Durham University

Durham E-Theses

The idea of an Arab caliphate in British Middle Eastern policy in the era of the Great War

Stephen Thomas Cox

How to cite:

Cox, Stephen Thomas (2003) The idea of an Arab caliphate in British Middle Eastern policy in the era of the Great War. Doctoral thesis, Durham University.

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a https://etheses.durham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1739/ is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the full Durham E-Theses policy for further details.

Academic Support Office, The Palatine Centre, Durham University, Stockton Road, Durham, DH1 3LE
e-mail: e-theses.admin@durham.ac.uk Tel: +44 0191 334 6107
https://etheses.durham.ac.uk

The Idea of an Arab Caliphate In British Middle Eastern Policy In the Era of the Great War

Stephen Thomas Cox

A copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without his prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

A thesis submitted for the fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

IMEIS
University of Durham

2003



25 AUG 2004

ABSTRACT

Making extensive use of British official sources, this thesis traces the origins, development, and eventual dereliction of the idea of a restored Arab caliphate amongst British imperialists in the Middle East during the Great War. The thesis describes how Britain, as the European imperial power with the greatest number of Muslim subjects, became especially sensitive to the Ottoman Empire's attempts to compensate for European encroachment by extending the religious authority of the sultan-caliph into territories outside the Empire. There is emphasis on the fact that, with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the nineteenth century, and moves towards autonomy in the Arab provinces, the return of the caliphate to Arabia appeared to the British as more or less inevitable.

The thesis demonstrates how British Islamophobia intensified with the prospect of war and more so once Turkey joined the Central Powers, since what Britain feared most was the manipulation of the caliphate by an imperial adversary. The thesis goes on to show how British imperialists based in Cairo and Khartoum sought to extend their empire through the endorsement of an Arab caliphate, which, they hoped, would prevent the forces of pan-Islam being turned against them while providing a façade behind which Britain could obtain exclusive control of the region. Of key significance to the account is the coincidence of this predisposition with Turkish moves to undermine the tenure of the current Sharif of Mecca, since this provided the principal elements of a collaborative alliance in which the latter's supposed standing within Islam made him an ideal candidate for future Arab caliph. Upon this supposition an Arab rebellion against the Turks with British support was planned.

The currency of the idea during the months prior to the Arab Revolt of 1916-18 is explained in terms of the *abstract logic* of a scheme of British rule 'behind the veil of Islam.' This is followed by an explanation of how, *in practice*, the Revolt proved to be the undoing of the idea, in part because the Islamic religious credentials which had attracted the British to Sharif Husayn actually precluded them from aiding him openly and directly. Finally, it is shown how the limitations inherent in the Sharif's position within the Arabian social-economic system rendered him completely unsuited to the collaborative project to which he had been assigned.

CONTENTS

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION..... i

1. THE 'IDEA OF AN ARAB CALIPHATE': DETERMINING THE NATURE OF THE SUBJECT MATTER

1.0 Introduction..... 1
1.01 The Objective of the Thesis..... 1
1.02 Some Anti-theses..... 2
1.03 The Approach Adopted..... 6
1.04 Conceptualising the Caliphate of Islam 7
1.05 Issues Arising from the Sources Used..... 12
1.06 Towards a Dialectical Approach..... 13

1.1 Theories of Imperialism and their Relevance to Historical Explanation 15

1.2 Ronald Robinson's Theory of Collaboration: An Assessment in Terms of the Aims of this Thesis..... 19
1.21 Introduction..... 19
1.22 The Ubiquity of the Collaborative Paradigm..... 22
1.23 The Need for a Theory of Structural Capacity..... 23
25

1.3 Alex Callinicos' Theory of Structural Capacity..... 25
1.31 Introduction..... 26
1.32 Structural Capacities and Callinicos' Notion of 'Interests'..... 26
1.33 The Congruence of Callinicos' Theory of Structural Capacity with Robinson's Theory of Collaborative Imperialism..... 28

1.4 A Brief Chapter Outline..... 28

2. PRECEDENTS, PRECURSORS, AND PRECONDITIONS

2.0 Introduction..... 31

2.1 The Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci and the Origins of Pan-Islam..... 32

2.2 The Indian Mutiny and the Emergence of British Islamophobia..... 36

2.3 The Eastern Crisis of 1875-80: Pan-Islam and the 'New Imperialism'..... 41

2.4 The Meccan Crisis of 1879-80 and the Second Afghan War: A Paradigm for Imperial Collaboration..... 49

2.5 The Question of Continuity 1881-1913: From Meccan Crisis to Meccan Crisis..... 56

2.6 The Intensification of Imperial Rivalry in the Middle East: Islam and the 'Prophylactics of Ideology'..... 63

2.7 Islamophobia in Context..... 67

2.8 Conclusion..... 70

3. THE 'HIJAZ CRISIS' OF 1914, THE COMING OF WAR, AND THE CALIPHATE

3.0 Introduction..... 73

3.1 Kitchener in Egypt: The Increasing Necessity for Collaboration..... 74

3.2 The 'Hijaz Crisis' of 1914..... 80

3.3 The Significance of the 'al-Masri Affair'..... 85

3.4 'Appreciation of Situation in Arabia': Captain Clayton's Memorandum of 6 September 1914 86

3.5 Kitchener's Declaration for an Arab Caliphate..... 91

3.6 An Excursus on Elie Kedourie's Arguments in Relation to Kitchener's Message to 'Abdullah of 1 November 1914..... 94

3.7 The Turkish Proclamation of Jihad against the Entente..... 99

3.8 The British Proclamation to the Arabs of 4 December 1914..... 102

3.9 India's Objections: Differences Emerge..... 105

3.10 Conclusion..... 109

4. REMOVAL OF THE CALIPHATE FROM ENEMY INFLUENCE BECOMES THE *SINE QUA NON* OF BRITISH MIDDLE EASTERN POLICY

4.0 Introduction..... 113

4.1 Towards a Definite and Coherent Caliphate Policy..... 115

4.2 Captain Symes' Report of February 1915..... 119

4.3 Further Thoughts from Cairo and London..... 124

4.4 The Search for Historical Collateral: The Pirie-Gordon – Lukach Memorandum'..... 125

4.5 'British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia' : The de Bunsen Committee and the Idea of an Arab Caliphate..... 129

4.6 Sir Mark Sykes' Tour of the Middle and Near East..... 136

4.7 Conclusion..... 140

5. THE COMPETITION FOR 'AUTHENTIC' SOURCES AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE IDEA OF BRITISH RULE 'BEHIND THE VEIL OF ISLAM'

5.0 Introduction..... 144

5.1 Wingate Seeks an 'Authentic' Islamic Voice: The Influence of the Informants Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani, CMG, and Muhammad Mustafa al-Miraghi, the Grand Qadi of the Sudan..... 146

5.2 Cromer's Speech in the House of Lords..... 150

5.3 The Qadi and al-Mirghani Again..... 154

5.4 Cromer Seeks an 'Authentic' Voice: The Tactic of Deferral..... 160

5.5 Wingate's Conversion to 'Pan-Arabianism'..... 163

5.6 Conclusion..... 168

6. THE 'HUSAYN-McMAHON CORRESPONDENCE' AND THE IDEA OF AN ARAB CALIPHATE

6.0 Introduction..... 172

6.1 The part played in the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence' by the Idea of an Arab Caliphate..... 174
6.11 Introduction..... 174
6.12 Antecedents of the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence'..... 175
6.13 Husayn's First Letter to McMahon..... 179

6.2 The 'al-Faruqi Episode' and the Modification of the 'Cairo Scheme'..... 185

6.3 Conclusion..... 194

7. FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: THE IMPACT OF THE HIJAZ REVOLT ON THE IDEA OF AN ARAB CALIPHATE

7.0 Introduction..... 201

7.1 The Return of 'The Alexandretta Option'..... 202

7.2 The Arab Bureau: The Institutional Expression of the Cairo 'Grand Plan'..... 205

7.3 Sykes-Picot and the Caliphate..... 208

7.4 The Arab Revolt and the Caliphate: Ideology in the Face of Practice..... 212
7.41 Preparation for the Revolt and the Early Deprecation of the Sharif's Capacity for Aggrandisement..... 213
7.42 The Confinement of the Revolt to the Hijaz..... 217
7.43 'Sharif Husayn's Revolt' and the Question over Landing British Troops in the Hijaz..... 220
7.44 The Sharif's Revolt and the Reappraisal of Britain's Arab Policy..... 228
7.45 Tribalism: The Critical Factor..... 232

7.5 The Turning Point: Husayn's Proclamation of Kingship..... 238

7.6 The Caliphate Idea Brought under Further Scrutiny..... 243

7.7 Conclusion..... 247

8. THE END OF THE WAR, THE PEACE PROCESS, AND THE ABOLITION OF THE CALIPHATE

8.0 Introduction..... 250

8.1 The Last Two Years of the War..... 251
8.11 The Caliphate Issue: Towards a New Consensus..... 251
8.12 The Persistence of the Caliphate Issue..... 258
8.13 The Derogation of King Husayn: A Sharifian Policy without a Caliphate..... 262

8.2 The Post-War Settlement and the Issue of the Caliphate.....
8.21 Further Moves Towards the Irrevocable Exclusion of the Sharif of Mecca..... 268
8.22 The Resort to Academic Sources: Assimilating the 'Italian Lesson'..... 268
8.23 'A Voice and Nothing More': The Development of a Secular Sharifian Policy, *Sans Sharif!*..... 271
8.24 The Caliphate Issue at Sèvres and Lausanne..... 275
279

8.3 The Demise of the Caliphate.....
8.31 The Abolition of the Turkish Caliphate..... 283
8.32 The Caliphate of Husayn, King of the Hijaz..... 283
8.33 The Caliphate Conferences of 1926..... 285
289

8.4 Historical Footnote.....
291

9. CONCLUSION.....
293

9.01 The Background to British Involvement in the Matter of the Caliphate.....
9.02 The Formation and Currency of the Arab Caliphate Idea in British Thinking..... 294
9.03 Explaining the Failure of the Arab Caliphate Idea..... 297
9.04 Matters for Further Research..... 302
306

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES.....
309

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....
311

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help given to me by my supervisor, Dr. Ali Ansari, throughout the last four years, but especially for his constructive criticism of earlier drafts of the thesis during the later stages. Ali's comments were always tactfully made, and sensitive to my overall objectives even when I had not expressed these well myself. I would also like to thank Dr. Emma Murphy for the enthusiastic support and encouragement I received during the first year of my supervision. Particular thanks must be given The Sharjah Scholarship Charitable Trust which funded the first three years of my research, and also to Professor Tim Niblock for putting my name forward for a scholarship without which it would have been impossible for me to embark on the project in the first place.

I cannot thank my partner, Valerie, enough for the support she has given me during the last five years and for which I will always be grateful. The formality and brevity of this acknowledgement cannot do justice to the constancy, patience, and selfless indulgence of my preoccupation that she displayed throughout a period which turned out to be considerably longer than either of us had anticipated.

I would like to express my enormous gratitude to my valued friend, and travel companion of long-standing, Graham Thompson, for accommodating me during three long summers while doing archival research at the PRO and British Library. I only hope that I will one day have the opportunity to repay Tom's generosity, though I could never aspire to the forbearance he displayed during what must have seemed like numberless evenings of inane enthusiasm on my part.

I would also like to declare my appreciation of the invaluable support of friend and fellow-student, Muhammad al-Masri, and for the innumerable topical conversations on matters of theory and fact which were invariably fruitful on account of Muhammad's intelligence, erudition, and boundless good-humour. In particular I would like to thank Muhammad for his much-needed help with the transliteration of Arabic terms, and for his clarification of points of fact in relation to the Islamic faith.

Thanks must go to Dr. Suha Taji-Farouki for her kind and useful suggestions regarding secondary sources at a crucial stage in my research, and recognition to Toby Dodge (now Dr.) for the stimulating paper on the application of Foucault to the study of the British Empire in the Middle East presented at Durham at a critical stage in my progress. Whilst I eventually rejected this approach, it is largely thanks to Toby that I was forced to explore such a possibility and to clarify my reasons for adopting an alternative. I would also like to express my appreciation to David Chilton of *Taikoo Books*, York, for allowing me vital access to several of the works included in his collections.

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation of the help given to me by the staff at the Public Record Office, the Sudan Archive at Durham, the Oriental and India Office Collections at the British Library, and also to the staff responsible for the Sledmere Papers at the University of Hull and the Private Papers Collection at St Antony's, Oxford. The efficiency and professionalism encountered at the PRO remains a paradigm of public service.

Finally, I must apologise to all those friends and relatives whom I may have neglected during the course of my research and for all the occasions on which I might have appeared tired, distracted or downright unsociable. Amongst these I would like to give especial thanks to friends and comrades, Chris Fuller and Hazel Gallogly, who were with me all the way. Such was the keenness of their support that they celebrated my finishing some twenty months early!

In Memory of

Ada Cox (*née* Jarvis)

1892-1974

COPYRIGHT

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without their prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

The fearful ghost which, if the bravest man in Europe saw it even in his sleep, would cause him to rise in fear and panic.

Shaykh Muhammad Bakhit on the caliphate, 1926.

Most people have heard of the pan-Islamic movement, especially during the War. Some of us have called it a political bogey and some a world-menace, but these are extremist views—it is really the practical protest of Moslems against the exploitation of their spiritual and material resources by outsiders.

G. Wyman Bury, 1919.

Note on Transliteration

The transliteration systems used have been applied to the main text, excluding quoted material. That part of the footnotes relating to primary source references is presented as per the original; however, comments and further information which have been added by the candidate are consistent with the systems applied to the main text.

The MESA (Middle Eastern Studies Association of North America) system has been used for the spelling of Arabic technical terms, personal names and most place names, except that no distinction has been made between the two forms of d, h, s, t or z, and long vowels have not been distinguished from their short variants. 'Ayns ['] and hamzas ['] are, therefore, the only diacritical marks employed. Commonly accepted English forms are used for some place names, for example, Cairo, Mecca, Medina. Only technical terms which do not appear in the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* are italicised.

A similarly modified MESA system has been applied to Ottoman Turkish technical terms, personal and place names, a cedilla [ç] in place of the letter *tchin* being the only diacritical mark used. The designation 'Constantinople' rather than 'Istanbul' is used throughout.

Except for consistency, no system has been applied to the few names and terms which derive from the languages of Afghanistan and the Indian sub-continent.

CHAPTER 1: The 'Idea of an Arab Caliphate': Determining the Nature of the Subject Matter

1.0 Introduction

This thesis is about the part played by the idea of an Arab caliphate in the formation and execution of British Middle Eastern policy during the First World War. Except for its treatment as a subsidiary issue in relation to the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence,' there is little existing literature devoted to the issue of the British scheme for the transfer of the caliphate from Turkey to Arabia which emerged in response to the exigencies of the Great War. This thesis aims to redress this default, first, by demonstrating the centrality of the idea, and, secondly, by explaining its trajectory, that is, the origins, development and ultimate decline of the idea in British imperial thinking. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to establishing a mode of explanation appropriate to the subject matter in relation to the objectives of the thesis set out below.

1.01 The Objective of the Thesis

The thesis being propounded here may be stated as follows:

Firstly, that the idea of an Arab caliphate during the First World War was neither incidental, peripheral nor an aberration in relation to British policy making in the Middle East. Rather, the idea was a crucial factor at the very foundation of British policy during the first half of the war with consequences thereafter, being based on a coherent, if abstract and ultimately unrealisable, vision of 'Oriental'/Islamic society.

Secondly, that the idea of a revived Arab caliphate was neither imposed on 'the Arabs' *unilaterally*, nor did it arise primarily due to a fundamental misapprehension concerning the nature of the institution on the part of the British. Rather, the idea was worked out

conjointly between British imperialists serving in the region and certain individuals representing (or purporting to represent) the nascent pan-Arab and Arab nationalist tendencies. The respective parties were in need of a 'principle of unity' which would facilitate either, a nominal Arab independence and sovereignty in combination with effective British control, or a degree of British involvement in support of something closely resembling Arab independence. The inherent possibilities for the convergence of these two positions are self-evident. The idea of a revived Arab caliphate was, therefore, an instrument of collaboration between the British imperial ruling class and certain elements of the Arab élite.

The idea of a revived Arab caliphate originated in response to the pan-Islamic propaganda which emerged in the context of the *relative* decline of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, and was sustained by a more general paranoia amongst imperial powers concerning trans-national and extra-territorial political forces. However, the idea retained currency since it served the intentions and interests of both British expansionism and of certain tendencies within the Arab movement, and was facilitated by its adaptability and reinforced on account of its internal coherence, noted above.

Thirdly, that in spite of its coherence at the ideological level the British project of a revived Arab caliphate was not ultimately realised - primarily because it was incompatible with the underlying social-structural capacities which both British imperialists and certain pan-Arabists wished to exploit. Besides which, the British idea contained a central contradiction. This being that the precise reasons underlying Britain's initial preference for Sharif Husayn amongst Arab leaders as a collaborative partner (specifically, his presumed pre-eminence within Islam based on his supposed eligibility for the caliphate) were the very reasons for which Britain later felt unable to intervene directly on his behalf.

1.02 Some Anti-theses

The first of the above sub-theses stands in direct opposition to what may be inferred from Elie Kedourie's monumental work, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth*,[1] regarding the issue of

[1] Kedourie, 1976.

the caliphate in British thinking. It should be emphasised, however, that it has not been the primary objective of this study to take issue with Kedourie's treatment of Britain's caliphate policy. Any criticism of him here is as incidental to the main aims of this thesis as the matter of the caliphate was to his own exposition. Nevertheless, it is precisely this effective marginalisation (to the point of dismissal) of British deliberations concerning the caliphate during the Great War which is distinctly at odds with the conclusions of this thesis. Consequently, some criticism of Kedourie's argumentation on a number of specific points has been unavoidable.

The second and third sub-theses are a challenge to the *implicit* essentialism of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and to the anti-foundationalism and epistemological relativism engendered by Michel Foucault's power/knowledge approach[2], respectively. The former has tended to view European imperialism in the Middle East as the effect of the particular set of preconceptions which constitute 'orientalism.' The second tendency treats power as an irreducible category not explicable in any other terms and considers that 'knowledge' may not be evaluated according to its 'ability more or less accurately to characterize independently existing states of affairs.'[3] The *possible* relevance of Said to any study of the relationship between a European imperial power and the Middle East is immediately obvious and requires no further elaboration here. Regarding Foucault, besides his being one of Said's two declared theoretical sources (the other being Gramsci) any theory dealing with the articulation of power and knowledge is, at least, *ostensibly* applicable to any consideration of an imperial power's representations of the Middle East. However, neither Said's predominantly 'intertextual' method, nor the Foucauldian approach upon which he purports to rely, are conducive to *explaining* the rise and fall of the idea of a revived Arab caliphate in British Middle Eastern policy. While the first does not permit reference to factors *extraneous* to the self-contained history of British *representations* of Islam and the caliphate, the second restricts one to *describing* the juxtaposition of elements *interior* to the all-encompassing domain of power/knowledge.

Broadly, the postmodern and post-colonial are rejected for their dogmatic abjuration of class analysis. While it would be quite uncontroversial to assert that it was not, for

---

[2] Works on Foucault are legion; however, Nick J. Fox has produced a brief critical assessment of the usefulness of the various Foucauldian approaches for the social sciences which is sympathetic to the aims of this thesis. Fox, 1998.

example, the Yorkshire miner who set out to subjugate the Syrian *fallah*, such an obvious fact has serious implications for any analysis such as Said's which, except in terms of culture and ethnicity,[4] takes no account of the *internal* differentiation of the societies concerned. There is an alternative: in a more recent context Said Aburish opined that 'the common enemy' of 'the West and the Arab elite' is 'the Arab people.'[5] There is not, however, even the faintest acknowledgment of such a possibility in Edward Said's *Orientalism*.[6] Like the object of his critique, Said relies entirely on the unstated metaphor of an all-encompassing binary opposition[7] according to which one discrete object, either 'the West' or one of its representative powers, imposes itself upon the other, 'the East.'[8] In this way, rather than negating them, Said abstracts from orientalism its major tropes. In fact, *Orientalism*'s assimilation of the essentialism found in orientalism itself has long been recognised[9].

