in the Middle East. Indeed, it would be accurate to say that the problem certain countries have is not necessarily specifically with Islam, but rather with true independence and freedom from imperial control, and it just so happens that today the dominant force pushing for such real independence in the Middle East is that of an Islamic character. This is a scenario that is taken seriously, with many think tanks and politicians planning for any eventuality.

As an example – the National Intelligence Council (NIC), responsible for producing the most authoritative written judgments concerning national security issues submitted to the Director of National Intelligence in the US government, wrote a report in 2005 entitled “Mapping the Global Future 2020”<sup>8)</sup> which amongst the various scenarios it considered looked at the possibility of the emergence of an independent Islamic Caliphate stretching across the Middle East and North Africa.

In his book *The Next 100 Years*, George Friedman – the CEO and founder of STRATFOR – which is the World’s leading private intelligence and forecasting company – wrote that Turkey will emerge, at a minimum – as a regional superpower in what he calls its “old role” – as the “dominant force in the region.” He notes that the recent history of the last 80 years where strong Turkish influence has been largely limited to Asia minor is an aberration, and in his words the world will soon see “Turkish power – the Ottoman Empire ... begin to re-emerge,” referring back to the last example of the Caliphate which was led by the Ottoman dynasty.<sup>9)</sup>

As for politicians themselves directly – we can look at the example of the last American President George Bush, who is reported to have mentioned the “Caliphate” 15 times during 2006, and 4 times in a single speech.<sup>10)</sup> This was more than the leaders of al-Qaeda such as Osama Bin Laden had talked about it publicly in the same period. Another prominent example

from the same period would be Charles Clarke during his time as the British Home Secretary, and as such responsible for the domestic security policy of the United Kingdom – giving a speech in America saying “there can be no negotiation about the re-creation of a Caliphate.”<sup>11)</sup> Hence you have the strange scenario that the man responsible for the British home affairs, talking to a foreign audience in America, about what people in the Middle East and Asia should or should not aspire to politically, and what would be accepted from them, as though Britain was still a colonial power with the power to dictate policy in India from London. In 2009, the former head of the British Army Sir Richard Dannatt said explicitly that the Allies were in Afghanistan to prevent the “Islamist agenda” and the establishment of a Caliphate which would extend from Afghanistan, through the Middle East and North Africa, to Spain.<sup>12)</sup>

With the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa which began at the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011 – this is an issue which is being addressed even more in the current climate. As an example when the uprisings in Egypt against the long-time ally of the West ex-President Mubarak began, the Americans in particular were quickly involved at several levels to help ensure that any change was carefully managed, in order to safeguard that their vital security interests linked to the Egyptian dictatorship would be maintained whatever the next personality there may look like. Consequently the politicians and media all lined up to warn against any imposition of Islam in the post-revolution political dynamic, labelling such ideas as “extremist” and unacceptable.

Most explicitly, when the events spread to Libya and the rebellion began against Moammar Gaddafi, the Italian foreign minister and former EU commissioner Franco Frattini warned that the fall of Gaddafi, one of Italy’s ally on the continent, could result in the rise of an Islamic state. “Can you imagine having an Islamic emirate on the borders of Europe? This would be a really serious threat.”<sup>13)</sup> It is not a purely Western concern either, with the Russian President Dmitri Medvedev warning that in his words “religious fanatics” could take power which would “set the region on fire for decades to come.”<sup>14)</sup> Such concerns have historically been manipulated and fuelled by the regions many dictators to justify their own human rights abuses upon their populations, and even though the events of the North African uprisings have upset the status quo and highlighted the short-sightedness of the American and European governments of following a policy of stability in the region which were subsequently overturned, the fear still remains and informs policy.

What is it exactly that has caused such consternation in its opponents and what is the understanding of the Caliphate as held by its adherents? In order to evaluate whether the concern of the politicians, which is then transferred by the media to the population leading to vilification of Muslims and Islam, is justifiable or not, there should be a brief consideration of its historical context, its theological position, and the relationship it had with both the West and East throughout history.