Following from Said, post-colonialists in general have not only placed great 'emphasis on an epistemological break between colonizer and colonized,' but tend towards the view that 'the discontinuities between [their] interests ... make a coherent history of their exchanges virtually impossible.'[10] Thus the implications of collaborative arrangements based on a coincidence of ruling class or élite interests *across cultures* are simply excluded from analysis *a priori*.[11] Collaborative arrangements with fractions of subject societies, it will be argued later, constitute the very *modus operandi* of imperialism, and a generality in relation to which Britain's involvement in the issue of the caliphate is only one instance.

---

[3] Callinicos, 1989b, pp. 81-2.
[4] Thomas, 1994, p. 24. Interestingly, the only occasion on which Said treats class exploitation is when the difference between exploiter and exploited is also an ethnic one, and the exploitation occurs overseas. Said, 1993, p. 69.
[5] Aburish, 1997, p. 31. Unfortunately, this assertion too treats 'the West' as undifferentiated.
[6] MacKenzie, 1995, p. 35. While the terms 'Britain' and 'the British' will be used regularly throughout this thesis, it should be clear from the context that what is being referred to is some section of, or function within, the imperial ruling class and not to British subjects in their entirety. The term 'imperialist' is used to refer to any person purposefully engaged in the running of an empire.
[7] MacKenzie, 1995, p. 20.
[8] Ahmad, 1994, p. 183.
[9] al-'Azm, 1981, p. 6; John M. MacKenzie cited in, Macfie, 2002, p. 135; Ahmad, 1994, pp. 182 & 183.
[10] Hamilton, 1996, pp. 176-7. Notwithstanding the misuse of the original Bachelardian/Althusserian term pertaining to discontinuities within a single development (Majumdar, 1995, pp. 30-37), the sense here of a lateral discontinuity between distinct developments is adequately conveyed. See Note 65, below. Furthermore, this quotation illustrates the difference between a *relativist* and a *relational* approach. See Note 82, below.
[11] Such lacunae are legion amongst the subaltern studies and post-colonialist schools of thought, for example in: Homi Bhabha cited in, Moore-Gilbert, 1997, pp. 121 & 168; Spivak, 1990, p. 27; Bhabha again, quoted in, Ahmad, 1995, p8.

Regarding Edward Said's fetishisation of 'the text,' exemplified by his belief in the autonomous transmission of 'knowledge' between texts which is assumed to take place independently of the authors' conscious intentions, it need only be said that the historiographical chapters of this thesis are replete with examples of individuals *consciously* selecting from alternative texts according to their current interests and objectives. In addition, the findings of this thesis run counter to Said's failure to acknowledge 'the contribution made by the intelligentsia of the colonized countries concerned to the formation of western textuality.'[12]

It has already been said that, *on the face of it*, Foucault's concept of power/knowledge is eminently suited to the analysis of imperialism. It is impossible to imagine an instance of it (imperialism) where power is not exercised and knowledge not applied, simultaneously. Since the vague, though undoubtedly correct, idea that 'wherever there is knowledge there is power' is at least as old as Francis Bacon[13] and in the present era something of a philosophical banality, it must be assumed that Foucault meant something more. The first thing to be said about the idea of power/knowledge, is that there is some ambiguity and indeterminacy in his own, not to mention his adherents,' demonstrations of it. The problem revolves around whether we should be thinking about 'power/knowledge' or 'power-knowledge.' The distinction is not merely typographical. Since, on the one hand, Foucault talks about a *correlation*[14] between 'power relations' and 'fields of knowledge,' and yet elsewhere we are told that knowledge/power is 'a phenomenon that cannot be reduced simply to either component,'[15] and that 'knowledge ... *presuppose*[s] *and constitute*[s] at the same time power relations.'[16]

The first version cited, being an internally differentiated construct, at least admits of a relationship and, at first sight, looks more promising. However, by assuming *a priori* some kind of *correspondence* between power and knowledge the nature of the relationship in a given instance is determined in advance of any inquiry. The second variant, which postulates an identity between the two terms, precludes all theorising of any relationship between power and knowledge since knowledge *is* power and *vice versa*, and is therefore

---

[12] Macfie, 2002, p. 126.
[13] Francis Bacon, 'De Haeresibus', *Meditationes Sacrae*, 1597, quoted in, Tripp, 1976, p. 337.
[14] Foucault, 1979, pp. 27-28.
[15] Fox, 1998, p. 416.
[16] Foucault, 1979, p. 32.

unlikely to prove helpful in analysing or explaining actual instances of either. If applied to the subject matter in hand, either formulation would seem to rule out questions about the precise nature of the relationship between, firstly, British imperialism as a source of power and generator of interests in the Middle East, and secondly, British vision and knowledge concerning Middle Eastern society. According to one commentator Foucault 'is not interested in explaining why things change, only in identifying points of discontinuity and describing various systems of power/knowledge.'[17] More importantly, as the conclusion of this thesis will indicate, power and knowledge are not necessarily equipollent.[18]

1.03 The Approach Adopted

It should be pointed out that it has not been the main purpose of this thesis to undertake a philosophical engagement with postmodernism or post-colonialism. Rather the aim is to contribute some evidence, in relation to a specific historical instance, towards a more empirically grounded theory of 'imperial knowledge' in its relationship with imperial practice. The aim, in other words, is to reassert the notion that for the historian *as well as the imperialist* 'empirical evidence ... imposes inescapable limits on all theorising.'[19] Having outlined what are thought to be the deficiencies in a Saidian-Foucauldian approach to the task of *explaining* the trajectory of Britain's relationship with the idea of a revived Arab caliphate, this chapter will proceed, in the first instance, by way of a brief discussion of the nature of the subject matter. A more grounded and dialectical approach will be developed in the remainder of his chapter by reference to two social-historical theories which, it is hoped, will facilitate an explanation of the origins, currency, and ultimate failure of Britain's caliphate adventure. The first of these is Ronald Robinson's theory of collaborative imperialism which is predicated on the fundamental and far-reaching observation that extensions of empire are invariably achieved by obtaining mutually beneficial arrangements with local agents. Although treated here as a theory of 'imperial modalities' - specifically, the political techniques which constitute the ubiquitous practice of imperial collaboration - rather than a theory of imperialism as such, Robinson's theory

---

[17] Best, 1995, p. 219.
[18] 'Equipollent' combines 'co-extensive' with 'co-efficient.' This terms is preferred to 'equivalent' which carries connotations of interchangeability, and correspondence of essence, rather than a correspondence of general effect and seems to accord with Foucault's own understanding.
[19] Callinicos, 1995, p. 94.

is considered to contain a number of acutely useful insights. It will be suggested that, shorn of its more extravagant claims, his theory may be refined to take account of the distinct functions of collaborator and informant[20] in such a way that introduces the factors of knowledge and interests to the collaborative framework. It will be argued that this more modest version of Robinson's theory requires augmentation by a true theory of imperialism in a manner which relates the somewhat common practice of collaboration to the possibilities for action - political, economic and military - inherent in the particular social structures under examination. This will be achieved by a brief exposition of Alex Callinicos' theory of structural capacities which reconciles a conventional theory of agency with the constraining *and enabling* factor of social structure. The theoretical section will be completed by a cursory reference to Lenin's theory of imperialism with particular regard to its implications for explanations based on an over-estimation of the self-actualising capacity of imperial romanticism.

1.04 Conceptualising the Caliphate of Islam

The caliphate of Islam *per se* is the subject of this thesis only to the extent that it was treated by British imperialists in the development and implementation of their Middle Eastern policy during the Great War. Nevertheless, some elementary appreciation of the historical phenomenon of the caliphate is necessary. The brief survey of its origins and development, which follows, is undertaken in order to apprehend its nature for the purposes of pursuing the objectives of this thesis as set out in the introductory section of this chapter. However, as the summary overview will illustrate, there are many possible ways of conceiving the caliphate: as a dynamic tradition, an enduring institution, an evolving ideology, a discourse, an unfolding religious doctrine, or the effect of transformations in secular power (political and economic). There would seem to be no good reason for settling exclusively on any one of these as long as it is understood that there is no *essential* caliphate, no single model by which any actual or proposed instance of it may be judged authentic or counterfeit. This point is of paramount importance when it comes to explaining the failure of the British caliphate project, one possibility being that the British misunderstood its 'true' nature. This is not to descend into radical relativism but

---

[20] It is important to note that these terms are, in no way, meant to carry the connotations of either 'quisling' or 'grass,' respectively.

to acknowledge the variable and indeterminate nature of the phenomenon under examination. It will be argued that none of the aspects of the caliphate enumerated below should be treated in isolation but only within their full range of concatenations. The importance of a 'totalising' approach will be reiterated in a later section.

The opening sentence of Wilfred Madelung's authoritative study of the foundation of the caliphate is remarkable only in its restraint: 'No event in history has divided Islam more profoundly and durably than the succession to Muhammad.'[21] Except for the fact that in Arabic the term *khalifah* means 'successor' (in this case, of God's messenger)[22] there is little about the caliphate that is agreed upon even by Muslims. The term appears several times in the Qur'an in connection with the inheritance and succession of past prophets (Adam, David, etc.) but nowhere in relation to future provision.[23] The only consensus which existed at the time of the Prophet's death, therefore, was over the need for a successor to Muhammad, there being immediate and, on occasions, violent[24] disagreement over who should be the first caliph. During the period of the first four 'rightly-guided' caliphs there were divisions between those who insisted that the caliph be a member of the Prophet's tribe, the Quraysh, and those who would have preferred a candidate from the wider community of Islam. Others favoured a caliph from Muhammad's clan, the Banu Hashim. Whereas the latter based their arguments on the traditions of inheritance and succession cited in the Qur'an in relation to former prophets, the opposing party believed that Muhammad's designation as 'the seal of the prophets' meant that strictures of customary practice no longer applied,[25] so leaving the field wide open.

It may be said that the dispute over the succession was neither purely, nor even *primarily*, doctrinal (in the sense of theological-exegetical) since the interpretation of the scriptures preferred by the concerned parties depended on their relationship to Muhammad and their place in his prophetic career. The underlying issue, in the first instance, was over who should rule the cities of Mecca and Medina and was soon followed by deliberations over the fitness of the Quraysh to lead the Arabs.

---

[21] Madelung, 1997, p. 1.
[22] Enayat, 1982, p. 6.
[23] Madelung, 1997, p. 6.
[24] Ibid., p. 144.
[25] Ibid., p. 14.

From its inception, then, the principal considerations surrounding the caliphate were political rather than religious-ideological, acceptance or rejection of traditions of inheritance being subordinated to political expediency. The result of such disputes over the succession was such that within a quarter of a century of the Prophet's death Islam was irrevocably divided by civil war. Subsequently, the majority who accepted Qurayshite supremacy came to be known as Sunnis (meaning followers of tradition); those preferring a Hashimite caliph and the succession of the fourth caliph, 'Ali, were known as the Shi'a (etymologically, 'followers') of 'Ali. An earlier faction, the Khawarij (seceders) supported the right of all Muslims to elect the most suitable successor.[26] Thereafter, doctrinal differences emerged between these traditions with the result that *the caliphate* became a predominantly Sunni institution[27] and remained so until its abolition in 1924.

The period of the Rashidun ended with the assassination of 'Ali, though, after the first civil war the majority of Muslims were united in AD 661 under the caliphate of Mu'awiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty.[28] Under the Umayyads, now based in Damascus, Islam continued to expand especially in the West[29] until, in AD 750, the caliphate passed to the Abbasid dynasty. The precise reasons for this are not apposite here, though it is pertinent to what follows that, once established, the dynasty legitimised its rule by reference to its Banu Hashim lineage.[30] The Abbasid caliphs resided in Baghdad for about 500 years until the city was sacked by the Mongols in AD 1258, however the period of their reign encompasses what is conventionally considered to have been the apex of Islamic civilisation only to be followed by its decadent disintegration. By the early 10th century, besides the autonomous Turkish and Persian states which existed outside the empire, a new non-Sunni, Fatimid caliphate had emerged in Cairo and it became evident that the Abbasids could no longer guarantee the unity of the Sunni Islam.[31] Consequently the Umayyad Amir of Cordoba declared a rival caliphate in AD 928.[32]

---

[26] Enayat, 1982, pp. 6-7.
[27] The most notable exception being the Shi'i Fatimid caliphate (AD 910-1171) which established its rule in Egypt.
[28] Hawting, 1986, p. 1.
[29] It was under the Umayyads that Muslim campaigns reached the Frankish Merovingian towns of Sens and Poitiers in AD 721 and AD 732, respectively.
[30] Hawting, 1986, pp. 109-11.
[31] Enayat, 1982, p. 10.
[32] Arnold, 1924, p. 58.

Hitherto, there had been little by way of an Islamic theory of the caliphate since the unity and dynamism of Sunni Islam had obviated the need for sustained self-examination. Whereas the first four (Rashidun) caliphs had been elected, the Umayyads and Abbasids were dynasties in the conventional sense. It was Mu'awiya's passing of the caliphate to his son which established the contrast with the Rashidun caliphs.[33] This gave rise to the distinction between 'caliphate' (*khilafa*) and 'kingship' (*mulk*) based on the notion that a caliph should be chosen after consultation with the representatives of Islam, however defined, whereas kingship was an arbitrary office based on force.

It was during the Abbasid decline that the first theories of the caliphate were expounded. Mawardi and Ghazzali, writing in the 11th and 12th centuries AD respectively, acknowledged political power as a criterion for office equal to piety and adherence to the norms of religion, and accepted that the caliph's right to rule ended whenever and wherever power had passed to a local amir. Although Mawardi reaffirmed, in theory, the caliph's 'authority over the entire range of Muslim public life'[34] he also indicated how 'accepted Sunni theory ... could be reinterpreted and developed so as to take account of existing power relationships.'[35] Ghazzali went further by conceding that the caliphate no longer conferred authority but merely gave legitimacy to rights already obtained by force. Sometime after the collapse of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, during its nominal tenure in Cairo under the Mamelukes, another theorist, Ibn Jama'ah, declared that military power was the sole criteria of possession.[36] In each instance these theorists were merely recasting theory in the light of changing circumstances thereby legitimising each new status quo as it emerged. Remarkably it was such theorists upon whom those debating the future of the caliphate after its abolition in 1924 relied,[37] there being little new thinking on the subject to have gained acceptance amongst the overwhelming majority of learned Muslims during the intervening period.[38]

---

[33] Hawting, 1986, pp. 12-14.
[34] Black, 2001, p. 87.
[35] Ibid., p. 89.
[36] Enayat, 1982, pp. 10-11.
[37] Ibid., p. 14.
[38] Rashid Rida was undoubtedly an exception, though he too began with the theories of Mawardi and Ghazzali. Enayat, 1982, Ch. 3. 'Ali 'Abd-al-Raziq's view, on the other hand, that politics was no business of Islam, was rejected as heresy. Enayat, 1982, pp. 62-66. Although 'Abd-al-Raziq was attacked on doctrinal grounds it seems likely that his views were found unacceptable because they were thought to serve the interests of European imperialism. Hourani, 1983, p. 189.

In due course the caliphate was appropriated by the Ottoman Sultans, though the occasion and manner of the original transfer from the last, nominal, Abbasid caliph in AD 1517 is the subject of conjecture, claim and counter-claim. The legitimacy of the Ottoman caliphate was vulnerable from the outset it being the first dynasty to attain the office which could not reasonably claim Qurayshite descent. This factor would not prove critical until the late 19th and early 20th century when certain Arabs, aided and abetted by a European imperial power, began to propose an alternative.

As Hamid Enayat concludes: 'So far as the Sunni thinking on the Caliphate enjoyed any continuity and sequence, one can detect in it a pronounced sense of realism, an eagerness to adjust theory to practice.'[39] Notwithstanding the endless tailing of practice by theory, a number of customs and validating procedures have come to be associated with the legitimate possession of the caliphate. Apart from the criteria of Qurayshite descent and political effectiveness which have already been mentioned there has been also a degree of consensus concerning consultation of the community of Islam and the election of caliphs, though invariably these have been somewhat ritual and perfunctory processes in practice. Other criteria insisted upon by some commentators have included possession of certain relics associated with the person of the Prophet, and effective rule over the Holy Places. The latter came to prominence with the emergence of the Arab movement and again when Turkey lost effective control of the Hijaz during the Great War.

Finally, even though, as Fred Halliday has pointed out, 'The fact that proponents of the religion claim something is no reason whatsoever to accept it,'[40] the evidence of the Islamic theorists cited above amounts to an acceptance that, notwithstanding the supposed duties of the caliph, the caliphate is what anyone powerful enough to lay more or less exclusive claim to it says it is.[41] It follows from this that the caliphate would endure as long as there was a single ruler who could effectively lay such a claim. The historical record suggests that later theorists have invariably favoured past doctrines which best serve a particular regime or candidacy - an observation which will be of particular significance

---

[39] Enayat, 1982, p. 10.
[40] Halliday, 1995, p. 208.
[41] The issue of the relationship between the secular and the religious in Islam has not been taken up here. Suffice it to say that according to Enayat politics was rarely theorised separately from religion by Muslims before European encroachment at the end of the 18th century. Enayat, 1982, p. 3. This is not to say, however, that the distinction between religion and politics had no place in the actual, historical 'Muslim world.' Black, 2001, pp. 38, 82 & 87.

when it comes to analysing the relationship between British imperialists and the local informants upon whom they relied in the course of developing their Islamic policy.

1.05 Issues Arising from the Sources Used

Although the thesis outlined makes reference to the indigenous social-structural constraints imposed on the realisation of imperial will and vision, except for a very brief recourse to secondary theoretical material dealing specifically with such issues, the evidence presented is derived almost entirely from official British sources. Consequently, British archives recording British perceptions of Middle Eastern societies are relied upon to show that the impracticability of a certain British vision was determined by more objective factors extrinsic to those archives. Nevertheless, it is possible to compare the circumstances, discernible from these and other independently produced texts, under which the vision was constructed, with those under which it fell apart. That is, by comparing the exercise of imagination and wishful thinking in the first instance with the less mediated experience of the Arab Revolt in the second, a process in which the producers of texts became increasingly acquainted with the object of their speculation.

In the context of a more extended programme of research in relation to which this thesis constitutes a *partial* implementation the evidence regarding social structural constraints upon the implementation of British policy would ideally be derived from alternative primary sources. Notwithstanding the limitation associated with an overwhelming reliance on official British sources which is accepted as necessary though unproblematic, it will be argued in the main section of the thesis that numerous British perceptions constitute, at least, *prima facie* evidence in support of the view that their intentions were ultimately thwarted by external, objective factors. More importantly, the change in British perceptions exposes their earlier theorising as a less adequate reflection of the reality with which they were about to engage. The failure of the British caliphate policy and the precise manner in which this failure was apprehended will support the conclusion that the world does not automatically re-constitute itself in conformity with the misapprehensions of the powerful. Power may produce both representations and misrepresentations (or alternatively, varying degrees of misrepresentation), but *in the longer run* the latter, although necessary, are likely to prove detrimental to the interests of the powerful. This issue, which is essentially

one of epistemology, will be addressed cursorily in the Conclusion as a matter lying beyond the scope of the thesis.

The alternative is rather stark. As Aijaz Ahmad points out, the problem with the 'postmodernist emphasis on "representations *as representations*"' is that without reference to '"historical and social circumstances"' there can be no grounds for discriminating between representations and *mis*representations.[42] Alex Callinicos has illustrated the dire consequences of adopting a view according to which there would be no basis for preferring 'conventional' to 'revisionist' histories of the Holocaust.[43] Of lesser moment, though of more immediate concern, is the fact that it would not be possible to pursue the second objective of this thesis, outlined at the head of this chapter. Although this thesis is concerned primarily with British *ideas about* the caliphate it also aims to explain the failure of a policy, i.e. an intended intervention in concrete reality, based upon those ideas. Such an endeavour could not be contemplated if one were to adopt the view, for example, that texts may only be apprehended in relation to other texts, or a concomitant position which regards historiography as merely another genre of literature none of which may be evaluated according to its factual accuracy.[44] The remainder of this chapter, therefore, will be devoted to assembling the theoretical underpinnings of a more grounded approach.

1.06 Towards a Dialectical Approach

The problems identified with some of the more obvious approaches to the question of Britain's involvement in the issue of the caliphate may be reduced to two essential features. Firstly, that the relationship between East and West is characterised as being one between *discrete and internally undifferentiated* objects. Secondly, the superficially attractive notion of power/knowledge reinforces the idea of *unilateral imposition* at the expense of more subtle and ambiguous processes. What is required is an antidote to the force of the Orwellian metaphor[45] which underlies such approaches to the subject matter: that of the imperial boot stamping forever on the imperialised face.

---

[42] Ahmad, 1994, p. 185.
[43] Callinicos, 1995, pp. 66-7.
[44] The latter is the position of Hayden V. White. White, 1973.

Even some post-colonialists have recognised that in general the 'colonial cultural experience had mutually modifying effects'[46] which goes some way towards the view that the relationships which constitute imperialism and engender orientalism are sustained *dialectically*. In a remarkably pertinent passage, written, coincidentally, during the first weeks of Sharif Husayn's Arab Revolt, though, it should be emphasised, not with that particular event in mind, Lenin provides a clear application of the dialectical approach to the circumstances under investigation here. The idea, 'that all dividing lines - both in nature and society - are conventional and dynamic, and that *every* phenomenon might, under certain conditions, be transformed into its opposite,'[47] does not force one to characterise a phenomenon as *essentially* Eastern or Western, as *necessarily* either endogenous or exogenous, nor, as *simply* either imposed or voluntarily produced. Above all, such observations emphasise the inherently unstable nature of imperialism. For example, whereas Homi Bhabha believes that mimicry on the part of the undifferentiated colonial subject remains unilateral and occurs solely to the advantage of the undifferentiated coloniser,[48] Samir Amin reminds us that frequently imitation of Europe is undertaken 'in order to offer a better resistance to it,[49]. One might go further and point out that imitation, at least in the form of the modular adoption of techniques and institutions theorised by Benedict Anderson,[50] was a two-way process - Britain's engagement with the subject of the caliphate of Islam being one such instance.

In contrast to the broad theoretical framework characterised earlier as anti-foundationalist, a dialectical outlook prefers a 'relational' approach to a relativist one,[51] where the elements of a relationship are viewed as being mutually constituting within an encompassing totality, rather than simply irresolvably different. In terms of the central question of this thesis, this allows for the possibility that British and Arab views of the caliphate may be intimately connected in some way rather than irreducibly different. Hence the invocation of the need to 'totalise' as an essential part of a dialectical approach to any subject. Accordingly, the notion of an *authentic* caliphate by which subsequent 'alien' idealisations

---

[45] Orwell, 1989, p. 280.
[46] MacKenzie, 1995, p. 11, referring to Bhabha and Spivak.
[47] Lenin, 1969, pp. 178-80.
[48] Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p. 120.
[49] Amin, 1976, p. 300. This 'mimicry' need not be seen simply as the imposition of ideas by colonisers upon the colonised, nor as slavish emulation, rather the adoption of the techniques of a more dynamic and productive society may be construed as a rational response to imperial encroachment.
[50] Anderson, 1991, p. 4.
[51] See Note 10, above.

might be measured is rendered meaningless. In more concrete terms a dialectical approach encourages the historian to consider in advance, for example, that the idea of a revived Arab caliphate may have arisen under a particular conjuncture which blurs the integral and pristine identities of the 'traditions' so engaged. It allows for the possibility that Sharif Husayn was simultaneously a pan-Arabist *and* an agent of imperialism, and that his politics need not be characterised as, necessarily *either* traditional-Islamic *or* modern-nationalist. Specifically, a dialectical approach is capable of producing an explanation in which the British idea of the caliphate is not viewed simply as a misapprehension, but one in which conceptions of it are understood to be under constant transformation according to the exigencies of the imperial relationship. It is precisely such possibilities which will be considered in the following chapters of this thesis. However, it is first necessary to elaborate the adopted approach in terms of theories which are appropriate to the specific combination of *internal* transformation and *external* articulation of societies found within the particular conjuncture under examination.[52] With this need in mind, the sections which follow deal, in turn, with, a theory of imperial collaboration and a theory of structural capacities.

1.1 Theories of Imperialism and their Relevance to Historical Explanation

Although Ronald Robinson's theory of collaborative imperialism will be put to great use in this thesis, it will be argued in the following section his theory of collaboration is not a theory of imperialism as such. Specifically, the ubiquity of the phenomenon theorised prevents it from explaining the particular global changes that occurred around 1880.[53] More importantly, as will be indicated in this section, theories of imperialism which give explanatory priority to certain underlying mechanisms can impact on the range of

[52] Indeed, it may be argued that a dialectical approach brings into question conventional notions of interiority and exteriority along with the presumption of a universe consisting of discrete objects.

[53] A cursory survey of even the most disparate theories of imperialism will indicate that, with very few exceptions, they agree on one thing: that momentous structural changes occurred during the last quarter of

explanations deemed valid in respect of any particular instance of imperial policy. It has been the view of several authors that the problems encountered with Robinson's theory arise largely on account of his exclusive reliance on 'official' sources.[54] In relation to such methods in general, and to Robinson's views concerning the explanatory primacy of official sources in particular, one author writes: 'All that the documents disclose is that the initiative came from [politicians].'[55] Tom Kemp adds that, 'that is bound to be the banal conclusion of any historiography which confines itself to "the documents" and interprets them in terms of the politicians and not in the entire social context of productive relations and class structures.'[56] The implication of these remarks is that the kind of archival sources which form the basis of *this* thesis need to be augmented by some more generally applicable social theory - hence the deliberations undertaken in the remainder of this section.

Lenin's theory has been selected, not because its original elaboration coincided with the onset of the Arab Revolt in June 1916 (though, undoubtedly, it was the same global context which engendered both), but on account of the relevance of some of its implications and assumptions. Significantly, this theory has been chosen in spite of the claim that Robinson and Gallagher, had, once and for all, invalidated 'Marxist interpretations of colonial history.' The latter, according to one commentator, support the notion that 'Victorian statesmen [extended] British influence in [for example] Africa in the hope of immediate economic gain.'[57] The absurdity and ignorance of this assertion should be evident from Lenin's characterisation of 'the extreme extension of annexationist (colonial) policy ... from 1880 onwards' when he wrote that,

> the fact that the world is already divided up obliges those contemplating a *new* division to reach out for *any kind* of territory and ... because an essential feature of imperialism is the rivalry between a number of great powers in the striving for hegemony, ie, for the conquest of territory, not so much directly for themselves as to weaken the adversary and undermine *his* hegemony. [emphases per original][58]

---

the 19th century. See, for example: Addo, 1986; Baumgart, 1982; Brewer, 1980; Kemp, 1967; and Mommsen, 1981.

[54] Kiernan, 1964, p. 265; and, Owen, 1976, p. 215. Owen concludes that, 'the Robinson and Gallagher approach ... severely limits the possibility of establishing any general theory of imperialism.'

[55] Aron, Raymond, 'The Century of Total War', 1954, p. 60, quoted in Kemp, 1967 p. 144.

[56] Kemp continues: 'Naturally nothing can be learned about the inner compulsions of the capitalist mode of production by even the most meticulous examination of cabinet papers.' Kemp, 1967, p. 144.

[57] Fyfe, 1962, pp. 93-4.

While it may be conceded that Lenin's theory is, in a certain sense, reductionist in so far as a dialectical approach 'calls for a many-sided investigation of a given social phenomenon in its development, that we *reduce* the exterior, the apparent, to the fundamental driving forces, to the development of productive forces and to the class struggle,' [emphasis added][59] his approach does in fact allow for the influence of a multiplicity of factors while insisting that some factors are more fundamental than others. It does not, however, as Robinson and Gallagher imply, mean 'drawing a straight line between finance capital and every colonial expedition.'[60]

Of more direct relevance to the explication of Britain's interest in the caliphate of Islam is the single most abiding feature of Lenin's conceptualisation of modern imperialism.[61] This is the close identification of the state with capital which was an essential characteristic of the period under examination. This emphasis emerges as a result of Lenin's (and Bukharin's) observations concerning the acute intensification of inter-state rivalry and competition in the late 19th century which culminated in the Great War. The underlying logic here is that, in order to prevail economically and militarily *vis-à-vis* other states, a state must favour the most dynamic class under its dominion by maintaining the conditions of its successful reproduction and aggrandisement, necessarily at the expense of other contending classes.[62] For the leading European powers of the time the class in question was, undoubtedly, the financial-industrial bourgeoisie.[63] Conversely, the reliance which the state necessarily places upon this class is reciprocated, in as much as the bourgeoisie is incapable, *in the long run*, of acquiring and retaining territory on its own behalf for the purposes of capital investment. This is especially the case under the conditions of intense competition between the capitalist powers which prevailed after 1870. Alternatively, it may be said that, 'the limiting case for the state is that, even if it overrides the interests of particular capitalists, it cannot forget that its own revenues and its own ability to defend

---

[58] Lenin, 1996, p. 92. Although Lenin does not use the term himself the notion of the prophylactic acquisition of territory may be inferred from his work.
[59] Kemp, 1967, p. 143.
[60] Ibid., p. 144.
[61] This had been advanced by Bukharin and was subsequently elaborated by Paul M. Sweezy. Bukharin, 1973; and, Sweezy, 1968, especially Chapter XIII.
[62] Bob Jessop's qualification that 'the "capital logic" approach can only indicate the *probable* forms of the state, and specify the broad limits within which variations can occur without fundamentally threatening the process of capital accumulation' seems a reasonable one and does not detract from the usefulness of the conclusions drawn here. Jessop, 1990, pp. 37-8.
[63] This is so even where another class is incumbent in the state apparatus as was the case in Germany after 1871. This is the conclusion of David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley. Blackbourn and Eley, 1984.

itself against other states depend, at the end of the day, on the continuation of capital accumulation.'[64]

The upshot of these deliberations is that although Lenin's theory conceives of an underlying mechanism which sustains the phenomenon of imperialism *as a whole*, this is not at odds with the assertion that, 'finance capital is not only interested in the already known sources of raw materials; it is also interested in potential sources of raw materials, because present-day technical development is extremely rapid, and because land which is useless today may be made fertile tomorrow if new methods applied and large amounts of capital are invested.'[65] Moreover, the fact that a state has different *immediate* priorities in different areas of the world emerges as a consequence of Lenin's theory and not, as some would have it, as a fatal challenge to it. What is important in limiting the kind of explanations deemed permissible with regard to specific instances of imperial conduct is that, while collaboration of one sort or another may be necessary in all cases, the precise arrangement *sought* in a given instance is determined by the factors pertaining to that particular locale in view of its specific connections to the totality of the empire in question set within the context of inter-imperial rivalry. For example, whether a given territory is, *at the outset*, required for direct investment, future potential, strategic location, or for purely prophylactic reasons (i.e. to prevent another power's acquisition) will determine the kind of collaborative arrangements preferred by the imperial power. Furthermore, the notion of 'prophylactic acquisition' may be extended to include instances where the objective is to preclude another power from gaining control of an institution which is the source of some extra-territorial ideology considered potentially threatening to ones own empire. This, it will be argued later, was the case when Britain first became interested in the future of the caliphate of Islam. While this may have been, in many obvious respects, a unique occurrence, it is nevertheless explicable within the general framework adumbrated above.

The significance of the limiting factors which emerge from Lenin's theory for this thesis is that they invalidate the explanatory primacy frequently given to imperial romanticism,[66] and counter any tendency to overestimate its capacity for self-realisation. If one accepts the basic tenets of Lenin's and Bukharin's theories these romantic inclinations are more likely

---

[64] Harman, 1991, p. 15.
[65] Lenin, 1996, p. 84.

to be explained in terms of the specific collaborative arrangements necessitated by a given imperial context. There is, admittedly, an unmistakable correspondence between the contradictorily destructive and preserving effects of imperialism, on the one hand, and certain romantic dispositions towards subject peoples typical of imperialists, on the other. In Arabia, for example, the British made the distinction between the 'pure,' and politically less threatening, Arabs of the desert who they sought to preserve by 'ring-fencing,' and the hybrid 'levantines' rendered dangerous through their being 'contaminated' by 'progressive' European political ideas.[67] Moreover, imperial notions involving the revival of ancient traditions or the artificial preservation of indigenous institutions of long standing (such as the Arab caliphate) are certainly romantic in form and specific content. Nevertheless, it is argued here that such romanticism arises as a *consequence* of collaborative preference, and, furthermore, that the capacity for the self-realisation of such ideological dispositions is ultimately curtailed by the realities of the subject society. In other words, 'incessant belief,' despite its labours, does not inevitably 'create its object.'[68]

1.2 Ronald Robinson's Theory of Collaboration: An Assessment in Terms of the Aims of this Thesis

1.21 Introduction

Ronald Robinson sought to develop an 'Excentric Idea of Imperialism'[69] applicable to formal colonies and informal empire alike, and wished to oppose those theories which 'for the most part were restricted to explaining the *genesis* of new colonial empires in terms of circumstances in Europe'[70] [emphasis added]. This idea is immediately attractive since it aims to remedy the Eurocentrism of other theories and to dispense with the metaphor of

---

[66] Such is the effect of the popular overestimation, and mistaken reading, of the part played by T. E. Lawrence in British Middle Eastern affairs.

[67] It is interesting to note that this distinction correlates with Aziz al-Azmeh's sublation of xenophilia and xenophobia to a common principle. al-Azmeh, 1993, pp. 7, 9, 10, 19 & 28. See also, Chapter 2, Note 136, and Chapter 5, Note 53, of this thesis. The notion of 'ring-fencing' is referred to in sections 4.2 & 4.3.

[68] William Empson, quoted on, Cooke, 2001.

[69] Taken from the title of Ronald Robinson's contribution to Mommsen and Osterhammel (eds.), 1986.

[70] Robinson, 1972, p. 120.

'metropolitan drives projecting on passive peripheries'[71]. Robinson's central premis is that 'imperialism was as much a *function* of its victims' collaboration or non-collaboration—of their indigenous politics, as it was of European expansion,' and the unquestionable fact that '[t]he expansive forces *generated* in industrial Europe had to combine with elements within the agrarian societies of the outer world to make empire at all practicable'[72] [emphasis added].

The first thing to note, however, is a certain ambiguity concerning Robinson's application of the concepts of 'genesis' and 'function,' which, like his theory as a whole, conflates origins, in terms of an underlying mechanism and impetus, with development, in terms of modes of performance and realisation. That is, Robinson obliterates the distinction between the form and content of imperialism with the consequence that the continuities in its superficial appearance obscure his appreciation of the momentous transformations in the hidden workings of imperialism in a way which corresponds with Said's construction of the phenomenon of orientalism. This allows Robinson to posit his theory of collaboration as an alternative, rather than an adjunct, to other theories of imperialism. Nevertheless, if recast in a more modest form, that is as a *complement* to certain other theories, many features of Robinson's theory are eminently applicable to the set of circumstances under examination here. Furthermore, they offer a way out of the constraints already identified in the methodologies of Said and the post-colonialists whose approaches preclude any theorisation of the concrete mode of articulation occurring between dominant and subordinate societies under imperialism.

Robinson's theory rests on the observation that European effort alone could not have accounted for the massive extension of empire which occurred from the late 19th century onwards. This concurs with the idea, expressed earlier, that certain sections of 'the colonised' actively participated in their own colonisation, and, indeed, had an interest in so doing. The are obvious affinities between Robinson's theory and the situation in the Middle East around the time of the Great War - particularly regarding Britain and the caliphate. For example, Robinson emphasised how 'imperialism ... proceed[s] by combining with local interests and affiliating with local institutions.'

---

[71] Robinson in, Mommsen and Osterhammel (eds.), 1986, p. 268.
[72] Robinson, 1972, p. 120.

Of further relevance to Britain's disposition towards the issue of the caliphate is Robinson's view that 'metropolitan power [was] deployed ... to manipulate, but not to abolish, the indigenous politics of other countries.'[73] This followed from the fact that, in any given instance, empire had to be run as cheaply as possible and was, therefore, 'founded ... on indigenous organizations and built out of local resources in the countries imperialized.' Of greater moment for the investigation being undertaken here is the observation that 'enough [local] leaders had to be attracted or conscripted into transferring the necessary resources and allegiances' in order that imperial business could be conducted safely and local resistance contained. Success therefore depended, in the first instance, on identifying local intermediaries who would be 'pliable without being ineffective.' In practice this meant maintaining local collaborators in a state of dependence which would give them an advantage *vis-à-vis* competing élites, and some protection against the demands of their own subordinates. More will be made of the tension and potential contradiction between the need for dependence and capacity to perform on the part of the local collaborator in the historical chapters of this thesis. As Robinson himself puts it:

> From the standpoint of the collaborators or mediators the invaders imported an alternative source of wealth and power which, if it could not be excluded, had to be exploited in order to preserve or improve the standing of indigenous elites in the traditional order.[74]

The full implications of this statement for any particular society, it will be argued later, require amplification in terms of its internal relational social capacities.

Of further relevance to Britain's engagement with the Middle East in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is Robinson's awareness that there is a 'balance of terms struck between the imperialists and their local contractors' which may be equalised by the subordinate party through the implied or actual threat of national resistance. Although expressed in abstract terms, the notion that, 'the relativity of imperialism to proto- and modern nationalism can ... be measured in the changing balance of collaborative equations,'[75] has obvious application to Britain's relationship with the Arab movement and underlines the precariousness of any imperial collaborative enterprise. This formulation supports Lenin's more dialectical assertion that '[a] national war *might* be transformed into an imperialist

---

[73] Robinson in, Mommsen and Osterhammel (eds.), 1986, p. 270-1.
[74] Robinson, 1972, pp. 120-1.
[75] Robinson in, Mommsen and Osterhammel (eds.), 1986, p. 271.

war *and vice versa*.'[76] Such an outcome might be precipitated, for example, when a collaborating elite is forced by the internal balance of political and social forces to answer to the needs of its own people to the detriment of the interests of their imperial sponsors.

There is a further dimension of imperial collaboration, which remains implicit in Robinson's exposition. Apart from the more obvious competition between imperial powers over potential collaborators, is the less conspicuous contest among the latter to secure mutually beneficial arrangements with one or other of the imperial powers. This corresponds precisely to the situation pertaining between the European powers and pan-Islam during the Great War. Similarly, although as Mommsen and Osterhammel put it 'the choice of collaborators determine[s] the organization and depth of colonial administration, which institutionalize[s] the indigenous political and economic affiliations upholding its authority,'[77] it must be stressed that 'choice' operates in both directions, albeit unequally. With regard to the Sharif of Mecca and the institution of the caliphate this must remain an open question at least at the outset of the investigation.

1.22 The Ubiquity of the Collaborative Paradigm

An outstanding feature of Robinson's exposition of collaborative imperialism is the ubiquity of the phenomena he describes and the wide applicability of his paradigm. The theory of collaboration may be applied equally to practically any instance of empire from classical antiquity[78] to the relationship between Israel and the PLO during the seven years 'peace' which followed the Oslo accords of 1993. So universal are the features described by Robinson, that collaborative techniques are necessarily employed even where the dominant power's ultimate objective is the total annihilation of the subject polity - as they were, to cite one of the starkest instances, in the case of the *Judenräte* in the Lodz and Warsaw ghettos.[79] In a certain sense this is the sign of a good theory, however, its near universal applicability betrays an inherent ahistoricity which renders Robinson's theory unsuited to the purpose to which he puts it: namely explaining the changes in 'modern

---

[76] Lenin, 1969, pp. 178-80.
[77] Robinson in, Mommsen and Osterhammel (eds.), 1986, p. 272.
[78] For example, 'The Romans did not seek to destroy annexed societies; on the contrary, they sought to maintain order and harness their resources with minimum disruption.' James, 1999, p. 102.
[79] Mayer, 1990, pp. 392 & 403-4.

imperialism' which occurred around 1880. Explaining the 'Scramble for Africa' (including the British occupation of Egypt), the transition from the 'old' to the 'new' Eastern Question,' and the partition of China into spheres of influence, in a piece-meal fashion in terms of the breakdown of existing systems of collaboration[80] is bound to obscure more fundamental changes in the imperial system as a whole. Robinson's approach results in a smoothing over of the momentous transformation of the world during the last quarter of the 19th century and of its bloody repartition subsequently known as the 'Great War.'

A related problem with Robinson's collaborative theory of imperialism is that he deftly exchanges one kind of chauvinism for another by replacing supposed 'Eurocentric' explanations with the presumption that European concern over instability in, say, southern Sudan, is not, itself, in need of explanation. Ironically, for a theory which purports to challenge Eurocentrism, it has been said that Robinson's inability to adequately explain the 'new imperialism' results in part from his approaching the subject solely through the perspective of Great Britain.[81] It is for these reasons that Robinson's 'excentric' theory, originally advanced as an alternative *theory of imperialism*, has been adapted, for the purposes of this thesis, and redeployed as a theory of the modalities of empire, that is of the techniques employed by a *particular* empire *given* the nature if imperialism itself.