## **The Emergence of a Global Superpower**

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The onset of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century occurred at a time when the World was dominated by two superpowers coming from the East and West – on one side the Byzantinean empire (Eastern Roman empire), and on the other side the Sassanid/Persian empire, the former based upon a monotheistic religion and the latter upon the Zoroastrian belief. At the time the Arabian Peninsula was considered irrelevant – the climate, the civilisation, the culture – meant that in the era before oil and gas it was a region without much geo-political relevance. Accordingly the two superpowers of the time, who were engaged in a struggle against each other, did not imagine any major threat emerging from the Arabian Peninsula. But throughout history there are events which cannot be accounted, and the emergence of a man claiming to be a Prophet and receiving revelation from God at that time was arguably the most seismic event which affected history.

Within his lifetime, the Prophet Mohammad called people to Islam as an individual and with his followers, and after 13 years they established a State in Medina, then known as Yathrib, under his leadership. He undertook all the activities of the leader of a state – handling internal issues, establishment of the rule of law, taxation and economic controls, and engaged in foreign diplomacy from sending and receiving ambassadors to other States, engaging in warfare and integrating new communities into the State.<sup>15</sup> By the time he had finished his mission upon the Earth 10 years later, the State that he had established had spread over the whole of the Arab peninsula, its followers numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and it had confronted the two superpowers of the day within the region.

It could be considered as a strong possibility that after the death of such an inspired leadership, the momentum would naturally slow. This would especially be the case if someone considers that the most charismatic leadership was now gone, and the revelation which he received ended, which could possibly lead to internal divisions. At the same time, further expansion would require military confrontation and defeat of the two superpowers of the time on their own territory. And yet under the first 4 leaders over a period of about 30 years – known as the *Khulafaa ar-Rashideen* (or rightly guided Caliphs) the Caliphate<sup>16</sup> spread into North Africa towards the West, and to the East past what are currently called Iran and Afghanistan.

Subsequently, the next hundred years after that under the first period of dynastical rule – the Caliphate had spread Westwards across North Africa and even up into Spain, while from the East it was into areas known as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. It can be recognised here that the first point of direct contact between Europe under the rule of Islamic Caliphate occurred at the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, less than one hundred years after the emergence of Islam from the Arabian Peninsula, and Islamic authority in one form or other remained there for almost 800 years. The example of Islamic Civilisation and rule in Europe, and what was lost when the Islamic rule was expelled from Spain in the 15<sup>th</sup> century – has been summarised by Stanley

Lane-Poole who wrote at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that “for nearly eight centuries, under Mohammadan rule, Spain set to all Europe a shining example of a civilised and enlightened State,” as contrasted to when it was removed which he stated led to “the blackness of darkness in which Spain has been plunged ever since.”<sup>17)</sup> The Islamic State has been held up as a model of multi-culturalism for the time, replaced by the Spanish inquisition which was the most vile kind of thought police which interfered in the personal and private beliefs and worship of its subjects. Though any comparisons between that period and contemporary Europe are at least for the time being far removed, the re-emergence of a thought-police against the Muslim community in Britain is another example of the creeping prejudice against Islam which remains latent in parts of European society.<sup>18)</sup>

Contact with the East occurred prior to the conquest of parts of Spain, with Uthman bin Affan the third Caliph sending an emissary to the Chinese Emperor in 650 AD. It is claimed that this emissary, a companion of the Prophet named Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas, built the first mosque in China which amongst its other names is known as the Great Mosque of Canton. Though this specific claim itself may be inaccurate, it is likely that various political emissaries and merchants from the Islamic State did come to the region around this period.<sup>19)</sup> As a result of this, there were many trade links established between the Islamic State and the Chinese, such as during the time of the Sung dynasty. The example of Islamic civilisation in the East has a deep and rich history of cultural, economic and political ties beyond the scope of this article.

### **The Foundations of the State**

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At this point it is useful to consider some of the characteristics which were the original foundation for this Islamic Caliphate that underpinned the State which was to have such an impact on the geo-political situation of the World during its early period. There are three characteristics which can be briefly examined to capture the essence of the foundation of the State – how it managed to bond and assimilate the people within its territories, what was the source of its legitimacy and the nature of its polity.