1.23 The Need for a Theory of Structural Capacities

The case for some reference to the issue of class and social differentiation when dealing with the area of societal conjuncture under conditions of imperialism has already been made. What is now required is an extension of Robinson's theory in terms of a theory of structural capacity, partly for the reasons given above and partly in order to counter the relativist and anti-foundationalist approaches referred to earlier. It is hoped that a version of Robinson's theory extended in this way may be able to explain an imperialist power's failure to make its vision 'stick,' by reference to the inability of the collaborating party to prevail within its own milieu. This, in turn, might be explained in terms of the structural capacity of the collaborating elite or class fraction within the subordinate society. Furthermore, in the context of this thesis, it is intended that the evidence provided

[80] Robinson, 1972, pp. 126-132.
[81] Louis in, Louis (ed.), 1976, p. 7.

concerning Britain's and Sharif Husayn's aspirations for a revived Arab caliphate with the Sharif as incumbent, will dispel the notion of an absolute epistemological hiatus between the discrete and undifferentiated categories of colonizer and colonized.[82]

Finally, in a way which is especially relevant to the case at hand, it is only by reference to the notion of structural capacities that Ronald Robinson's theory of collaboration may usefully be refined to take account of the temporally phased division of labour which takes place within the collaborative process. Specifically, this involves making the distinction between the function of informant in the speculative phase of a given collaborative engagement, and the collaborating élite proper. In both instances account must be taken of their interests determined by their respective positions within their local social structures and the effect this has on their performance as informants and collaborators. In addition, the elaboration of a speculative phase - of central importance to the subject of this thesis - gives rise to the notion of a dialectical learning process involving a bilateral accumulation of knowledge subject to discontinuities in terms of reference, certain leaps of faith and the occasional redirection of effort. In practice, as will be shown later, in spite of the economic and military advantage possessed by the colonisers, they are frequently less well informed about their subordinates than their subordinates are about them. This should not be surprising once it is understood that external collaboration was an essential and customary feature of the tribal substructure upon which the British vision for the Arab Middle East was founded[83]. Imperialists may be omnipresent but it does not follow that they are omniscient. It may be pointed out that even where political intelligence is exceptionally thorough, the internal drive towards imperial incursion and expansion is unlikely to be diminished by the paucity of collaborative options in a given instance: a lesson that may never be learnt by imperialists for reasons that will become apparent. This constitutes further evidence against the supposed 'equipollence' of power and knowledge.

---

[82] See Note 10, above.
[83] Ayubi, 1995, pp. 46 & 53-4.

1.3 Alex Callinicos' Theory of Structural Capacity

1.31 Introduction

As will become evident in later chapters of this thesis, some of the British imperialists implicated in the Anglo-Sharifian accords *eventually* came to understand the failure of their collaborative enterprise in terms of the shortcomings inherent in their correspondent's location within the Arabian social structure. In other words, although less systematically articulated, and frequently tinged with prejudice, British imperialism proceeded on the basis of an *implicit* theory of structural capacity. It is suggested that the central question to be answered here - concerning the rise and fall of the idea of an Arab caliphate in British Middle Eastern policy - may be answered *explicitly* in terms of such a theory in a way which avoids the deficiencies associated with either the textualism of Said or the interiority of Foucault's power/knowledge formulation.

In general terms, Alex Callinicos is opposed to both structural determinism and the kind of 'metaphysical individualism'[84] which assumes that individuals are ontologically prior to structures. In developing a theory of structural capacities he endeavours to show, against the usual treatment of the social context of an actor's performance as part of a *ceteris paribus* clause, that the failure to realise one's desires may be explained by one's class position. However, in order to avoid 'bouncing back' into structuralism, Callinicos demonstrates that the idea that social structures have explanatory autonomy is not inconsistent with an orthodox conception of agency since the latter, he maintains, includes a hidden premis concerning an individual's capacity to act. In other words the powers agents have to act 'depend on and are determined in part by social structures,'[85] hence the term 'structural capacities.'[86]

The starting point of Callinicos' exposition is a treatment of Anthony Giddens' concept of social structures[87] which are regarded as 'the unacknowledged conditions and

---

[84] Callinicos, 1989, p. 91.
[85] Ibid., p. 38.
[86] This expression is derived from the earlier work of Erik Olin Wright, specifically, Wright, 1979, p. 99.
[87] As advanced by Anthony Giddens in, Giddens, 1979.

unanticipated consequences of human action,'[88] in conjunction with Giddens' basic insight that structures are enabling as well as constraining. The dual nature of structure, so conceived, is attractive since it permits a resolution of the conventional 'dualism' of structure and action in so far as structures are not simply a 'barrier to action, but ... essentially involved in its production.'[89] Not only do structures make possible the exercise of power but determine the manner in which such power is exercised. Accordingly, Callinicos' claim that 'structures have explanatory autonomy' is upheld and amounts to his assertion 'that agents' powers are partly dependent on their position in the production relations.'

The flexibility of this basic formulation is evident, since, as Callinicos is happy to point out, his thesis may be expressed in other than Marxist terms 'so long as one accepts that agents' ability to realize their goals is determined to a significant degree by their place in social relations, whether one thinks of these relations as structures, institutions, or whatever.'[90] Such latitude seems likely to be beneficial when it comes to applying the theory to a situation comprising the articulation of social formations involving semi-tribal societies where the applicability of the paradigm of classes based on relations of production is less than straightforward. Furthermore, Callinicos' theory is unaffected by the fact that individuals may have beliefs about, or shaped by, structures since the mere *possession* of powers does not depend on the nature or extent of knowledge about them.[91] However, as will be shown in later chapters of this thesis, their successful exploitation may depend on the quality of knowledge acquired.

1.32 Structural Capacities and Callinicos' Notion of 'Interests'

According to Callinicos a suitable definition of interests is crucial to a complete enunciation of the theory of structural capacities since it is 'the hinge connecting structure

---

[88] Callinicos, 1989, p. 84. This corresponds closely to Roy Bhaskar's conception. Ibid., p. 90. One might add that this 'unacknowledgement' is not merely a feature of lay perceptions since Foucault's treatment of power as diffuse and unstructured deals only with its most immediate appearance and effects.
[89] Ibid., p. 84. It is pertinent that, according to Nick J. Fox: 'The structure/agency dichotomy is not resolved by Foucault, rather it is seen as incapable of resolution: and ceases to be a problem.' Fox, 1998, p. 429.
[90] Callinicos, 1989, p. 89.
[91] A capacity is, by definition, *inherent*, and, therefore, not necessarily utilised.

and action.'[92] This is of importance here if it is understood from a modified version of Robinson's theory of collaborative imperialism proposed earlier that imperialism involves, among other things, a conjoint pursuit of interests between imperialist and collaborator. Furthermore, in relation to the objectives of this thesis, it is precisely these interests and capacities which, it is hoped, will provide the 'objective context' of events, and thereby form the basis of historical explanation. Callinicos' makes use of Antony Giddens' definition of interests which encompasses the view that, 'To be aware of one's interests ... is more than to be aware of a want or wants; it is to know how to go about trying to realize them.' The 'bracketing' of wants in this way is of theoretical importance since, by not reducing them to the factor of social structure, it leaves space for the notion of agency albeit within an objectivist framework. However, the importance of this conceptualisation for historical practice is that, rather than assuming wants, it is concerned with 'the possible modes of their realization in given sets of circumstances' which 'can be determined as "objectively" as anything in social analysis.'[93]

If one accepts Callinicos' argument, it becomes apparent that the possible ways of realising wants will depend on an individual's structural capacities. This is as important for the historian as it is for any imperialist seeking out mutually beneficial collaborative arrangements since a determination of interests will depend on a rational assessment of a potential collaborator's structural capacities which will depend, in turn, upon knowledge of the local social structure. This insight is of crucial importance when it comes to explaining both the course of action chosen by British imperialists in the Middle East at the beginning of the Great War as well as the later re-orientation undertaken as their knowledge became more sophisticated. Of equal consequence to this enquiry is the fact that the local informants who are necessarily employed during the early stages of an imperial advancement have interests of their own. These too will depend upon their structural capacities within the very social structure they are relied upon to convey faithfully to their imperial masters. Naturally they would seek to enhance their own standing within the subject society and would tend to provide information that suggests that such an outcome is either desirable or inevitable.

---

[92] Callinicos, 1989, p. 6.
[93] Callinicos, 1989, p. 129.

1.33 The Congruence of Callinicos' Theory of Structural Capacity with Robinson's Theory of Collaborative Imperialism

According to Callinicos it is largely through the experience and conduct of class struggle that agents discover their interests and the extent of their powers[94]. This could usefully be generalised to situations of imperial collaboration where an imperial power may gain knowledge of its interests through imperial conflict. In a given situation it will soon be ascertained who is most likely to make a reliable partner. In the light of comments already made concerning the delicate balance between capacity and dependence required of a collaborator the importance of local knowledge cannot be overestimated. Secondly, Callinicos names social mobility within a given class structure as an alternative method of realising one's desires, that is, through an *exchange* of class capacities.[95] Alternatively this may be achieved by acquiring a position within a state apparatus. Such considerations are of more immediate significance to potential collaborators (who may effect such an exchange through the act of collaborating) than they are to imperialists; nevertheless, these possibilities extend the range of strategies available to imperialists and their local agents. The congruence of Callinicos' theory of structural capacities with what has been retained of Robinson's theory of collaboration is readily apparent. Between them these theories will form the backbone of the theoretical approach to be applied in pursuit of the aims of this thesis.

1.4 A Brief Chapter Outline

Although, as the title of the thesis indicates, the Great War of 1914-18 forms the main historical context of this investigation, the main arguments of the thesis are developed through, and, indeed, derived from, an historical narrative spanning a period from the late 18th century down to 1926. Chapter 2, in this respect, is more than preambulatory since it gives prominence to what are considered to be the preconditions of Britain's later

---

[94] Callinicos, 1989, p. 132.
[95] Ibid., p. 133.

involvement in the issue of the caliphate which only occurred as a result of the crisis which faced the British empire in October-November 1914. This chapter deals with British perceptions of the caliphate of Islam in so far they impinged on imperial policy, and therefore begins with the treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci in 1774 which marked a fundamental transformation in the Ottoman Sultan's role as caliph in his relations with the encroaching European powers. The effects of the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857, in particular the manner in which it induced British orientalists to regard Islam as an anti-imperial and potentially trans-national political force, are also examined. Of central importance to this chapter is the 'Meccan Crisis' of 1879-80 which established the historical paradigm of a collaborative venture involving the Sharif of Mecca with far-reaching consequences for Britain's relations with the caliphate.

Chapter 3 covers approximately the period of Kitchener's tenure as British Agent and Consul-General in Egypt from 1911 up to the end of 1914 when Britain came into conflict with the Ottoman Empire and *ipso facto* the caliphate and official guardian of the holy places of Islam. It was under Kitchener's influence that the vague notion of a collaborative enterprise involving an Arab, as opposed to a Turkish, caliphate, re-emerged. The 'Hijaz Crisis' of 1914 is used to show how certain British imperialists hoped to realise their vision of a British-dominated Middle East through the manipulation of the central institution of Islam. This chapter will explore how the idea of Arab 'independence' from the Turks came to be conflated, in the British imperial mind, with the project of a restored Arab caliphate functioning as a cover for British predominance in the region.

Chapters 4 & 5 deal with the coalescence of a definitive caliphate policy during the first nine months of 1915. Chapter 4 provides ample evidence for the centrality of the issue of the caliphate in the context of Britain's overall Middle Eastern policy in the early months of the war, exemplified by the attention accorded it in the deliberations and final report of the de Bunsen Committee. Evidence is provided at this early stage for the emergence of a *constructive* caliphate policy designed to facilitate imperial expansion, rather than a purely *defensive* one designed to forestall an anti-British jihad. Chapter 5 examines the relationship between the Governor General of the Sudan and two of his local informants, both Islamic dignitaries and loyal servants of the British administration. Of particular interest here is the use made of what turned out to be rival sources of information regarding Islamic politics in promoting the idea of a British sponsored Arab caliphate.

Chapter 6 will look at the relationship between the idea of an Arab caliphate and the broad thrust of Britain's Middle Eastern/Islamic policy during the period of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence up to the end of 1915, and the final decision to support an Arab revolt. This chapter goes on to demonstrate the reinforcing and modifying influence of a self-styled leader of the *secular* Arab movement on the British idea of a Sharifian Arab caliphate.

The Arab Revolt of 1916 is the subject of Chapter 7 to the extent that it affected Britain's support for Sharif Husayn as the future caliph of Islam. Above all this chapter serves to illustrate the argument which lies at the heart of this thesis, namely that Britain's caliphate policy (and ultimately Britain's Middle Eastern policy) was thwarted by its internal contradictions. Chapter 7 then shows how these emerged as a result of the limitations inherent in the social-structural location of the party whom Britain had selected for collaboration.

Chapter 8 analyses Britain's attitude towards the caliphate during the last two years of the war and up to its abolition in 1924. Of particular interest here is the first use made by British orientalists of more sophisticated continental academic sources in forming a coherent position *vis-à-vis* the institution of the caliphate during the post-war peace process. This will involve a brief examination of the effect of such 'expert' opinion on the British response to the political and social reorientation which took place in Turkey during the same period. The Conclusion to the thesis draws on the sub-conclusions attached to each of the chapters described above and will make a number of more general points in relation to the objectives and theoretical approach established in this chapter. Finally, a number of theoretical issues will be introduced, which, although emerging from the subject matter of the thesis, lie beyond its scope as set out in this Introduction.

CHAPTER 2: Precedents, Precursors, and Preconditions

2.0 Introduction

It should be evident from the brief history of the Islamic caliphate provided in Chapter1 that there is no such thing as a pristine caliphate. For historians if not for Islamic theorists, there can be no single instance of the institution which may stand as a paradigm against which all other instances could be judged as either authentic or in some sense degenerate. It follows that any historical example of the institution must be taken *in context* rather than in comparison with some supposed ideal. It also emerged from that brief survey that since the death of Muhammad religious theory has tended to justify changes in the status quo *ex post facto*.[1] In attempting to explain Britain's semi-official support for an Arab caliphate during the Great War it will be necessary, therefore, to provide some account of how the institution of the Ottoman caliphate itself, as well as certain theories of it, developed as part of the totality of changing relations between the Ottoman Empire and the dominant European powers between the late 18th century and the eve of the First World War.

The history of the relationship between modern Europe and Islam is usually recounted within the context of 'The Eastern Question.' The question itself generally takes this purely nominal form; though once made explicit it becomes clear that the question was a European one, asked by Europeans to other Europeans. The corresponding question formulated from the Ottoman point of view is rarely, if ever, articulated by Western historians, though it may safely be assumed that for Ottoman statesmen the matter of resisting, or even reversing European incursions into imperial territory, would have been an overriding one. It is in the context of such resistance that the ancient institution of the Islamic caliphate first re-emerged as a political force in the modern era. As will be shown later, this idea, once established as an

[1] Mustafa Kemal argued precisely this point in 1923 when he wished to abolish the Caliphate. Enayat, 1982, pp. 53-4.

instrument of politics and diplomacy, becomes available, at least in theory, for the use of other parties in the furtherance of *their* interests being distinct from, and even opposed to, those of the Ottoman ruling order. It is this process of instrumentalisation which will be examined in the following sections of this chapter.

The era of 'The Eastern Question' corresponded precisely with the period during which Islam first appeared as a threat to the modern empires of Christian Europe, and to which Islam, in turn, was bound to respond. This, of course, is no coincidence. Presented thus the issue of the caliphate in modern times may be viewed as developing within a context of mutual awareness and understanding (and, as will be shown, occasional misunderstanding, deliberate deception and malicious misapprehension) between European imperial powers on the one hand, and various Islamic countries on the other. A further aspect of this dynamic is the part played by the instrumentalisation of Islam and the institution of the caliphate both in the relations between the Ottomans and other Islamic and national parties, and in the rivalry between European imperial powers themselves. It is the unfolding of this process throughout the century or so leading up to the Great War which is the central concern of this chapter.

2.1 The Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci and the Origins of Pan-Islam

The emergence of 'The Eastern Question' as an object of historical enquiry is conventionally denoted by the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci, being that concluded between Russia and Turkey on the conclusion of the war of 1768–1774, in which the former obtained strategically significant territory from the latter. More importantly, in relation to the issue of the caliphate, the territory in question was the first such area ceded by the Ottoman Empire to a Christian power, which was inhabited predominantly by Muslims.[2] It is the precise legal form of this cession, as recorded in the Treaty, which marks a new departure in relations between the

[2] Hourani, 1983, p. 38.

Ottoman Empire and Europe by positing Islam as a political force capable of transcending state boundaries and subverting European imperial expansion.

The precise novelty of the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci was that for the first time it *effectively* established the assumption of the title of Caliph by the Sultan.[3] One has to say *effectively*, since a perusal of a faithful copy of the Treaty[4] will reveal that the word 'Caliph' appears nowhere, and yet the implications are unmistakable. The precise manner in which this assumption occurred is an object lesson in the internalising effects of an imperial conjuncture between unequal contenders. The Russians having taken parts of the Khanate of Crimea in the war of 1768-1774, territories inhabited predominantly by Muslim Tartars, had the stipulation written into the Treaty that the Empress of Russia become the official patroness of Orthodox Christians living in the Ottoman Empire. This they effected by establishing the right to build an Orthodox church in the Ottoman capital and, more importantly, by the insertion of what has been referred to as 'a vague and potentially dangerous phrase,' allowing them 'to make representations on behalf of it "and those who serve it."'[5] In return for this extra-territorial extension of sovereignty, and in order to save face,[6] Ottoman plenipotentiaries began to refer to the Sultan as 'the sovereign caliph of the Mahometan religion [sic].'[7] Furthermore, for the sake of Muslim unity in the face of European 'Christian' expansion, religious theorists tended to support this innovation after the fact, thereby internalising a European political 'technique'[8] via a subtle, though far-reaching, modification of Islamic doctrine. In fact the then serving Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam, the true religious authority within the Empire, resisted the Treaty and had to be replaced. It was not until some years later, according to Jacob M. Landau, that the legend was put about that Sultan Selim I had inherited the caliphate in 1517 from the last Abbasid incumbent, and much later still before this was generally accepted.[9]

---

[3] Enayat, 1982, p. 52.
[4] Hurewitz, 1956, Vol I. pp. 54-61.
[5] Anderson, 1966, p. xi.
[6] Landau, 1990, p. 10.
[7] Enayat, 1982, p. 53.
[8] It seems fair to refer to this as a 'European' technique since this had been the state or affairs with regard to the Papacy for centuries. Whereas the Roman Catholic Pope had traditionally claimed an extra-territorial spiritual authority over Catholics regardless of which sovereign state they lived under, within Islam the territorial authority of the caliph of Islam had been coterminous either with that of the Islamic state of which he was head, or alternatively of the emirates affording him allegiance.
[9] Landau, 1990, p. 10.

It should not be assumed, however, that the interaction here was purely bilateral, since the clause inserted into the Treaty asserting the Sultan's jurisdiction over Muslims everywhere, regardless of domicile, was supposedly introduced on the advice of the French Ambassador at the Porte, a Francois Emmanuel Guignard, Comte de Saint-Priest. According to Landau the insertion of this 'pontifical concept' into the Treaty enabled 'each side to interpret [it] differently, either as an Ottoman renunciation of temporal authority or as a recognition of its spiritual one.'[10] Here we see that the factor of inter-European rivalry becomes crucial[11] once the Ottoman Empire is perceived as being weak enough to concede on issues which potentially confer advantages to one power at the expense of others.

Moreover, the unpopularity of the Treaty was the reason that the Sultan delayed ratification until January 1775, that is, five months after ratification by Catherine II, since it was obvious that the supposed independence of the Crimea from Russia was a sham. Finally, in March 1779, on the advice of Saint-Priest, Turkey agreed to the Convention of Aunili-Kavak[12] according to which Turkey agreed to recognise the new ruler of the Crimea but subsequent rulers would have to obtain the formal approval of the Sultan on their assumption of the throne. Although Russia recognised the religious authority of the Sultan over the Muslim inhabitants of the Crimea the contrivance of those rights as a pretext for political intervention was now specifically precluded.

It is significant that it was only after the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci, beginning with the accession of Mahmud II to the throne in 1808, that the Ottomans introduced such symbolic acts as the girding of each new Sultan with Caliph 'Umar's sword.[13] Similarly, according to Bassam Tibi, it was around this time that court historians first declared the Sultans to be the legitimate heirs to the caliphate and later confirmed this new-found authority by inventing genealogies tracing the House of 'Uthman back to the Prophet himself. This was undertaken in order to comply with the orthodox Islamic stipulation that the Caliph be a member of the

---

[10] Ibid., p. 10.
[11] This factor defines the 'Eastern Question.'
[12] Anderson, 1966, pp. 1-8.
[13] Landau, 1990, p.11.

Prophet's tribe, the Quraysh.[14] It should not be supposed, however, that all changes in Ottoman Islam were either consciously formulated, or introduced solely as 'window-dressing' for external effect. Already, by the late 18th century, tax farming had been introduced in order to ameliorate the effects of the territorial contraction of the Empire. However, the attendant growth in absentee landlordism and fief-holding by state officials meant that no party had an interest in improving productive capacity but merely in extracting, or avoiding the extraction of, surplus value by whatever means were available.[15] Quite naturally such an increase in despotism and militarism produced resentment and resistance at the periphery, especially among the non-Turkish elements of the Empire. This, in turn, necessitated a renewed legitimacy which likewise meant 'a recourse to Islam and the *shari'a*,' whereby 'Islamic universalism gave ideological sanction to the supra-national character of the Empire.'[16]

For obvious reasons the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci is seen by some[17] as marking the origins of pan-Islam. There is less agreement, however, concerning the broader relationship between the spiritual-religious and temporal-secular functions within historical Islam. Regardless of what was assumed to be 'authentic' Islam, it was the functional separation of religious authority from political sovereignty as applied to *European Christian states* which constituted the innovation to be found within the provisions of the 1774 Treaty. Regardless of whether these changes constituted a novelty within Islamic doctrine the novelty lay in their new emphasis being the work of a Christian diplomatist. The point, however, is that the Ottomans adopted them freely and in fact incorporated similar terms into subsequent treaties confirming the loss of territory to European powers.[18] One author is more clamorous on the issue when he asserts that the original claim to an extra-territorial extension of religious authority was fraudulent to the extent that Europeans were *intentionally* deceived. If so this would not be the last time that the Ottomans, or indeed Muslims, took advantage of, or even encouraged, the misconceptions of Europeans in order to gain political advantage in a world where the general drift of history

---

[14] Tibi, 1981, p. 52.
[15] Tibi, 1981, p. 52.
[16] Ibid., p. 52.
[17] Landau, 1990, p. 10. 'The origins of Pan-Islam can be traced, perhaps, to the Ottoman-Russian treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, in 1774, in which a clause was inserted, asserting the Sultan's jurisdiction over Muslims (ehl-i Islam) outside the Ottoman Empire.'

was not in their favour. The full significance of this assertion, being made as it was towards the end of the First World War by an Italian academic serving his government, will be dealt with in a later chapter. His claim to the effect that, from a European point of view, the presumption by the Ottoman Sultan of extra-territorial jurisdiction on the lines of the Christian Papacy was subsequently reified into an incontrovertible fact about Islam, should not be doubted. According to Professor Nallino, writing in 1917, it was an Armenian of Constantinople by the name of D'Ohsson who turned this 'error' into a doctrine of European diplomacy through the publication of his *Tableau general de l'Empire Ottoman* in Paris in 1788. It seems highly probable that this was the first occasion on which anyone in Europe referred to the Sultan, in his capacity as Caliph, as the 'Pontiff of the Moslems'[19] and as such marks the beginning of a process whereby an historical claim *might* be mistaken for an essential attribute. However, as the later chapters of this thesis indicate, it was a situation which an imperial power could also see advantage in exploiting.

2.2 The Indian Mutiny and the Emergence of British Islamophobia

Before the mid-nineteenth century, British statesmen were little concerned with Islam as such. Strictly speaking, the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci implicated no state other than Russia, and in even in her case, the effects had been largely reversed by the Convention of Aunali-Kavak. Neither were the practical legal effects extended by Turkey, nor the theoretical implications, generalised by European observers, in the aftermath of the Treaty. All of this was to change, for Britain at least, with the Indian revolt of 1857, better known, no doubt in order to justify punitive action taken at the time, as the 'Indian Mutiny.' In simple objective terms, Britain's

---

[18] Over several decades various European powers reluctantly granted extra-territorial powers to the Sultan as caliph regarding certain Islamic offices within acquired territories – for example Algeria, Tunis, the Balkans and Tripolitania. See section 8.22.

[19] FO 882 Vol. 27, Arab Bulletin No. 102, 3 September 1918. More specifically D'Ohsson refers to the 'priestly authority of the Sovereign.' Note also that Nallino merely implies that D'Ohsson was a propagandist, though, of course, as a Christian he may simply have mistaken the novelty of the Sultan's claim for a long-standing tradition. See Section 8.22 for references to Nallino as a contemporary source after the First World War.

relation to Islam was no different after the Mutiny from what it had been before. As an imperial power Britain was unique in merely having more than seventy million Muslims under her rule. Nevertheless, as P. Hardy points out: 'Before 1857 British policies were generally speaking 'community-blind'; Muslims were considered harmless being members of a 'fallen race' or in George Campbell's words, "the most gentlemanly and well-mannered" of those seeking employment under the [East India] Company.'[20] By contrast, however, the British would later blame Muslim intrigue for the conversion of a Sepoy mutiny into a conspiracy to subvert the Raj.[21] It was upon such experiences that British writers such as Sir William Muir based their assessments of Islam and 'helped to foster the myth of the Muslim as always armed with the sword in one hand and the Qur'an in the other.'[22]

According to P. Hardy the specific Muslim character of the Mutiny was merely apparent and that it was really a Hindustani affair, described as 'a rebellion of previously dominant classes, both Hindu and Muslim, in the North-Western Provinces "who have been rejected by us."'[23] If Hardy is correct, it is pertinent to ask why Muslims were perceived as so threatening and conspiratorial in a way which Hindus were not. The answer must lie partly in the transnational nature of Islam according to which loyalty and allegiance is presumed to be to some transcendent, though singular, source of authority discharged nebulously across state frontiers. This was not the case with Hinduism[24] which was local and unorganised in character.

This factor is alluded to in correspondence later cited in Government of India records on the subject of '*mujahidin*' operating beyond the jurisdiction of British forces:

> The avowed object of the fanatics is the restoration of the Muhammadan role in India by the sword ...They unite the sympathies of Muhammedans all over India and on its frontier. They are supplied with funds from Hindustan. It was ascertained that the Nawab of Tonk supplied persons with money to enable them to reach their settlements. They are believed to carry on correspondence with Bombay, Patna, Bareilly and other Muhammadan cities. In short their

---

[20] Hardy, 1972, p. 60, quoting George Campbell, *Modern India*, (London 1852), p. 291.
[21] Ibid., p. 62.
[22] Ibid., p. 62.
[23] Ibid., pp. 67-8. One might add that such a view suited British rule in so far as hostility to it was explained by the *inherent* attitude of those subjected to it.
[24] The argument that the notion of 'Hindu*ism*' was a British invention is compelling. What is *now* conventionally referred to as Hinduism was in fact a set of local ritual social and religious practices and traditions found throughout the sub-continent which, having no common source of authority, did not constitute *a religion* as such.

> hostile position on our frontier is a rallying point for all those who long for the renewal of Muhammadan rule, an encouragement to the disaffected intrigues of that sect, and a stimulus of the worst sort to the unruly passions of the warlike and inflammable population on our frontier. In a time of difficulty their posture of defiance might not improbably serve as a beacon to the Muhammadans generally.[25]

As Hardy concludes: 'Most Britons emerged from the events of 1857 with the conviction that Muslims were required by their religion to be antipathetic if not actively hostile to British rule, despite the active military assistance of Muslims from the Panjab and the loyal service of Muslim officials.'[26] Firstly, the rule of India was revolutionised in a manner which, it has been argued, created a sectional Muslim interest in India.[27] This resulted in a special fear of Muslims by the British and a corresponding awareness among leaders of the Muslim community, whether appointed autonomously or by the British authorities, of the potential for exploiting that fear. Secondly, India, being the primary source of colonial experience for imperial administrators and British Army staff, became a paradigm by which all other non-settler colonies were both conceptualised and organised. More importantly, in relation to the Middle East after 1882, what imperial administrators based in Cairo, Khartoum, Aden or the Gulf, knew or thought they already knew about Islam, they had learnt in, or from, India. It was precisely through such a process, according to Hardy, that, 'the "Indian Muhammadan" bugaboo in British foreign policy had been borne.'[28]

Whereas the revolt which confronted the British in India was not truly Islamic, the same can not be said for other rebellions faced by Russia in the Caucasus and Central Asia during the 1850's and 60's which used Islam as a rallying cry. However, like the Indian Mutiny, each was a response to foreign domination construed as a form of crusade.[29] Although the Indian Mutiny may have been misconstrued by the British, this was the era in which Islam emerged as a vehicle for opposition to the non-Islamic Empires, as did the possibility, in the minds of imperialists and Muslims alike, that such disparate revolts might somehow be co-ordinated in

---

[25] Quoted in Hardy, 1972, p. 83. Secretary, Panjab Govt., to Govt. of India, 16 August 1862, *Selections from Government of Punjab Records,* Confidential Series no. A xiii (Lahore, 1884), p. 23.
[26] Hardy, 1972, pp. 81-2.
[27] This process resulted in the Morley-Minto reforms of 1906-9 which introduced separate Muslim electorates. These were later acknowledged as being responsible for strengthening, if not creating, a distinct Muslim political identity. See Chapter 7, Note 93.
[28] Hardy, 1972, p.119.

order to effect such resistance on a global scale. Whether this was ever a feasible project is a moot point; what is important in the context of this thesis, however, is the part played by the possibility in the minds of those British imperialists engaged in various attempts to extend their empire during the First World War.

It would be wrong to assume from the foregoing that the Indian experience and the 'Eastern Question' did not interact before 1882. During the Crimean War (1854-56), in which Britain supported the Ottoman Empire against Russia, 'the British themselves had magnified Turkey in the Indian eyes.'[30] Besides which, during the Indian Mutiny, in spite of a nascent Islamophobia among members of the administration, the British had already enhanced the Sultan's standing as the leader of world Islam by obtaining a proclamation from him urging Indian Muslims to remain loyal to Britain.[31] The apparent soundness of this policy could only have been based on the assumption that Britain's best response to the 'Eastern Question' was to continue to support the Ottoman Empire at all costs, and that this would be the case for the indefinite future. As will be shown later, this would remain a well-founded assumption for another two decades at most, at which point, according to one French statesman, 'the Islamic world [would come to resemble] a gigantic drum, the reverberations from one end being felt at the other.'[32]

Elsewhere, within months of the Indian Mutiny but with no apparent connection to it, ideas were being aired in certain Arab speaking provinces of the Ottoman Empire, which would only seem significant with hindsight. In July 1858, in relation to recent local disturbances resulting from an increase in taxes by the Ottoman authorities, the British Consul in Aleppo submitted a report to his superior in Constantinople in which he stated:

> The recent incidents ... have given rise to much talking on these subjects, from which it would also appear that the Mussulman population of Northern Syria harbours hopes of a separation

---

[29] Landau, 1990, pp. 11-12. This has remarkable similarities to the reaction of certain Muslims to the (neo-) imperialism of the 21st century who characterise Western globalisation as a crusade against Islam.
[30] Enayat, 1982, p. 58.
[31] Ibid., p. 57.
[32] Hardy, 1972, p. 176. A quotation of Marshal Lyautey's (1854-1934, Marshal of France).

> from the Ottoman Empire and the formation of a new Arabian State under the sovereignty of the Shereefs of Mecca.[33]

Although the Consul reported that the local Arab population hated the troops of the Turkish garrison 'whom they regard as degenerate Mahometans,' he viewed this local conflict as inherently national in character.[34] The overriding British concern at the time, however, was the maintenance of law and order within the Ottoman Empire.[35] Moreover, no opportunities were perceived, never mind seized, as they would be twenty years later in relation to the office of the Sharif of Mecca and his supposed position within Islam. Such manoeuvres could only be contemplated within the context of a revised approach to the 'Eastern Question' in which British support for the Ottoman Empire could no longer be taken for granted.

Regardless of Consul Skene's gloss, his scant report suggests that as early as the 1850's Arab disgruntlement with certain aspects of Turkish rule manifested itself in the form of a desire for Islamic purity under an Arab ruler whose source of authority was religious and whose legitimacy was genealogical.[36] It would be tempting to argue that the inherent logic here *anticipates* an Arab caliph in the person of the Sharif of Mecca. As far as such logic goes, Albert Hourani is correct when he asserts that, 'to return to the original purity of Islam meant in fact to move the centre of gravity back from Turks to Arabs; if there was to be a caliph at all, he could only be an Arab caliph.'[37]

Apart from the account of an alien observer, who wrote of certain Arabs living in Jerusalem in the 1850's and 60's that they were 'unable to comprehend how a Sultan of Turks, an alien race coming from Tartary, can rightly be regarded as Caliph (successor) of Mohammed the Koreish

---

[33] FO 78/1389 d:20, pp. 237- 242. Letter from J. H. Skene, Consul at Aleppo to Charles Alison Esq. at Istanbul, 31 July 1858. This report is referred to obliquely in, Landau, 1990, p. 38, and is cited specifically in, Tauber, 1993, p10.

[34] Albert Hourani refers to a lecture by Bustani in 1859 which he indicates an awareness of an entity called 'the Arabs' and 'Arab culture,' however this would seem to fall short of national consciousness *per se*. Hourani, 1983, p. 277.

[35] FO 78/1389. See Note 33, above.

[36] These two are closely linked of course, it being a variant of Islamic doctrine which privileges the Qurayshi line of descent. The Wahhabi-Sa'udi alliance of the 18th century was along these lines but lacked the genealogical qualification which would have posed a more direct challenge to Ottoman authority everywhere.

[37] Hourani, 1983, p. 268.

Arab, or exercise the power of appointing or displacing the Shereef of Mecca,'[38] there is no direct evidence that such reasoning was made explicit at that time. To discern, without qualification, the inherent logic of a situation retrospectively solely on the basis of *subsequent* development, is to disregard what is possible in terms of thought and action *at the moment in question*. The same observer seems to have assimilated this intuitively when he added that 'loyalty to Islam is a powerful and pervading principle which keeps in check every other feeling. The Sultan is *de facto* Caliph to the learned Arabs; he is also Caliph *de jure*. As a matter of religious obedience they acknowledge and obey him.'[39] Certainly there is no suggestion that the Sharif himself claimed anything along these lines on his own behalf, nor that he was acting in collusion with the disgruntled elements of northern Syria or other enemies of the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, as will be shown in the following section, this would soon change as a result of a shift in relations between the Ottoman Empire and certain European powers.

2.3 The Eastern Crisis of 1875-80: Pan-Islam and the 'New Imperialism'

While there may be a good deal of consensus regarding the fundamental changes occurring in the relationship between certain European powers and the rest of the world in the period 1875-85, there is less concurrence amongst theorists in respect of the underlying mechanisms giving rise to them. In Chapter 1 certain aspects of Lenin's theory were singled out for their relevance to the issues at hand. It may be inferred from Lenin's exposition of the relationship between the state and capital in certain countries that there is an alternative to the 'autonomy of diplomacy' approach which underpins the conventional 'Eastern Question' framework. Rather, the changes which occurred then may be seen more usefully as an aspect of the development of capitalism operating on a global scale. The conflicts of 1875-80, including

---

[38] Ibid., pp. 266-7, quoting, Finn, *Stirring Times*, (London, 1878), (2 vols.) i. 215. Note that these comments were not recorded until 1870-2.
[39] Ibid.

those involving the Ottoman Empire, may be viewed in this light since it was during this period that a fundamental change of attitude occurred among certain European powers giving rise to what has been called the 'New Eastern Question.' It matters little that some of the powers involved may not be designated 'advanced capitalist.' It is sufficient to grasp that it was the structural changes occurring in the most advanced economies, principally Britain, France and Germany, which characterised the dynamics of the new era. In addition, due to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1868, a gradual shift of focus on the part of the British, away from Constantinople in favour of Egypt and the Levant, was already under way.

Moreover, even before the events of 1879-80, described below, and further reports of dissent within the Arab speaking provinces of Turkey in Asia, Lord Salisbury, as Secretary for India, had already observed: 'In the course of my travels I have not succeeded in finding a friend of the Turk. He does not exist. Most believe his hour is come. Some few that it may be postponed. No one has even suggested the idea that he can be upheld for any length of time,'[40] though as yet he did not advocate dismemberment.

The 'Eastern Crisis' of 1877-8 began, as crises frequently do, over matters of apparently local significance: a peasant revolt in 1876 in Hercegovina and a rebellion against taxation in Bosnia. However, these local conflicts also had a Christian-European versus Muslim-Turkish dimension and the inhabitants of the surrounding provinces were soon embroiled. Inevitably the various powers became interested in the outcome. Eventually a Russian advance on Constantinople led, in March 1878, to the imposition on Turkey of the harsh terms of the Treaty of San Stefano. This proved unacceptable to the other powers. Britain threatened war, and along with Austria secured a new settlement at the Congress of Berlin in which they both obtained former Ottoman territories, ostensibly in return for maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The obvious contrariety of this result reflected the fact that although the rules of the 'old game' were still applied in principle, there was in evidence a new, countervailing tendency towards the partition of the whole world, including Turkey, amongst a small number of powers.

---

[40] Yapp, 1987, p. 8, quoting Salisbury in 1876.

The new dispensation, like the old, had both an internal and an external effect on the Ottoman Empire. Consequent to the initial crisis in the Balkans the Constantinople conference of powers[41] of December 1876 put pressure on the Ottomans to instigate constitutional reforms. No doubt some, like the high-ranking Ottoman official, Midhat Pasha, wishing to avoid Great Power interference, saw the opportunity to shift power away from the Sultan's Palace towards the Sublime Porte. Consequently, a new constitution was promulgated based on those of Prussia, France and Belgium. Given the unevenness of consciousness found within the Ottoman Empire, the secularisation of authority inherent in the Tanzimat reforms was unacceptable to many Muslims who felt that their privileged status under the *Shari'a*[42] had been undermined. Accordingly, the Sultan was persuaded by certain divines to shun friendship with European Christian governments in favour of a policy of uniting Islam against them.[43] A central contradiction emerged which might almost be the leitmotif of this thesis, namely that the supposed 'foreign' nature of the constitutional changes, deemed necessary as a consequence of the failure of Turkey to compete with European powers, were politically unworkable, precisely as a result of that 'foreignness.'[44] Then as now, resistance to what is, at bottom, military and economic domination, frequently took the form of a cultural struggle against supposedly 'inauthentic' influences.

Following the war with Russia which he used as a pretext,[45] the new Sultan, 'Abdulhamid II abandoned the more democratic reforms while retaining those which enhanced the central authority of the state and his own position as the its head.[46] Again, the internal and external components of these changes were intimately connected. One may discern, on the one hand an internalisation of certain external effects due to the relative weakness of the state *vis-à-vis* other states, and, on the other, an outward projection of an ostensibly traditional form of

---

[41] Anderson, 1966, pp. 190-92.
[42] Macfie, 1998, pp. 14-16.
[43] Zeine, 1966, p. 55.
[44] The issue of the supposed foreignness of these reforms, like that of the supposed foreignness of capitalism itself, is one that only arises because certain sectional interests embodied in extant social structures are threatened. Where ruling classes are sufficiently united, provisionally or otherwise, and able to reap the benefit, such technological, social and political innovations are not threatening except perhaps to the subordinate classes and the issue of their supposed foreignness is suppressed. The foreignness is therefore of an extrinsic ideological nature. Compare Malaysia to Iran post 1979.
[45] Kayali, 1997, p. 30.
[46] Hourani, 1983, p. 104.

Islamic authority revived in order to mitigate that weakness. The policy of 'Abdulhamid II may be characterised as reform from above coupled with Islamic revival.