Its bond was quite simple in that it was the idea of a universal religion, a common theme underpinning numerous examples of global polities throughout history – while in this particular case it was the message of Islam that it adopted which enabled it to bind together such a diverse variety of people with differing interests, giving them direction in by instilling within the society the vision of a mission to propagate that universal message to the rest of the World. This naturally meant that it was also Expansionist, which is the nature of any State that believes it carries the truth, whether one which refers to a greater purpose such as Islam or a more secular calling such as the democratic ideal as promoted by Western enlightenment followers.

The Islamic State also had a very effective policy of assimilation – with anyone able to

become Muslim, and particularly those areas which were brought under Islamic rule within the first one hundred years the majority of the population became and remained Muslim. This included Islamic Spain, whose Muslim population no longer exists as a majority due to its expulsion and purge at the time of the inquisition. At the same time, the polity of the State was based upon rule of law, and hence generally no one was forced to become Muslim.

In the Islamic Political theory, the Caliph was appointed originally by choice and consent.<sup>20)</sup> This only lasted in a practical sense for the first 30 years, after which dynastical rule became established. At the same time in theoretical terms the concept of Choice and Consent has always remained, with an exception being given to allow for hereditary rule if the alternative was to be civil war. However, the rule was not left without any restrictions – this was not to be a despotic rule or an unbridled autocracy, but rather as was mentioned the fundamental basis of the State was the rule of law. In other words – there was a consent given to the ruler, as long as the ruler applied the Islamic law. If he deviated from this application, he was no longer owed obedience. This is the basis of the theory of *bay'a* in Islamic government, and there is a section by the famous American scholar who studied Islam Bernard Lewis which is worth stating in full:

*“The bay'a was thus conceived as a contract by which the subjects undertook to obey and the Caliph in return undertook to perform certain duties specified by the jurists. If a Caliph failed in those duties – and Islamic history shows that this was by no means a purely theoretical point – he could, subject to certain conditions, be removed from office.*

*This doctrine marks one of the essential differences between Islamic and other autocracies. An Islamic ruler is not above the law. He is subject to it, no less than the humblest of his servants. If he commands something that is contrary to the law, the duty of obedience lapses, and is replaced not by the right but by the duty of disobedience.”<sup>21)</sup>*

There is also the point that Muslims are obliged to appoint a single political leader who is to be the head of a unitary State. Over time the distance between theory and practise can again be noticed, with one of reasons being that the size of the Islamic State meant that it was difficult, if not impossible, for the Caliph to keep practical control over the whole of the State.<sup>22)</sup> In brief – there were claimants, and the Caliphate remained as an important symbol – such that it remained a title that was sought after, and often lesser rulers would submit to the authority of the Caliph at least symbolically through giving him their formal fealty, if not practically.<sup>23)</sup>

The last Caliphate was constituted in the form of the Ottoman State which managed to assert itself over the Islamic world after a period of fragmentation such that it became the undisputed foremost power and largely accepted as the leader of the Muslims. It also represents the lasting impact of Islam in Europe since Turkey is situated within Europe geographically, and

any consideration of the Caliphate in Europe today begins from an account of the end of the last Caliphate, which occurred after the end of the First World War at the hands of Mustafa Kemal.

### **The Caliphate – Its Fall and Rise?**

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The history of the Ottoman Caliphate is itself a very rich history – by the 17<sup>th</sup> century it had established itself as the pre-eminent leader of the Muslim World and was recognised by other Muslims as such, reflected in the entreaties of leaders from areas such as India and Aceh to seek support from the Ottoman Caliph against European encroachment on their territories in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24)</sup> There were many factors which contributed to the decline of the Ottomans, which are beyond the scope here, but by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the European powers were considering how they could best take advantage of a post-Ottoman situation. As a result of the industrial revolution leading to progress in the heart of Europe, coupled with the stagnation within the Ottoman State that often afflicts global powers in their dying days, European civilisation was seen in the ascendancy above all others.

According to academic Cemil Aydin, as a result of the hegemony of Europe at this historical juncture, there was the dominance of single Eurocentric political order. At this point Europe claimed that it had gained a pre-eminent position due to its Enlightenment, and that other civilisations were unable to compete due to their backwardness. In other words, the Islamic World could never compete with the West due to cultural issues, and the same was considered with respect to Asian and African civilisations. And so Aydin argues that the pan-Asian and pan-Islamic movements which were strongly linked during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in particular, were a reaction against Western racism and exclusivity.<sup>25)</sup> It was in this period that exchange and contact between the Islamic State and Japan took root. The Ottomans, along with many others, began to look to a pan-Asian identity especially after the Japanese victory over Russia in 1906 undermined the narrative which asserted the inevitability of Western dominance. A shared engagement with a European center led to emergence of a common Eastern identity,<sup>26)</sup> despite lack of communication and shared values – this was articulated by the establishment of various pan-Asian movements such as the “Association for the Defense of Asia” in 1909 between AbdulResid Ibrahim and Japanese pan-Asianists such as Toyama Mitsuru.<sup>27)</sup>

Just as many Muslims looked to Japan for inspiration and the secret of success in this period, the cultural exchange also led to Japanese conversion to Islam. Yamaoka Kotaro, another pan-Asian activist, converted to Islam while travelling with Ibrahim and used to give speeches within Ottoman state. Mohammad Barakatullah, an Indian scholar, published the “Islamic Fraternity” journal from Tokyo, in collaboration with Japanese convert Hasan Hatano Uho. This was all built upon the shared idea of a pan-Asian block between the different Asiatic states including the Caliphate to resist European hegemony.<sup>28)</sup>



However, despite the efforts of the supporters of the Ottoman Caliphate, the aftermath of World War One ultimately led to the final abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate at the hands of the President of the future Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal, which occurred in 1924. At the same time, there were still many links between Muslims and Japan up until World War Two as part of the pan-Asian policy adopted. To summarise the conclusion of the arguments of the time – it was decided that the only way to succeed in the “modern” World was through the vehicle of the nation-state, and this was articulated through the establishment of a secular polity in Turkey, while the establishment of firm colonial control over most of the previous Ottoman territories in the Middle East delayed the aspirations of the ruling elite from the Arab countries who had aligned themselves with the Europeans against the Ottomans in the First World War.

At this point it can be concluded that the Caliphate was no longer considered as a viable political option, and the performance of the last Caliph was seen by some as a tool in the hands of the British against the Turkish people. It was the era of the nation state – the global nature of the Ottoman State, as represented also by the Habsburg Empire, was considered to be a failed polity and out of keeping with the modern era. This was what has been labelled by some as the “Wilsonian moment.”<sup>29)</sup> Not only was a global, multi-ethnic, polity to be left in favour of the nation-state, but it was also a requirement to be enlightened in order for it to be admitted to the club of modernity – religion had no role in politics, or even – taken to the extreme by Mustafa Kemal – to have any role in the public space.

The types of regimes that emerged in the post-direct colonial rule of the Middle East likewise adopted secular paradigms of government, either under monarchies left behind by the British such as in Jordan or republics based upon pan-Arabism as a result of the coup d'états in the 1950's. At that time, Islam was relegated to an afterthought in the political sphere. The Caliphate was not mentioned as a political vision or alternative, it had been largely discredited and seen to be the failure at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and all subsequent attempts to revive it, in conferences from Cairo to Indonesia were ineffective and seen as opportunities for monarchs and other leaders to try to become the Caliph figurehead as a symbolic title which would give them greater influence and prestige, rather than as the political leader of a global Islamic polity.<sup>30)</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood – the largest Islamic movement in Egypt – adopted the call to the establishment of a global Caliphate as an ultimate goal in theory but it was rarely used in its discourse.<sup>31)</sup> In any case, in reality they accepted to work within the nation state paradigm making their eventual goal a utopian slogan. Hizb ut-Tahrir, established in the early 50's with the explicit goal of establishing the Caliphate, has consistently refused to accept the nation-state paradigm, but some of their activists mention that they did not use the word Caliph when they were initially talking to people about the Islamic political system in the 1950's due to the misconceptions about what that entailed.<sup>32)</sup>