Evidently the claim of the Sultan to be the caliph of Islam, sustained since the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci,[47] had already gained considerable acceptance, since, as Albert Hourani points out, it was given written form in the constitution of 1876.[48] Hourani aptly describes the continuation of this process under 'Abdulhamid II in a way which encompasses both the domestic and global aspects of this Islamic revival:

> Under Abdulhamid the claim was pushed even farther. It was a policy aimed partly at the European Powers: they had Muslim subjects, the Russians in the Caucasus and Turkestan, the French in North Africa, the British in India, and might fear trouble among them if their policy pressed too heavily on the sultan. But it also aimed at reinforcing the loyalty of the Muslim peoples of the empire, a loyalty which might be shaken by the secularisation of law, the spread of liberal ideas, or the contagion of nationalism.[49]

This period saw also the advent of differential ideologies of legitimation within the Ottoman Empire since the Sultan was both a national symbol for the Turks and the source of imperial authority based on Islam for other ethnic groups including the Arabs.[50] As a response to the reaction against reform, Islamisation was not without its inherent contradictions. The attendant dangers soon became acute. Due to the importance of the Arabs as native speakers of the language of the Qu'ran they were deemed the most suitable vehicle for propaganda in support of the Sultan as caliph. At the same time those policies accentuated their difference from, and, in Islamic terms, inherent superiority to, the Turks. Meanwhile, 'Arab intellectuals grew increasingly more conscious of their ancestors' role in the origin of Islam and in early Islamic civilization,'[51] consequently Islam became an essential attribute of the nascent Arab identity. The Islamic policies simultaneously alienated certain internal constituencies whose prestige was magnified by them as well as the 'traditional' upholders of Ottoman territorial integrity. Already by 1875, a 'secret society ... spoke ... of the "Arab pride" of the people of Syria and

---

[47] It will be recalled that the Ottoman recourse to the authority of the Caliphate in 1774 was primarily for external consumption.
[48] Hourani, 1983, p. 106. Landau, 1990, p. 10.
[49] Hourani, 1983, p. 106.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Kayali, 1997, p. 36.

rejected the sultan's claim to be caliph as a usurpation of Arab rights.'[52] Midhat Pasha, as Vali of Syria,[53] later reported to the Sultan that some Syrians were plotting to establish an Arab caliphate,[54] however, the possibility may well have been exaggerated in order to enhance his own powers within the province. Both the Sultan and those wishing to oppose him had to reckon with the relative potency of the external European threat to Islam and the caliphate, on the one hand, and the internal fear and loathing of despotic[55] rule, on the other.

Furthermore, because of such contradictions these Islamic policies entailed a closer control of the Holy Places, particularly Mecca and its local guardian and ruler, the Sharif of Mecca. The potential coincidence of interests between a querulous and insecure Sharif and an imperial power contemplating the possible threat of an Islamic revolt encouraged by another, albeit minor, power would not remain theoretical for long. It would, however, take the effective extension of Ottoman propaganda to the borders of the British Empire to induce a keener interest in her internal Islamic affairs

Whereas the internal effects of 'Abdulhamid's Islamic policies are clear, the question of whether Ottoman foreign policy may be characterised as distinctly and intentionally pan-Islamic[56] remains contentious. Jacob Landau refers to two orientalists writing at the turn of the 20th century one of whom thought that pan-Islam was a force to be reckoned with and another who denied its existence.[57] A similar divergence of views is to be found among modern

---

[52] Hourani, 1983, p. 277.

[53] In spite of 'Abdulhamid's policies, the Empire continued to be integrated into the world economic and political system. The effect was uneven however. It was the social-structural changes which occurred in Syria, at least partly as a result of this process, which made Syria the site of such acute discontent.

[54] Zeine, 1966, p. 54

[55] Macfie, 1998, p. 16.

[56] Landau, 1990, pp. 2-3, provides an interesting discussion of the etymology of the term 'pan-Islam' which although not consistently used in Europe until the 1880's appeared simultaneously in English and German in 1877. However the Young Ottomans used the term '*Ittihad-i Islam*' from the 1860's and in the early 1870's advocated pan-Islam as an antidote to pan-Slavism and pan-Germanism, suggesting the kind of modular adoption described by Benedict Anderson. Anderson, 1983. The earliest recorded use of the term in Arabic is by Afghani and 'Abduh in 1884 in their publication, *al-'Urwa al-wuthqa*, when writing in Paris at a time when the term was already being used by French commentators.

[57] E. G. Browne who believed pan-Islam did not exist and C. A. Nallino who believed that it did. Landau, 1990, p.1 Note that the writings of Nallino were not discovered by British political intelligence officers operating in the Middle East until 1918. He was later quoted as an authority in a series of Foreign Office handbooks on the caliphate and pan-Islam published in 1919 in preparation for the Paris Peace Conference. See Section 8. 22.

Turkish authors.[58] At the root of this issue is the view that 'the idea of political unity is inherent in Islam, whose character is a priori international, no less than a complete moral, cultural, legal, social, and political system.'[59] Underlying this notion is the idea of an autonomous and essential Islam existing, as it were, outside history, a notion which ignores the distinction between Islam's ideal view of itself as a universal total system, and actual historical practice which has varied over time. As Landau points out, both the champions of such unity and Western observers of Islam, have often failed to acknowledge the divisive factors in 'actually existing' Islam – such as nationalism. It is suggested here that if this Western view of Islam is to be characterised as 'orientalist' then so is Islam's view of itself under the impact of European centred imperialism. Thus regarded, Orientalism emerges not simply as a set of prejudices imposed externally on the 'other' but as an ideological effect emerging *conjucturally*. Questions concerning the inherent unity of Islam cannot be resolved here, except to say that conscious efforts to unify Islam, for whatever reason, imply that the supposed unity of Islam's is not pre-given. Regardless of how the question is answered, the presumption and of an *ideal* unity, that is the elevation of unity as the norm, *and* the Islamic response to imperialism, may be seen as aspects of the same phenomenon.

In pursuit of a new Islamic unity under conditions of European encroachment 'Abdulhamid developed an emissarial programme. According to Martin Kramer:

> In the doctrine associated with Abdulhamid, authority was personified in the radiant ottoman sultan-caliph, and amplified by his possession of Mecca and Medina; around his person and his sacred possessions revolved all Muslims. But not all were in close orbit. Most simply faced the sultan-caliph's territories in prayer; few cited him in their prayers; still fewer visited or resided in his domains; yet fewer bore arms in his cause. It was the task of Abdulhamid's emissaries to make Muslims aware of sultan-caliph's prerogatives, and to ask more of those Muslims who already acknowledged Ottoman primacy. Those emissaries gifted in speech travelled widely in the Ottoman Empire and abroad, while those prolific in the written word were maintained in Istanbul at the expense of the treasury. Together they formed a chain of transmission for the message of Ottoman primacy which, by spoken or printed word, was intended to reach the most distant Muslim enclaves.[60]

---

[58] I. S. Sirma who believed pan-Islam to be a cornerstone of Hamidian policy and O. Koluglu who thought it entirely absent. Landau, 1990, p. 1.
[59] Ibid., p. 4, referring to, A. Dawisha, (ed.), *Islam in Foreign Policy*, esp. pp. 2 ff.
[60] Kramer, 1986, p. 6. Kramer also lists various emissaries posted after 1876 including Afghani in 1892 following his expulsion from Iran, Ibid., pp. 7-8.

Of particular concern to the British, no doubt, was the Ottoman consular service in India through whom Indian Muslims[61] delivered expressions of allegiance. It was in this vein that the '*kazasker* Ahmed Hulusi Efendi' was sent to Kabul in 1877 to establish a Muslim alliance against Russia 'by persuading Amir Saghir Ali of his obligations to the Sultan.'[62] British concerns did not go unarticulated. Following Russia's declaration of war on Turkey, the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, wrote in May 1877 to Lord Salisbury, then Secretary of State for India, of his concern that Indian Muslims might suspect Britain of colluding with Russia against Turkey. He advised that, 'did they see us openly sharing the plunder, we should probably be at once confronted by an internal embarrassment sufficiently serious to paralyse all external action on our part; we should not only have to reckon on a *real* jehad all around our frontier,'[63] and later that:

> It is my strong impression, at the present moment, the lives of all your officers and European subjects in India mainly depend on the course of your Eastern policy and its freedom from all appearance of subserviency to Russia. . . There is no getting over the fact that the British Empire is a Mahommedan power, and that it entirely depends upon the policy of Her Majesty's government, whether the sentiment of our Mahomedan subjects is to be an immense security or an immense danger, to us.[64]

Regardless of whether such fears were the intended effect of the Sultan's policies, or whether the possibility of exploiting such fears was fully realised by his government at the time, the policy was, understandably, characterised by European imperialists as pan-Islamic. Pan-Islam, however, presupposed, above all else, a strong central authority vested in a caliph to whom universal obedience would be pledged by Muslims regardless of domicile.[65] Consequently, the British, as the power with the greatest number of Islamic subjects, quickly sought to avoid the potential consequences.

---

[61] The effects of the emissarial policy in India were manifold but generally inconsequential. They included the celebration of Turkish successes in the 1877-8 war with Russia, the popularisation of the fez, and the addressing of the Sultan as *Amir al-mu'minin* and *Khalifa* by Muslim dignitaries, all of which, however, emphasised the trans-national power of Islam. Hardy, 1972, p. 119.

[62] Kramer, 1986, p. 8.

[63] Hardy, 1972, p.118, referring to, Lytton to Salisbury, 21 May 1877, Lytton Papers, Letters Despatched 1877, vol. II, pp. 405 & 519-20.

[64] Hardy, 1972, p. 119.

[65] Landau, 1990, p. .5.

Just as European empires had become global, so had the capacity for resistance in the name of Islam. This is evidenced in the example of the Second Afghan War of 1878-80,[66] which may be regarded as an outgrowth of the Eastern Crisis of 1875-8.[67] The war resulted in part from the exploits of the Russian General, Kaufman, who had been turned back at the gates of Constantinople in February 1878. In spite of an ostensible agreement between Britain and Russia at the Congress of Berlin, Kaufman hoped to strike at India via Afghanistan with the assistance of a popular anti-British revolt. Amir Sher Ali of Afghanistan failed to have Kaufman's mission to Kabul turned back, which, to the annoyance of the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, whose own missions had been refused, was then met cordially. Unaware that the Russians had already threatened to support the Emir's nephew and rival, Abdur Rahman, Lytton decided, late in the year after writing to the Emir and receiving no reply, to despatch his own mission. The Emir died in February 1879 and was replaced by his son Yakub Khan who, being uncertain of his support in the country, accepted a British offer of protection against the Russians. In spite of a treaty signed at Gandamak in the May of 1879, due to a series of misunderstandings the British mission was massacred at the compound of Bala Hisar in September. The British reprisals (considered atrocities by the British press and public) induced a jihad in December 1879 which concentrated its force on the city of Kabul. Although the British succeeded in putting down the uprising, partly as a result of their fear of instability in the sub-continent and the contagion of a religious war, and partly as a result of their belated realisation that Abdur Rahman was neither pro-British nor pro-Russian, they decided to forestall Russian attempts at collaboration by welcoming Abdur Rahman's re-installation as Amir.[68] Ultimately, the British agreed to withdraw leaving a Muslim agent behind, on the condition that Afghanistan foreswore all relations with foreign powers other than Britain.

In spite of an apparently satisfactory resolution of this conflict, the British in India continued to suffer from a chronic sense of insecurity. This, coupled with the discontent felt by the Sharif of Mecca, resulting from unwelcome interference by the Ottomans in relation to their own endeavours to control Islam, produced an ephemeral alliance between him and Britain. In an

---

[66] The summary of this conflict which follows relies heavily on, Hopkirk, 1990, pp. 380-397.
[67] Yapp, 1987, p. 82.
[68] The British even went so far as to arrange a *durbar* proclaiming Abdur Rahman as Amir. Hopkirk, 1990, p. 397.

audacious bid, based on a sound knowledge of global politics, the Sharif of Mecca offered his services in order to mitigate his own, as well as British, insecurities in respect of a threat construed as common to both parties. Although not directly connected with the alliance sought during the First World War, the formal similarities are outstanding, both in terms of the diplomatic and political context and in terms of the mutual manipulation of anxieties. This abortive attempt at collaboration would appear, *on the face of it*, to have been the source of certain misapprehensions concerning the position of the Sharif of Mecca in relation to Islam, and as such deserves closer examination.

2.4 The Meccan Crisis of 1879-80 and the Second Afghan War: A Paradigm for Imperial Collaboration

In early March 1879, before news of Amir Sher Ali's death had reached the Hijaz, the British Consul at Jiddah, James Zohrab, wrote to the Secretary for India, the Marquis of Salisbury, informing him of what he considered to be an unprecedented opportunity. The Consul had heard, via his dragoman, that, prior to the war in Afghanistan, the Sharif of Mecca had received a letter from the Amir in which:

> His Highness [the Sharif] was earnestly requested to state in reply whether, seeing the Government of India ill-used and oppress[ing] the Indian Mussulmans, the Mussulmans would not be justified in taking up arms against the Government in aid of Afghanistan. His highness saw the object Shere Ali had in view in seeking for such a document, and well knowing that a declaration of this kind, emanating from the highest Mussulman ecclesiastical authority, would prove most mischievous, he refused to give the opinion; he replied that, being on the most friendly terms with England, and feeling that England was humane and just in her rule over Hindostan, he could not credit assertions to the contrary, and would not give an opinion prejudicial to her interests. The Sultan having also sent a Mission to him (the Ameer) to convey the disapproval of his Majesty at the policy of the Ameer, he was bound to bow to that opinion.[69]

---

[69] CAB 37/1 1880 No. 8, a series of 19 letters from March 1879 to February 1880, printed for use of Cabinet 11 February 1880. No. 1 Consul Zohrab to Salisbury – Jeddah, March 12, 1879.

Assuming that the consul's dragoman had conveyed the Sharif's intentions faithfully, it would appear that that the latter wished to impress upon the British, (a) the possibility of a properly declared jihad among Indian Muslims against British rule, (b) his own pre-eminence in relation to the Muslim religion generally, and (c) that the Sharif's inability to respond positively to the Amir's request was contingent upon the inclination of the Sultan. Item (b) would seem to be novel, however, this pre-eminence could be of no consequence to the British in the absence of the already familiar Islamic 'bogey' which the Sharif clearly wished to exploit to his own advantage. The letter went on:

> His Highness requested me to inform your Lordship, always under the strictest secrecy, that the state of Mussulman feeling in India, throughout Asia, and in Egypt, is such that a slight event might create wars and raise revolt in all Mahommedan countries. Suspicion, mistrust, doubt, and irritation have taken deep root in the hearts of Mussulmans, and these sentiments, his Highness states, can only gradually be eradicated and confidence restored by the exercise of great prudence and delicacy, and by avoiding any and every measure which may excite fanaticism. The various Mussulamn nationalities are now in close correspondence with each other, and political events are reported to the Chiefs of all; the organization seems complete and the union perfect, and restless spirits are ever moving in search of pretexts to raise complications. Russia is aware of all of this, and she is, through her agents, fanning the flame. His Highness states that he will be happy to give his aid to her majesty's Government in any question in which his sacred position may be of any use, so long as such aid will not prejudice the Sultan. All communication must, however, be made to him secretly, and must not be communicated to any one; by this I know he includes the Turkish Government.[70]

This is not, however, simply the aggravation of British Islamophobia but the linking of this fear with the designs of another Great Power set against the possibility of an alliance between Britain and a power within Islam as an antidote. In other words, the Sharif presented a problem to Britain in order to promote himself as the solution. The Sharif took the step of offering to act as an intermediary in communicating with Yakub Khan and the other chiefs of Afghanistan on behalf of Britain in order to counteract the supposed plans of Sher Ali.

In the same letter, Consul Zohrab, went on to explain, albeit ambiguously, the relationship between the 'Sheriffate' and the Sultanate, specifically that the Sultan could not dispose of the appointment at will since it was hereditary. However, since there were two families, the 'Devi Aun' (line of 'Aun) and the 'Devi Zed' (line of Zayd) both descendants of the Prophet, from whom the Sharif could be chosen, the Sultan could, exceptionally, exercise his discretion. In a

---

[70] Ibid.

manner which could only have enhanced the Sharif's standing even further in the eyes of British statesmen, Zohrab added that, 'the Sultan is acknowledged as the elected leader of the Mahommedan religion; the Sheriff is recognised as the direct descendant of the Prophet and head of the Faith.'[71] Precisely what was supposed to be the difference between 'leader of the religion' and 'head of the Faith' cannot be ascertained, but there can be no doubt that the juxtaposition of these formulations implies a potential cleavage within Islam, an alternative source of authority which ultimately no imperialist threatened by Islam could fail to contemplate exploiting.

Following discussions between the Foreign Office, the Government of India, and the British Ambassador in Constantinople[72] shortly after the Treaty of Gandamak, Salisbury wrote to Zohrab[73] in August 1879 declining the offer of moral assistance while asking him to convey their appreciation to the Sharif. Evidently unsatisfied with the results of his initial approaches, the Sharif contacted Consul Zohrab again later in the year,[74] as he also did a Mr. Hassan Jehur, a British subject resident in Mecca, in order to report an alleged rapprochement between Turkey and Russia. He also claimed to have received many letters from Arabia and Syria opposing a compact between the Sultan and Russia against Britain for fear that Asiatic Turkey would be absorbed into Russia. Furthermore,

> the Sultan no longer possessed that unbounded allegiance and veneration which his exalted position and his sacred character as Kalif demanded. People asked why they should respect and obey a man who could be dethroned by the fetva (decree) of an inferior (the Sheikh-ul-Islam), and why should they venerate him as the representative of the Prophet when the same Decree could deprive him of that sacred power and character? The forced abdications of the Sultans Abdul Aziz and Murad [in 1876] had, he added, given rise to these pernicious opinions. The people now say if a Sheikh-ul-Islam can dethrone a sultan, he cannot be the indisputable Sovereign, and his right to represent the Prophet is not Divine, therefore opposition to him is not wrong.[75]

---

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid. No. 2, Mr Lister, FO to Sir L. Mallet, April 14, 1879; No. 3, Mr. Stanhope, India Office, to Lord Tenterden, April 18, 1879; No. 4, Mr. Stanhope, India Office, to Lord Tenterden, July 25, 1879, enclosing a letter from the Governor General of India in Council, Simla, to Viscount Cranbrook, June 23, 1879.
[73] Ibid. No. 5, Salisbury, FO to Zohrab, August 7, 1879.
[74] Ibid. No. 6 Consul Zohrab, Jeddah, to Salisbury, FO, December 8, 1879.
[75] Ibid.

'Mysteriously,' according to Zohrab, the Sharif requested that HMS *Philomel* remain at Jeddah.[76] One might presume that whatever insecurities the Sharif was feeling at the time were connected with his next proposition. He now offered to send a representative to Afghanistan in order to communicate a message to the effect that, 'Mussulman religion requires England's aid, Mussulmans opposing England oppose interests of their own religion; their duty, therefore, is to submit to England, and follow her wishes.'[77] Similar messages, if approved by the Indian Government, would be distributed by the Sharif's agents, if necessary accompanied by Indian Government officials. Significantly, the Sharif now asserted, more positively than before, that a secret treaty had been reached between Turkey and Russia.

Aware of the ongoing chaos in Afghanistan the Sharif continued to make offers of mediation on Britain's behalf and to assert that Turkey had signed a treaty with Russia.[78] Such offers Zohrab duly passed on to London while taking the opportunity to explain 'the importance of establishing British influence in the Hedjaz on solid bases.'[79] Additionally, and in contrast to the conventional European wisdom of the day, Zohrab describes the power of the Sultan as caliph as distinctly temporal while the spiritual component of power in Islam is vested in the 'Grand Sheriff.' Consequently,

> [Given] the position, as regards Mussulmans, of the two heads being thus defined, it will not be difficult to understand how their influence acts on the followers of Mahomet, and whose word will be listened to most. Any kind of advice or counsel offered by the Sultan will and must be regarded, by those for whom it is intended, as biased by political leanings and views, and must lose much of its power and value, while whatever is said by the Grand Sheriff, being regarded as emanating from the true Spiritual Head of Islam, will, I am persuaded, carry conviction with it.[80]

Although only a consul and obviously not a maker of imperial policy, Zohrab made many comments which reflected, if they did not actually influence, the political changes occurring at the time. He recommended that England cease to temporize with Turkey, albeit on the basis of an imaginary treaty between the latter and Russia, and opined that, 'The Eastern question (if

---

[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid. No. 7, Malet, Cairo, to Salisbury, FO January 8, 1880, reporting that Zohrab has arrived in Cairo and requested that a message from the Sharif be passed on to London.
[78] Ibid. No. 8, Consul Zohrab, Jeddah, to Salisbury, FO, December 22, 1879. No. 9, Consul Zohrab, Cairo, to Salisbury, FO, January 9, 1880.
[79] Ibid. No. 9, Consul Zohrab, Cairo, to Salisbury, FO, January 9, 1880.

we can still so term Asiatic questions) no longer embraces merely Turkey, it includes the whole of Mussulman Asia.'[81] He therefore advocated a protective policy which would 'establish our authority over Mussulmans in a manner which will permit of no wavering or falling away.' The weapon which would be used against a Sultan in alliance with a Great Power opponent, an alliance which, moreover, constituted a unique threat in view of the Islamic factor, he asserted, 'we now have to our hand in the Hedjaz and the Grand Sheriff.'[82]

In a way which would not be taken up until such circumstances were replicated thirty-five years later, Zohrab argued that, 'if we establish an influence by a kind of protectorate in the Hedjaz, we shall be able to guide the whole Mussulman world.'[83] Uniquely, Zohrab ascribed certain characteristics to the Sharif of Mecca which were more usually attributed by Europeans to the Sultan as caliph: 'Were the Grand Sheriff a mere servant of the sultan, like the Sheikh-ul-Islam, his authority with Mussulmans would be *nil*, but being a direct descendant of the Prophet, he is for Mussulmans pretty well what the Pope is for the Roman Catholic Church.'[84] The appeal of this assumed separation of functions, however, becomes evident when he reasons that, 'were he, therefore, placed beyond the power of being controlled by the Sultan, through his ability of removing him and appointing in his stead the head of the family of the Beni Zed, he would be in a position to influence every Mussulman, and of materially aiding our cause in Asia.'[85]

Following discussions between Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, and the Viceroy of India, the latter approved the use of the Sharif's agents in Afghanistan and India.[86] However, Salisbury emphasised the necessity of maintaining the semblance of non-involvement and the appearance that the proposed mission

---

[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid. No. 10, Zohrab, Cairo, to Mr Alston, January 12, 1880.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid. No. 11, Sir J. Pauncefote, FO to Sir L. Mallet, January 27, 1880; No. 12 (under cover of No. 13, Salisbury, FO to Mallet, January 29, 1880), Stanhope, India Office to Lord Tenterden, Januray 28, 1880 with inclosures (all telegraphic): Cranbrook, India Office to Viceroy, January, 12, 1880, Viceroy, Simla, to Cranbrook, January 17, 1880, Cranbrook, India Office to Viceroy, January 17, 1880, Viceroy to Cranbrook, January 27, 1880.

was the spontaneous act of the Sharif.[87] Meanwhile, Salisbury sought confirmation from the Ambassador in Constantinople that Turkey had entered into a secret treaty with Russia[88]. Layard was unable to obtain corroboration of the Sharif's story and in any case thought it highly improbable.[89] As will become evident later, the issue of secrecy over Britain's use of Islamic authority and the potential pitfalls associated with such a venture would be identical to those concerns attending a similar collaborative project during the First World War.

Ambassador Layard then submitted a report based on what he had been told by an informant, though supposedly originating with the Sharif, stating that,

> discontent with Turkish rule prevailed amongst the Arab populations in all parts of the Ottoman Empire. They were ready, he declared, to emancipate themselves from it if they could depend upon the support of England. The Sultan, he maintained, had lost the greater part of his influence and authority over the Mahommedan world as caliph, and all true Mussulmans now looked to the Sherif of Mecca as their real religious head.[90]

Nevertheless, such views were not uncorroborated, since Layard professed to be in receipt of information from a variety of sources confirming the view that the Arabs of the Fertile Crescent were willing to free themselves from Turkish rule with the aid of a power such as Britain. He was convinced that 'there is a secret conspiracy or movement amongst the Arabs against the Sultan and his Government, the head-quarters of which is in the Hedjas.'[91] Regardless of any conclusions drawn concerning the precise origin, in modern times, of the idea of a specifically Arab caliphate, Layard's communication to Salisbury of 9 February 1880 must have been the first occasion on which that notion was connected so explicitly with the institution of the Sharifate of Mecca by an official of the British Empire. Layard wrote:

> The idea prevails among certain Mussulmans, and no doubt extends to the Arabs, that the present Ottoman dynasty is effete, and that it would be greatly to the advantage of Islam to replace the Sultan by the Sheriff of Mecca, who would then be universally accepted as the head of the Mahommedan world and as the true Caliph.[92]

---

[87] Ibid. No. 19, Salisbury, FO to Mallet, February 5, 1880.
[88] Ibid. No. 14, Salisbury, FO to Earl Dufferin, January 29, 1880.
[89] Ibid. No. 10. Printed for use of Cabinet, February 27, 1880. Sir A. H. Layard, Constantinople, to Salisbury, No. 182 Secret, February 9, 1880.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid. It should be noted that the idea of an *Arab* caliphate is not identical to the notion of the Sharif of Mecca becoming caliph. Whereas the latter is not necessarily nationalistic (since it may depend on religious arguments

Of more immediate concern was that the Sultan had intimated to the Ambassador that he was aware not only of Arab discontent but also of the suggestion that Britain might annex the Hijaz 'in order that the Queen, who has many millions of Mussulmans under her sway, might possess the Holy Cities.'[93] Reasonably, Layard speculated that such suspicions might cause the Sultan to depose the current Sharif unless Britain took steps to support the latter. Any steps the British might have taken were, in fact, pre-empted, since, five weeks later consul Zohrab reported that when the Sharif was on the point of sending his two emissaries to Afghanistan he was assassinated.[94] The assassin, who, it transpired, was an Afghan, which Zohrab thought 'a strange coincidence,' was executed within a week without confessing who had instigated the act.[95] Regardless, the consul made the obvious connection when he referred to 'the sacrifice of his life by the late Sherif while on a self-imposed duty in favour of our interests.'[96] That there really was such a connection was further supported by the fact that the Sultan took the opportunity of replacing 'Abd al-Ilah, the brother and designated successor of the deceased Sharif, by 'Abd al-Muttalib, a member of the opposing Zayd family.[97]

It will be recalled that the events of 1879-80, described above, were also part of a more fundamental change occurring on a global scale, namely the advent of 'classical' imperialism. However explained, this period witnessed a significant qualitative transformation of the underlying nature of the competition between the European Powers and a concomitant development in the political uses of Islam according to which Sultan 'Abdulhamid II,

> unable to defend his own territories effectively, and even less able or prepared to liberate fragments of other Muslim empires already under Western rule, ... was drawn to claim a spiritual authority no longer dependent upon possession of the sinews of power. His was a policy designed to conceal weakness, to create an illusion of strength.[98]

---

alone), the former implies, at least, that it is issues of race and nation which are paramount even though they might be rationalised and legitimised in terms of the redemption of Islam.

[93] Ibid.

[94] FO 78/3131 Turkey (Political) Consuls at Jeddah, Jerusalem.- Zohrab. Burrell. Johur. Moore. January to December 1880. Political No. 1, Zohrab, HBM's Consulate, Jeddah, to Salisbury, March 16, 1880, reporting that the Sharif had been assassinated on the 14th.

[95] Ibid. Political No. 3, Zohrab, HBM's Consulate, Jeddah to Salisbury, March 22, 1880.

[96] Ibid. Political No. 2, Zohrab, HBM's Consulate, Jeddah to Salisbury, March 17, 1880.

[97] Ibid. Zohrab to J. B. Malet Esq. Her Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary, Cairo, March 16, 1880; Political No 7 Zohrab, HBM's Consulate, Jeddah, to Salisbury, April 7, 1880.

The link between these global changes and the internal ramifications for the Ottoman Empire is made most succinctly by Hasan Kayali when he writes that,

> what makes Islamism politically important was that it gained ascendancy in opposition to the political interests of the European powers that traditionally had abetted Ottoman territorial integrity. Indeed, Islamism was the child of changing international and economic relations in Europe and the position that the Ottoman Empire acquired in the neoimperialist status quo. It had wide domestic implications which were strongly felt in the Arab provinces of the empire.[99]

It was this unfamiliar situation which facilitated inter-imperial meddling through the medium of Islam and produced, in equal measure, opportunities for collaboration with Islamic parties based on, as yet, unanticipated coincidences of interests. Although not fully realised, the arrangements negotiated by Consul Zohrab were probably the first attempt to effectuate such possibilities.

The formal similarities between the situation which gave rise to the arrangements proposed, and considered, fleetingly, by Great Britain in 1879-80, and the alliance which emerged between the British in Cairo and the Sharif of Mecca in 1912-14 will become apparent later in this thesis. The details of these earlier proposals and the conclusions drawn from them by British imperial officials are worthy of close inspection if only to emphasise the synchronic and contextual conditions of their emergence over what might otherwise appear to be a linear causal chain linking the two instances.

2.5 The Question of Continuity 1881–1913: From Meccan Crisis to Meccan Crisis

As the title of this section is intended to suggest, as far as British views on the question of the caliphate are concerned there are two ways if viewing the connections between the Eastern

---

[98] Kramer, 1986, p. 6.
[99] Kayali, 1997, pp. 31-2.

Crisis of 1875-80 (broadly conceived) and the eve of the Great War: either as continuous development, or as the reproduction of contexts which evoke correspondingly similar responses. It is maintained here that it is important to avoid a pernicious form of anthropomorphism, namely the fallacy of treating such categories as 'The British,' or even the aggregate of 'British imperialists,' as coherent subjects whose careers span the centuries. Such an approach is frequently supplemented by what might be called a 'viral' theory of ideology which seemingly obviates the need for identifying the real connections in modes of thought.[100]

As regards such direct biographical links between these two sets of events there are two prime contenders. The first is Herbert Horatio Kitchener who gained fame as the avenger of General Gordon in the Sudan and whose career evolved predominantly in the Middle East. His role was pivotal at the outset of the 1914-1918 war in establishing an alliance between Britain and the Arabs centred on the Sharif of Mecca as a candidate for the caliphate. Significantly, Kitchener's Middle Eastern career began under Layard during the crisis of the late 1870's. However, his position was a relatively minor one and there is no evidence, direct or indirect, that he was aware of Consul Zohrab's advocacy of a British backed caliph vested in the institution of the Sharifate of Mecca.[101]

The second is Wilfred Scawen Blunt who was certainly associated *in some way* with the events of 1879-80. Although Blunt lived through the war and was well connected with the statesmen of the late Victorian era he was very much an outsider, an anti-imperialist even, [102] and in no way instrumental in the politics and diplomacy of the later period. It has been

---

[100] Contrary to the notion of 'intertextuality' espoused by Edward Said, the view taken here is that determinant 'textual' connections are ultimately human connections since it is only people, and not books, which are capable of intentional action. See further references in Section 1.02 and in the Conclusion to this thesis.

[101] Having been assigned to the Palestine Exploration Fund from 1874 to 1878 and after undertaking similar work in Cyprus for one year Kitchener was transferred to the post of military Vice-Consul at Kastamonu in Northern Anatolia in the summer of 1879 where he remained until March 1880. There he reported to Sir Henry Layard, ambassador to Constantinople, and was originally supposed to aid the implementation of reforms designed to enhance Turkey's defence against Russia, pursuant to the Congress of Berlin. He returned to the Survey for Cyprus for two years before continuing his career in Egypt and the Sudan. Magnus, 1961, p. 40, and, Pollock, 2001, Ch. V. The Consular files for the period include no correspondence between Kitchener and Layard, except on the most mundane matters and in any case Kitchener was not involved in political intelligence at that time. It is possible that Kitchener learned of the intrigue at Mecca at a later date but even his private archive, PRO 30/57, gives no indication of this. However, considerations such as these cannot be conclusive since Kitchener was notably circumspect on such matters throughout his life.

suggested, nevertheless, that through his numerous contacts with various Muslim and Arab theorists, Blunt was responsible for the genesis of the idea of an Arab caliphate among Arabs themselves. It is this claim which will now be examined.

Sylvia Haim, writing in 1955, identifies a number of similarities between what Blunt advocates as a remedy for the supposed ills of Islam, in his book *The Future of Islam*, published in 1881, and those ideas espoused later by the influential Arab Islamist, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, in his own book *Umm al-qura*. Certainly, Kawakibi, like Blunt, anticipated the fall of Constantinople and held that Islam would become a better religion for being relieved of its secular responsibilities. On a more practical level, both men advocated an Arab caliphate in Mecca as the centre of a new religious system, due to its remoteness and poverty which would 'protect it from the ambitions of competitive neighbours,'[103] including, presumably, imperial powers. Notions of the purity of the bedouins as the essential Muslims and bearers of the language of the Qur'an betray a romanticism whose content is identical to that of many imperialists, and illustrates how identical ideological content may be assimilated by proto-nationalists and their imperial detractors for quite different, though related, reasons.

While the similarity between al-Kawakibi's ideas, as summarised by Haim, and those expressed in Blunt's *The Future of Islam* may not be doubted, that is insufficient reason for agreeing with Haim's assertion that,

> a pious Muslim as [Kawakibi] no doubt was, he unconsciously adopted all Western fallacies about the temporal and spiritual powers of he caliph, and carried the distinction so far that he justified through it the setting up of an Arabian caliphate.[104]

Regardless of the suggestion that al-Kawakibi's adoption was unconscious, an argument for which Haim provides no support whatsoever, one might question the implication that the separation of the spiritual from the temporal powers of the caliph was, at least on Blunt's part,

---

[102] Edward Said refers to Blunt as unusual since, although he was an orientalist imbued with classically orientalist ideas, he was neither afraid of, nor hostile to, the Middle East. Said, 1985, p. 237.
[103] Haim, 1955, p. 133.
[104] Ibid., p. 136.

based on a misapprehension about Islam.[105] As Haim seems to acknowledge later, al-Kawakibi, like Blunt, *consciously and positively* advocated a 'revolutionary change in the nature of the caliphate from being both a spiritual and temporal power, to being a kind of papacy'[106] in order that Islam might redeem its position in the world in the face of changing circumstances. While the actual 'spiritual' role of the Ottoman caliph may have been negligible in comparison to that of the earliest caliphs, a fact recognised by al-Kawakibi, it should be recalled that from the late 18th century, Ottoman caliphs had officially assumed such a role at least in their dealings with Muslim populations falling under European domination. This development, both Blunt and al-Kawakibi believed, ought to have been eagerly embraced by Islam. What they each advocated was in fact a logical progression of the changes which had already occurred in the caliphate: that is a displacement of political sovereignty by spiritual 'reach' in the face of European encroachment.

As we shall see later similar ideas to those expressed by al-Kawakibi and Blunt were eventually expounded by leaders of the Arab movement and by other parties wishing to collaborate with them. This is not to argue, however, that there was *necessarily* an actual transfer of such ideologies from one such party to another. It may be argued that their general currency is a function of their usefulness to anyone who had both an interest and a capacity for an effective intervention in history on the basis of them. In other words the apparent possibilities for change embodied in these idea were real in so far as they emerged immanently from the new circumstances. There is, then, a certain Eurocentrism in the contention that such thoughts were the invention of a particular individual such as Blunt, upon whom all other apologists were ultimately dependent.

The question of Blunt's role in the emergence of the idea of a revived Arab caliphate has already been examined in some detail by Marten Kramer. A critical review of the latter's account, therefore, is a prerequisite to answering the questions raised here concerning the

---

[105] This is in distinct contrast to Consul Zohrab's advocacy of a caliphate in Mecca under British protection, which was quite definitely based on a misapprehension concerning the historical nature of the caliphate in Islam.
[106] There is, admittedly, a certain ambiguity in the writings of Haim over the use of the word 'Islam,' which is used to refer both to the religion as espoused by its adherents, as well as the geographical domain of that part of the world in which Islam has predominated. Consequently, such writings lack the distinction provided by, for example, the terms 'Christianity' and 'Christendom.'

currency of the idea. According to Kramer, Blunt and his wife had travelled extensively in Arabia and the Middle East returning to England in 1879, apparently convinced that the Turks were responsible for the decline of Islam which, they believed, could only be reformed under Arab guidance. Two possible sources of the idea, both acquaintances of the Blunts, are rejected as unlikely by Kramer: one being the Iranian minister to London whose writings indicate no interest in Arabs or the idea of an Arab caliphate, and the other, a former Syrian-Catholic priest from Diyarbekir who resided in London from 1874. The latter, John Louis Sabunji, however, was not critical of the Ottoman claim to the caliphate until January 1881 by which time, Kramer asserts, Blunt had already suggested the possibility of an Arab caliphate under British protection to both Prime Minister Gladstone and certain members of the Foreign Office, with whom he had personal contact.[107]

However, Blunt's own account records that on 8 July 1880 he conveyed to Gladstone the idea 'that the Caliphate was not necessarily vested in the House of Othman,'[108] which does not amount to the advocacy of an Arab caliphate. What Blunt does say, however, is that when he met Sir Charles Dilke, Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, on 17 July, the latter's

> questions were plain and to the point, and, once understood, he wrote the draft of a despatch to Goschen at Constantinople [Ambassador Layard's replacement], referring me for further details to Tenterden (the permanent Head of the Foreign Office), *and I am now* full of the notion of going to Arabia and heading a movement for the restoration of the Arabian Caliphate. [emphasis added]

It is important to note the ambiguity here and the distinct possibility that, although no doubt already moving in that direction, he may only have arrived at the solution of an Arab caliphate, *as a result* of this meeting.[109] Kramer offers two further alternatives sources of the notion: one a publicist active before July 1880 and the other a contact made some months later. The first was an Indian Government administrator by the name of G. C. M. Birdwood, also an acquaintance of Sabunji, who had expressed a preference for a caliphate vested in the Sharifate of Mecca rather than the Sultans of Constantinople. These views were articulated in

---

[107] Kramer, 1986, p. 12, referring to Blunt's, *Secret History*, 1907, p. 67.
[108] Blunt, 1907, p. 88-9, quoting extracts from his own diary for that day.
[109] Hitherto, according to Blunt's own account, he had only argued for the independence of certain parts of Turkey in Asia, questioned the Sultan's entitlement to the caliphate and at most hinted at an alternative. Blunt, 1907, pp. 80-1, 86-7& 88-9.

a series of letters in *The Times* throughout 1877, his main concern being the loyalty of Indian Muslims, 'a loyalty which could be secured for Great Britain through the transfer of the caliphate from potentially hostile to pliant hands.'[110] Though his concern was not new, his proposed solution certainly was. Kramer concedes that nowhere does Blunt refer to Birdwood's correspondence in *The Times*.[111]

A more likely contender 'hitherto unappreciated,'[112] according to Kramer, is James Zohrab, British Consul in Jiddah. The Blunts travelled to Arabia via Jiddah in the winter of 1880-81. Blunt described his own mission thus:

> I had an idea that among the Wahhabis I might find a teacher who would give me the Arabian as opposed to the Ottoman view of Islam, and that I might devise with him a movement of reform in which I should suggest the political, he the religious elements.[113]

The origins of Zohrab's own advocacy of a caliphate at Mecca under British protection has already been chronicled at some length. It may be recalled that this occurred for the first time in late 1879 or early 1880, and also that Ambassador Layard, though ultimately relying on the same Arab sources, simultaneously relayed back to London the currency of such propositions among certain Arabs associated with the Sharif of Mecca - ideas of which, moreover, the Sultan was already aware. It is also worthy of note that both parties submitted their reports to Salisbury at the Foreign Office. It is *equally* likely therefore, given the relative ubiquity of such notions before Blunt's meeting with the Prime Minister in mid 1880, and before he met Zohrab in Jiddah,[114] that his contacts at the Foreign Office were the source rather than the beneficiary of his ideas. Given these facts, Blunts memorandum to the Foreign Office in late 1880 advising that 'the position of England might assume of Protectress of the Caliphate

---

[110] Kramer, 1986, p. 13, referring to letters in *The Times*, 25 June 1877, 9 July 1877 & 15 October 1877.

[111] Interestingly, an Arabist by the name of C. P. Badger wrote in response to Birdwood that the Sharif had neither spiritual nor political influence beyond his own district and was therefore unlikely to be thought a suitable candidate for caliph by Muslims. Kramer, 1986, p. 17. Unfortunately for the British Middle Eastern establishment during the Great War, for reasons which constitute the central subject matter of this thesis, this would remain the case even after a great deal of money, political capital and prestige had been invested in the Sharifian caliphate project.

[112] Kramer, 1986, p. 13.

[113] Ibid., referring to Blunt's *Secret History*, 1907, p. 65.