However, by the turn of the century it appears that a different dynamic has appeared in the

political aspirations of the people across the Middle East and wider Muslim community. Poll results in 2007 indicated that 65% of respondents from across four major Muslim countries wanted to live under a single Islamic State,<sup>33)</sup> and in the same year 100,000 gathered in a stadium in Indonesia in support of the Caliphate,<sup>34)</sup> Consistent polling from Egypt, year after year from 2006 has shown more than 2/3 support for a single unified state, and more than 80% support for the full establishment of the *Shari'a*.<sup>35)</sup>

This call for the Caliphate has not simply resonated in Muslim countries, and the search for alternatives is not limited to Muslims. Westerners have also become disillusioned with the materialism of the consumer society<sup>36)</sup> and the perceived hypocrisy of the liberal democracies of the West which claim to represent the masses, but in reality represent elite interests and are responsible for most of the greatest crimes of the last century which were in fact perhaps the greatest crimes in history – from the dropping of the atomic bomb; violent crimes against civilians from Vietnam to Iraq to Afghanistan; the rendition, imprisonment and torture of political prisoners whether by the British in Malta at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the use of Guantanamo Bay at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> – Western civilization has become further and further discredited amongst its own people.

One prominent example emerging out from this environment is that of Ian Dallas, now known as Sheikh AbdulQadir Sufi, a Scotsman originally born in 1930 in Ayr, Scotland who converted to Islam in his thirties and founded his group originally known as the Murabitun, with many of their prominent members also Western converts to Islam. Their ultimate aim is the destruction of the global capitalist banking system and re-establishment of the Caliphate, to be achieved through the creation of Islamic trading communities across the World which would undermine the current World order and naturally lead to the emergence of Islamic rule. They claim to have more than 20 established communities as far afield as England, Mexico, South Africa, Indonesia and Russia with an estimated 10,000 followers worldwide, and have minted their own gold dinar currency as part of the “World Islamic Mint” organisation, most recently in Indonesia and Malaysia.<sup>37)</sup>

Though this movement, and other Western based movements such as the former German based Hilafet Devleti and the London based Jama'ah tul Muslimeen are on the fringes of the Muslim community, they do reflect the growing sense of solidarity and unity between European based Muslims and those in the Muslim countries. This is actually a part of the theological foundation for Muslims who all believe they are spiritually one *Ummah*, or collective nation based upon a unified belief, and that this spiritual unity should be represented by a political unity which would represent the Islamic interest on the world stage. This is a specifically Islamic or Muslim view, but it should not be seen in isolation from the current international trends as well.

## The Globalised World

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Today's globalised world has also meant there is a fragmentation of identity, with people not necessarily feeling tied to any one nation due to the ease of travel and communication. The nation state can be considered to be a failed entity, an unsuitable mode of polity for an increasingly interconnected world with shifting capital and workforces.

At the same time it is possible to witness the re-emergence of a multi-Civilisation world polity, with the rising power of Asia and South America as exemplified by China, India and Brazil, three components of the so-called "BRIC" nations. At the same time, the consideration in the global environment is that collective global level entities are required. The United States, Russia and China are already at that size. In Europe there is the European Union which as a supra-national entity has eroded and continues to erode the sovereignty of the nation-state, and though its lack of a real military and political component still hamper it this is the direction the EU supporters aspire to go towards building upon the economic integration which is in place.

It can be argued that the nation-state is reasonably resilient in Western Europe though it has been undermined, given that it is its intellectual father and gave birth to it – but the same is demonstrably false for the nation-state in other areas in the World – as highlighted by the continuing conflictual state of affairs in the Middle East and wider Islamic World. The various states in the Middle East have had a legitimacy deficit from the moment they were established, given that they were colonial creations made up of borders imposed by imperial powers. A good example would be the three North African states which have featured heavily in the North African uprisings at the beginning of 2011 in the form of protests and rebellions, namely Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. It cannot be said that there are ethnic differences between them which justify their separation – since the Awlad Ali tribe is found half in Egypt and half in Libya, and there are many Berber tribes which are spread from Morocco to Egypt. The three countries all speak Arabic dialects amongst a few other local languages, and fundamentally – the majority population is Muslim, and in recent times more conservative and religiously inclined. Historically and culturally the boundaries between them are not natural, but rather imposed.

To demonstrate the solidarity of the people in the region – after the uprising in Tunisia then led to those in Egypt – people in both Tunisia and Jordan and other countries went out to demonstrate against the Egyptian president while also protesting against their own government and vice versa.<sup>38)</sup> The same solidarity is felt with the Libyan uprising against Gaddafi, which saw Egyptians protesting outside the Libyan embassy in Cairo.<sup>39)</sup> There were also scenes of Muslims from London to Indonesia demonstrating in solidarity and support of the moves to remove the dictators of the region throughout the period of the uprisings.

Though each of the uprisings has its specific conditions, there are broad shared characteristics, namely the illegitimacy of the state, the lack of accountability, endemic levels of

corruption and the pervasive nature of the secret police apparatus to keep the population submissive. The removal of the fear factor fell as the protests gathered momentum initially in Tunisia and then subsequently in Egypt, and the fall of this pillar of security has led to the changing of the geo-political landscape of the Middle East and beyond. The governing elites in the region are not seen as representing the opinions and viewpoints of the masses, but are rather viewed as tools of the West, largely in place to ensure the interests of others while suppressing the aspirations of the population of the region. Recent well-publicized examples of this are the Egyptian government's position during the war on Gaza in 2009, and their role in the facilitating the American rendition program since the mid 1990's,<sup>40)</sup> acting as a type of offshore torture facility for the CIA. This is why the mantra across the region has been that "the people demand the overthrow of the system" rather than purely focusing on the removal of one or two individuals alone.

There are many factors which can be said to have set the scene for Muslim populations in the Middle East and beyond to seek alternatives to their current political order. These include the occupation of lands considered to be of religious significance such as Palestine, the oppression of Muslim populations in areas believed to be historically Islamic such as in Kashmir or the Caucasus region and poverty across wide swathes of the populations despite a wealth of natural and manpower resources in their regions, perceived subservience of the state to foreign agendas and that they mostly live under oppressive governments who have been imposed upon them and do not represent their interests and values. The fact that these regimes often deal with the general population as a security threat whether they are republics like Egypt, pseudo democracies like Pakistan or monarchies like those of Morocco or Jordan. These grievances are largely felt to be shared due to the collective Muslim identity as represented in the idea of the *ummah*, even though the nation-state has now been the only form of polity in the region for a number of generations.

Whatever the discourse being used in the media, such as the "pro-democracy" term which was imposed by some of the International Satellite Channels, digging below the superficiality of such a discourse there are certain key demands that the people seem to be searching for.<sup>41)</sup> These include:

- Electable government
- Accountable government
- Independent government
- The rule of law
- A system which represents their political aspirations on the global stage

With the failure of the nation-state, and then subsequently ideas such as secular pan-Arabism to settle the problems faced by the *ummah*, it is the Caliphate that can be posited as an alternative which can fulfill all of these demands, as expressed in the classical formulation of the Caliphate theory which was previously touched upon. Both the idea of the unified *ummah* and

its political representation being the Caliphate are derived from Islamic sources. Despite the concerns of its detractors, it could be argued that it is the Caliphate system that is actually the modern state which is suitable for the World at this time – given that it does not recognize the national boundaries which do not represent the people, and have been undermined by the transfer of revolutionary ideas and encouragement through Facebook and Twitter. As the world seems to be moving towards greater unity along regional blocs in order for each to remain relevant and also have influence on the World Stage, it is the Caliphate that is historically, culturally and theologically grounded which could lend it legitimacy for the people in the region.

It should be noted at this stage that history has shown that the Caliphate, whether in its Ottoman form or previously, had all manner of relations with external states and polities. These ranged from peaceful co-existence, to military support, to hostile relations to open warfare, much like the relations between polities throughout history. Japan's relationship with the Ottoman Caliphate at the turn and beginning of the last century is a good example of this, though there are several Western precedents as well. In any case the application of international relations theories of realism may align many of those speaking out against the idea of a unified Islamic State to accommodate it for the sake of their own interests upon realization of the resources that may be under its control, as exemplified by the French u-turn on its position on engagement with Islamic parties in the Middle East as a result of the changing political landscape in the post-uprising era.<sup>42)</sup>

Any continued demonization of a polity considered as part of normative Islam will likely only be detrimental for relations with the populations in the Muslim countries where there is a substantial support for greater application of Islamic law and values in governance along with increased unity, irrespective of whether the masses are actively agitating for its re-establishment or not. At the same time it will also create more alienation of the Muslims living in the West, which will likely lead more of them to seek belonging in the idea of a global Islamic community.

The reality is that the hegemony of Western governments and values is being disputed more openly as time passes, and as demonstrated by a BBC international poll released at the end of 2010 there is in fact a worldwide dissatisfaction with Western-style capitalism.<sup>43)</sup> As re-emerging world powers and civilizational identities all assert themselves regionally and internationally, demands to adopt the political values and philosophy of Western European and American governments are less relevant to those involved. Consequently, the attempts to establish a form of Islamic polity which would be given legitimacy by its citizens should be accepted as alternatives to be examined in their own right. While the triumphant claims to an end of history at the beginning of the so-called "New World Order" were derided at the time in some quarters and subsequently proven to be ill-judged, it may be that there is more than the rumblings of an end of a Western history, where the dominant narrative, universals and hegemonic discourse is not only challenged, but eventually overturned.

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**Notes**

- 1) This article is an amended version of a key-note lecture given at The Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions (CISMOR) International Symposium ‘The Islamic World and Globalization – Beyond the Nation State,’ March 2011.
- 2) Reza Pankhurst received his doctorate from the London School of Economics, Government Department, in 2011. He writes commentary at [www.newcivilisation.com](http://www.newcivilisation.com). He can be contacted at [rezapankhurst@newcivilisation.com](mailto:rezapankhurst@newcivilisation.com).
- 3) Richard Paul Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, Middle Eastern Monographs; 9 (Oxford U.P., 1969).
- 4) Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.1.
- 5) BBC News, “Merkel Says German Multicultural Society Has Failed,” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11559451>.
- 6) Spiegel Online, “New German Interior Minister Reopens Integration Debate,” <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,749477,00.html>.
- 7) Suzanne Goldenberg, “Republican Urges Islam Terror Hearings Amid ‘Mccarthyite’ Witch-Hunt Claims,” *Guardian*, March 7, 2011.
- 8) National Intelligence Council, “Mapping the Global Future 2020,” (Pittsburgh, 2004).
- 9) George Friedman, *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century* (New York: Doubleday, 2009).
- 10) Reza Pankhurst, “The Caliphate, and the Changing Strategy of the Public Statements of Al-Qaeda’s Leaders,” *Political Theology* 11, no. 4 (2010).
- 11) Charles Clarke, “Lecture at the Heritage Foundation – Published October 21, 2005,” <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Lecture/Contesting-the-Threat-of-Terrorism>.
- 12) Richard Dannatt, “Radio 4 Today Program May 17,” (2010).
- 13) Telegraph, “Libya: Up to a Million Refugees Could Pour into Europe,” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8339225/Libya-up-to-a-million-refugees-could-pour-into-Europe.html>.
- 14) Paul Joseph Watson, “Medvedev: Revolutions Could Lead to “Disintegration” of Middle East,” <http://www.infowars.com/medvedev-revolutions-could-lead-to-disintegration-of-middle-east/>.
- 15) Mohammad Bakhit Al-Mutee’i, *Haqiqa Al-Islam Wa Usul Al-Hukm* (Cairo: Al-Matba’a al-Salifiyya, 1925).
- 16) The word was taken from numerous statements of the Prophet Mohammad mentioning it in relation to the ruling after his death, and the meaning of the word itself – “Successor” – in this case successor to the Prophet, not in Prophethood and receiving revelation, but in political leadership and the application and spread of the Islamic State.
- 17) Stanley Lane-Poole and Arthur Gilman, *The Story of the Moors in Spain* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic, 1990, 1886).
- 18) Institute for Policy Research & Development, “Supplementary Memorandum from

- Institute for Policy Research & Development (Pve 19a),” <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmcomloc/memo/previoex/uc19a02.htm>.
- 19) Jonathan Neaman Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1997), p.25.
  - 20) See for example the foremost text on the issue Abul Hasan Ali al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam Al-Sultaniyya* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-ilmiya).
  - 21) Bernard Lewis, “Islam and Liberal Democracy,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 271, no. 2 (1993).
  - 22) Abdul Malik bin Abdullah al-Juwaini, *Al-Ghiyathi* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-ilmiyah, 2003). It is mentioned that the original rule is the obligation of a single overall authority for the whole Muslim community, though there may be an exception made if the two leaders were unknown to each one another.
  - 23) Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London; New York: Zed Books, 1997), p.56.
  - 24) Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage; V. 12* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997), p.29.
  - 25) Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), p.61.
  - 26) *Ibid.*, p.74.
  - 27) *Ibid.*, p.83.
  - 28) *Ibid.*
  - 29) Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
  - 30) For a review of the various conferences at the time – refer to Martin S. Kramer and Merkaz Dayan, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
  - 31) Ahmad S Moussalli, *Moderate and Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Quest for Modernity, Legitimacy, and the Islamic State* (Gainesville, FL.: University Press of Florida, 1999), pp.117-8.
  - 32) Sheikh Taleb Awadallah, “The Beloveds of Allah – Emergence of Light from Al-Aqsa Mosque – Launch of Hizb Ut-Tahrir’s March,” (2006).
  - 33) WorldPublicOpinion.org, “Muslim Public Opinion on Us Policy, Attacks on Civilians and Al-Qaeda” (The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, 2007).
  - 34) Lucy Williamson, “Stadium Crowd Pushed for Islamist Dream,” *BBC News Website*, August 12, 2007.
  - 35) WorldPublicOpinion.org, “Public Opinion in the Islamic World on Terrorism, Al Qaeda, and Us Policies,” (The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, 2009).
  - 36) BBC World Service, “Wide Dissatisfaction with Capitalism – Twenty Years after Fall of Berlin Wall” (PIPA, 2009).
  - 37) Al-Arabiyya, “Muslims Shun “Worthless” Paper Money,” <http://www.alarabiya.net/art>

icles/2010/02/20/100913.html.

- 38) Ahram Online, "Egypt Activists Protest in Solidarity with Tunisia Uprising," <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/3950/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-activists-protest-in-solidarity-with-Tunisia.aspx>. Press TV, "Anti-Mubarak Protests Held in Jordan," <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/164314.html>.
- 39) Reuters, "Egyptians Protest against Libya's Gaddafi," <http://af.reuters.com/article/egyptNews/idAFLDE71K1C320110221?sp=true>.
- 40) ABC News, "New Egyptian Vp Ran Mubarak's Security Team, Oversaw Torture," <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/egypt-crisis-omar-suleiman-cia-rendition/story?id=12812445>.
- 41) For further discussion of the meaning of democracy in the Middle Eastern/Muslim discourse, refer to Reza Pankhurst, "Muslim Contestations over Religion and the State in the Middle East," *Political Theology* 11, no. 6 (2010).
- 42) Reuters, "France Signals New Openness on Muslim Groups Abroad," <http://af.reuters.com/article/libyaNews/idAFLDE73I1WG20110419>.
- 43) BBC World Service, "Wide Dissatisfaction with Capitalism – Twenty Years after Fall of Berlin Wall."