[114] Kramer, 1986, p. 13, n. 18, describing Zohrab's despatch of December 23, 1880, in which he reports receiving the Blunts. Kramer also cites letters from Zohrab to the Blunts written during the first half of 1881, but makes no reference to contact between them before their meeting at Jiddah.

would assure to her whatever forces Islam can still command. This is the only solution which could assure India permanently to her,'[115] is revealed as a superfluity since the same recommendations had already been made by Consul Zohrab some months earlier.[116] It may be that Blunt's reading back of suggestions already familiar to the Foreign Office was simply a means of indulging and legitimising his own byronic romanticism towards the Arabs by locating a possible coincidence of interests that he might exploit. Of equal importance, in relation to Haim's argument, is that the ideas expressed here were already something of a commonplace among certain Arab parties even before Zohrab espoused them.

Finally, after briefly promoting his ideas concerning the future of the caliphate, Blunt realised that there was little support for an Arab caliphate among Muslims generally and by early 1884 ceased propagandising entirely. Ironically in view of what was to come, Islamic theorist and reformer, Jamal ad-din al-Afghani, advised Blunt at a meeting in London in January 1883 that the Sultan was as popular as ever in India because of the prevalence of rumours concerning British designs on the Hijaz. To Afghani, at least, what would later emerge as the central contradiction of Britain's wartime caliphate scheme thirty years later was already apparent – namely that British meddling in Islam by its very nature was bound to fail.

For those who favour the linear diffusion model, their argument is not complete without adumbrating the full lineal descent of an idea. The purpose of these comments is to emphasise, firstly, that Blunt was not the originator of the idea of a revived Arab caliphate during the late 19th century, and secondly, that, in spite of an ongoing dissatisfaction with the Ottoman Sultan as caliph among certain small groups of Arabs, there was no continuity between Blunt's advocacy of an Arab caliphate and later support for it in connection with the Sharif of Mecca during the First World War. This applies equally to British intelligence officers stationed in Cairo and Arab nationalists in Syria. Notwithstanding the fact that certain of Blunt's ideas were shared by Kawakibi and later disseminated in the pages of Muhammad 'Abduh's and

---

[115] Kramer, 1986, p. 12. Referring to Blunt's *Secret History*, p. 67.

[116] It is surprising that Kramer does not allow the possibility of such conclusions himself, since he cites among others, the crucial letter from Zohrab to Salisbury of January 9, 1880 (See notes 78 & 79, above). Kramer does not, however, refer to British cabinet papers, in particular CAB 37/1 1880, No.8 & No. 10 (See note 89, above) which include the dispatches of Ambassador Layard.

Rashid Rida's journal, *al-Manar*,[117] the 'revival' of such ideas cannot be explained by the part played by Wilfred Scawen Blunt. Rather such ideas were immanent and depended for their emergence and re-emergence upon the perception of interests and the presentation of opportunities for their realisation. It was certain historical conditions which gave rise to the inherent logic, whose starting point was the diminishing secular authority of the predominant Muslim state upon which the supposed unity of Islam depended. Given that at a certain point this process appeared to be irreversible, a range of possible remedies were considered. These were not infinite in number; the most conspicuous option being a recourse to the specifically religious authority of the caliph, as distinct *and conceivably separable* from the secular authority of the sultan-caliph, which could transcend state boundaries while at the same time accommodate other national sovereignties. This then raised the possibility of an alternative, as well as purely spiritual, caliphate as an instrument which might be used by Islamic and imperial powers alike. Conceived in this light, there is no need to locate any direct continuity between the Meccan crisis of 1879-80 and that which would occur in 1913-14.

2.6 The Intensification of Imperial Rivalry in the Middle East: Islam and the 'Prophylactics of Ideology'

At the political level the inner logic of the 'new' imperialism was driven, in part, by the emergence of imperial powers whose economies were fast catching up with Britain's and who soon began to seek their own 'place in the sun.'[118] In other words Britain was no longer alone and her ruling classes could no longer debate idly the choice between direct annexation and informal control of overseas territory. The new imperative was one which has been described as 'prophylactic acquisition,' that is, the extension of empire in order to preclude the extension of rival empires. The turn of the twentieth century saw Britain's entry into the system of

---

[117] Published in Cairo from 1898. Hourani, 1983, p. 226.
[118] This phrase was coined quite late in the game by Kaiser Wilhelm II in a speech at Hamburg, Germany on 21 August 1911. Williams, 1975, p. 436.

continental alliances[119] which she had hitherto eschewed, and the end of her so-called 'splendid isolation'[120].

At the centre of this alliance system was the Middle East, in particular Arabia where imperial designs converged, and where the British route to India jangled with the main thrust of Germany's '*Mitteleuropa*' and '*Drang nach Osten*'[121] policies. The latter were potentially in conflict with Russia's atavistic tendency to extend southwards, as well as the relatively limited designs of France and Italy in the region, not formally acknowledged in any treaty or alliance. By 1914, following the partition of Africa, with the exception of Ethiopia, the Arab and Ottoman Middle East remained the only area on the planet which had not been formally occupied, partitioned into zones of interest, or expressly designated as a buffer zone. Given the logic of the underlying process it would have been natural to assume that any future inter-imperial war would be concentrated on the Ottoman Empire. The focus of interest, however, was no longer Constantinople. Since the opening of the Suez Canal this had shifted southwards to Cairo[122] which, due to the imperatives of imperial defence,[123] and the extraordinary influence of men like Lord Cromer[124] and his successors, had become the base for British regional expansion and influence. Consequently, Cairo gradually came to be seen as the capital of a putative viceroyalty on the scale of India.

---

[119] In particular the alliances established between Britain and France in 1903 and 1904 which guaranteed Britain's position in Egypt as far as other European powers were concerned, and the Anglo-Russian alliance of 1907, which, among other things, confirmed Afghanistan's status as a buffer between their respective empires, and effectively partitioned Persia into two non-contiguous zones of interest.

[120] Usually denoted by the signing of a treaty with Japan in August 1902, guaranteeing the independence of China and Korea one month after Lord Salisbury's retirement as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. This followed Lord Salisbury's upholding of isolationism and rejection of an Anglo-German alliance in May 1901. According to his daughter the phrase 'splendid isolation' was first used by him, in a speech in November 1896, in connection with the 'Eastern Question' and was meant ironically as 'a rebuke to the self-righteousness of his compatriots' who had criticised Russia's and Austria's refusal to engage in punitive action against the Turks which he had proposed in connection with the Armenian massacres. Cecil, 1932, pp. 85-6. Notwithstanding the above, the phrase is used here to in the sense in which it is more popularly understood.

[121] The second was an extension of the first and refers to the contiguous extension of German political and commercial influence towards the Middle East and India. Fisher, 1999, pp. 27-8.

[122] Khalidi, 1980, p. 12.

[123] It was in 1902 that a cabinet sub-committee, the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) was established in order to ensure the application of this very logic to what was already a global empire.

[124] Marlowe, 1970, pp. 302-3. Marlowe notes that Cromer was in Egypt longer than any viceroy in India and was, likewise, more closely identified with Egypt than any viceroy was with India and suggests that Cromer's views had more authority in London than any Viceroy's.

Salisbury may have been one of the first Britons to anticipate the demise of the Ottoman Empire due to internal unrest.[125] But in spite of Britain's unilateral involvement in its dismemberment with the occupation of Cyprus and Egypt in 1878 and 1882 respectively, he did not actually discuss partition with another power until 1895.[126] However, possibly due to his experiences of 1879-80, Salisbury had already expressed his expectation of the emergence of an alternative Caliphate in Arabia. When discussing the souring of relations between Britain and the Sultan of Turkey with Sir William White, the Ambassador at Constantinople, he wrote:

> We have shewn that we can govern Mahomedans so as to make them prosperous and contented and that on our side of the Red Sea. On the other side of the Red Sea – in Arabia – people have begun to talk and move, and to ask themselves whether eternal misgovernment by Turks is their irrevocable doom. And Arabia is the terror of the Sultan's dreams – the joint in his armour: because it is in Arabia that some day an opposition Commander of the Faithful *will be manufactured*. If my view is right, I cannot comfort you with the hope of an early restoration of your popularity, though the Sultan may think a certain amount of dissimulation respectable. The English are the only people who have shewn that they can conduct Mahomedan communities – in India and Egypt – to prosperity and internal security without meddling with their religion; and to the Sultan, to whom his position as the first Moslem of the world is everything, this rivalry is both exasperating and alarming. [emphasis added][127]

While this constitutes a legitimisation and rationalisation of possible future British rule over Muslim countries it does not amount to the positive advocacy of an Arab Caliphate in pursuance of that end. Rather, it views the emergence of such an entity as practically inevitable. It would take the re-emergence of Islam as an acute threat to the empire for these two possibilities to be combined into a coherent scheme for the extension of empire in the Middle East. This is not to say, however, that Islam was in no sense a threat during the intervening years. In fact the 'bugaboo'[128] of Islam intensified as empires continued to extend into the territories hitherto unoccupied by European powers.

---

[125] See note 41, above

[126] Salisbury discussed partition with Kaiser Wilhelm II while visiting Cowes in August 1895 though there is some disagreement as to who proposed it first. Anderson, 1966, p. 256.

[127] Cecil, 1932, pp. 388-9. Letter to Sir William White (Ambassador at Constantinople since 1887), September 14, 1891.

[128] See note 28, above.

As early as 1881-2 the Mahdi of the Sudan declared a jihad against the British[129] and with his successors was later able to sustain an anti-imperialist war which occupied the British for the best part of a decade. It was with Britain's first incursion into solidly Muslim territory that they discovered that the threat of Islam was not merely the stuff of paranoia. As if to prove his utter disregard of British hegemony in the region the Mahdi's successor suggested that Queen Victoria convert to Islam.[130] Simultaneously the British in Egypt were bothered by another anti-imperialist fighting in the name of Islam, Muhammad bin 'Ali Es-Sanussi, who promulgated his own doctrine permitting him to claim the caliphate should the Sultan deviate from his own doctrines. His son did in fact adopt the title of 'Khalifa' on his father's death. Reginald Wingate, as Kaimakam of the Egyptian army, was sufficiently impressed by 'the Senussi' (as he was generally known) to suggest to Cromer an accommodation with him, within the framework of Egyptian government.[131] Wingate's propensity for such adaptations would become his hallmark during the First World War when he became one of the first to champion, and then to abandon, a policy of collaboration based on the Sharif of Mecca as caliph. It was perhaps the formative experiences of Wingate and Kitchener which made them more willing than many others to interfere in Islamic politics and to attempt to divert certain indigenous tendencies to Britain's advantage. There was, in addition, a more populist dimension to the spectre of an Islamic threat: when 'the Senussi' shifted his theatre of operations to the Sudan following the British victory over Mahdism, the *Daily Express* referred to his army as a force 'which threatened civilisation.'[132]

It was during the 1890's, however, that a new factor compounded the fear of Islam in the British Government: the courting of pan-Islam by the Germans. There were rumours that the Kaiser was about to convert to Islam[133] following his visit to Damascus in 1898, and in the same year the British were further disconcerted by the engagement of a German arms

---

[129] SAD WP 100/11/1-7. Translation of the Mahdi's declaration of jihad, AH 1299 (AD 1881- 82), with Arabic original.
[130] SAD WP 250/1/528-606. Covering note dated 1/5/87 with handwritten translation of letters from the Mahdi. Original sealed 'Mohamed El Mahdee Abdullah'.
[131] SAD WP 155/5/46-57. Letter to Evelyn Baring from Cairo, dated 6/4/89 enclosing a handwritten report entitled 'Memorandum – The Senussi Movement', signed by Wingate, Kaimakam AAG Intelligence EA, 6/4/89.
[132] SAD WP 272/5/127. File of newspaper cuttings on the Sudan, *Daily Express*, 25 July 1902.
[133] Landau, 1990, p. 47. These rumours may have been started deliberately. It was reported that the Kaiser wore a coat that had an 'Arab-Muslim' appearance from behind.

manufacturer in Kabul.[134] Although, after 1900, the Germans showed an increasing interest in Islam as an instrument to be used against opposing imperial powers, they were to a considerable extent driven by mistaken assumptions. In particular it was believed that the British were behind the anti-Turkish revolt in the Yemen, and that they endorsed the Khedive's pretensions to an Egyptian empire in the Levant.[135] Ultimately it would be this new factor, i.e. the threat of a German inspired anti-British jihad, which would be a major stimulus inducing the British in Cairo to adopt a coherent Islamic policy of their own. The 'prophylactics of territorial acquisition' has already been referred to; this subsequent development may aptly be described as the 'prophylactics of ideology.' Though, as will be shown later in the context of Lord Kitchener's tenure in Egypt, contained within the imperative of prophylactic acquisition would be a more constructive aspect to Britain's response to 'German pan-Islam.'

2.7 Islamophobia in Context

For obvious reasons Judeo-phobia, as an instance of imperial anxiety,[136] is not generally thought to be associated with a fear of Islam. Perhaps because much of the history concerning the war-time agreements entered into by the British has been written in the light of the latter-day Arab-Israeli conflict, there has been a tendency to designate the leading actors of the earlier period as either anti-Semitic Arabophiles or Judeophile Arabophobes. One could just as easily substitute 'Islam' for 'Arab' in this formulation. It will be argued here that both of these dispositions, are aspects of a single all-encompassing politico-attitudinal complex commonly

---

[134] McKale, 1998, p. 7.

[135] McKale, 1998, p. 29. Ironically, the revolt in Yemen was finally suppressed in 1911 with the assistance of the Sharif of Mecca.

[136] This subject has been dealt with extensively by Elie Kedourie, Kedourie, 1956, pp. 67-86, and, 1974. The author deals with Judeo-phobia and anti-Semitism in the context of what he calls 'Levantinism'. This concept referred to those inhabitants of the Middle East who had been 'contaminated' by modern European political and cultural ideas. Such people were considered as either 'hybrids,' or as inferior types in relation to their nomadic cousins who attracted a certain romantic sympathy amongst imperialists like Sir Mark Sykes. This attitude was later reflected in Sykes' advice to the Cabinet. Chapter 6, Note 63.

found among statesmen, diplomats and intelligence offices operating in, and in relation to, the Middle East before and during the First World War. The two aspects of this complex, rather than being mutually exclusive, as is frequently assumed, were in fact closely associated, being manifestations of a more general fear of all extra-territorial influences, and trans-national forms of politics,[137] except of course those closely underpinning their own imperial projects. The importance of this argument is that the simultaneous support for Zionism *and* the idea of an Arab caliphate, rather than being seen as a contradiction stemming from the duplicity of British imperialists, should be viewed as mutually consistent and genetically similar positions. Extraordinary as it may seem it was even possible in the minds of some diplomats to assume an intimate and subversive association between international Jewry, pan-Islam and the caliphate.[138]

The most notable example of the conflation of Judeophobia with Islamophobia was that which emerged among British Middle East experts (so-called) in the early years of the 20th century. A. L. Macfie relates how Sir Gerald Lowther, British Ambassador in Constantinople, wrote to Charles Hardinge, Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, referring to the 'Jew Committee of Union and Progress.'[139] A few months later in May 1910, Lowther submitted a report, again to Hardinge, which reiterated at length the notion that the CUP, and by extension the Ottoman Empire, was run by a clique of Salonica Jews and 'crypto-Jews.' He went on to say that 'every Hebrew seemed to become a potential spy of the occult Committee, and people began to remark that the movement was rather a Jewish than a Turkish revolution?'[140] The report, actually the work of G. H. Fitzmaurice, dragoman at the embassy, gave the appearance of being authoritative and well-researched being some five thousand words in length. Macfie agrees with Elie Kedourie and Bernard Lewis that the notion was completely fanciful and ridiculous.[141] In a manner which assumed the world-wide power of Jews, whose first loyalty was to their own kind rather than their state of domicile, Fitzmaurice argued, that since 'The Jew' hates Russia with whom England is now in alliance, the Jews are now liable to be anti-

---

[137] The ultimate fear of imperialists would be that of Bolshevism which, being based on working class solidarity, was the first form of politics to be truly worthy of the description 'international.'
[138] In comparison with the British notion of a Jewish run pan-Islam, the Nazis' absurdly conceived enemy of 'Judeo-bolshevism' hardly seems ridiculous. Mayer, 1990, passim.
[139] Macfie, 1998, p. 31, and, Fromkin, 1991, p. 41. Both refer to a letter of July 1909.
[140] Macfie, 1998, p. 32. Quotation taken from an extract of the letter provided by Elie Kedourie. Kedourie, 1971.

British, a prospect which, moreover, the Germans might wish to exploit.[142] As the British Government's sole source of information on the matter, Fitzmaurice's report was inordinately influential. The problem of single, uncorroborated sources of intelligence, on which to base policy in the Middle East, was one which would become a debilitating factor in relation to British deliberations on the merits and demerits of an Arab caliphate.

In the absence of informed objections Fitzmaurice's language grew ever more inflammatory. In 1911 he wrote of the 'baleful Jew-Mason element,'[143] and in 1912 warned a colleague melodramatically that 'if a general massacre ... sweeps over Asia Minor and Syria in an expiring spasm of Pan Islamism, now for four years harnessed to the Chariot of Pan Judaism, the prairie fire may even reach Egypt.'[144]

The most remarkable connections, reflecting the ultimate in paranoid fantasies, were expressed a few years later by Sir Arthur Hirtzel of the Political Department at the India Office, who wrote on the eve of Turkey's declaration of war against the allies:

> The strength of our position vis a vis the Arabs has lain in their own divisions and in their hostility to Turkey... moreover, Pan-Islam is a danger that must be steadily born[e] in mind, and it seems highly probable that eventually a consolidated Arabia would be a far greater danger, alike in Africa and Asia, than the *Jewish free-masons who now control the Caliphate.* [emphases added][145]

---

[141] Macfie, 1998, pp. 32-3.

[142] Fromkin, 1991, p. 42. Quotation taken from Kedourie, 1974, p. 261. Fromkin points out that there were only four Jews elected to the 1908 Ottoman parliament and that no Jews were elected to the Central Committee of the CUP in 1909. He adds that those Jews associated with the CUP distanced themselves from Zionism before and during the war.

[143] Khalidi, 1980, p. 255, note 91.

[144] I have relied on Khalidi, 1980, pp. 245-6. The original is somewhat illegible but likens the situation to the storm depicted in one of Turner's paintings exhibited in the National Gallery entitled, *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway.* FO 800/80, LJM, pp. 88-91, Letter from Fitzmaurice, British Embassy, Constantinople, to Tyrell, 5 Nov 1912.
The language used here anticipates that used by novelist John Buchan in his oft-quoted passage (e.g. Fromkin, 1991, p. 97) from *Greenmantle* written in 1916: 'There is a dry wind blowing through the East, and the parched grasses wait the spark. And the wind is blowing towards the Indian border.' Buchan, 1916, p. 6. It is conceivable that Buchan, as Director of Information for the British Government during the war, picked this up from Fitzmaurice since he also came to believe that the CUP was controlled by Jews. Fromkin, 1991, p. 43. Buchan's novel was well read by British soldiers serving in the trenches and was, until the release of Hitchcock's film, *The 39 Steps* in 1939, his best selling story. Smith, 1965, pp. 293-297 & 373.

[145] McKale, 1998, p. 74.

Regardless of the conflation exhibited in such passages, the point being made here is that there is not simply a formal similarity between imperial Judeophobia and imperial Islamophobia. Rather, the often presumed opposition between the emerging British Islamic (and Arab) policy, and British Zionism, may be sublated under a more fundamental principal - that of imperial paranoia regarding trans-national forms of political solidarity in general.

2.8 Conclusion

The origins of pan-Islam, that is of Islam as a political force harnessed to the task of resisting European imperial expansion, has been traced back to 1774. Although this development was not immediately threatening to Britain, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 produced in many British imperialists, for the first time, a misplaced Islamophobia and a self consciousness of Britain as an 'Islamic Power.'

It would take the Eastern Crisis of 1875-80 and the revival of the Caliphate by 'Abdulhamid II, as the main component of his pan-Islamic policy, to create an acute anxiety in the minds of those European empires containing large populations of Muslims while simultaneously producing reaction and discontent in certain parts of the Arab speaking provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The Meccan Crisis of 1879-80 merely provided the first opportunity for collaboration between the two simultaneously threatened parties – an opportunity based on a marginal correspondence of interests in which the Sharif of Mecca sought British protection, while the British sought the sanction of Islam in support of their imperial order in southern Asia.

The excursus in relation to Wilfred Scawen Blunt serves to, (a) emphasise the lack of continuity between Blunt's advocacy of an Arab caliphate and that contemplated by the British in Cairo in 1914, (b) draw attention to the similarities between the events of 1879-80

and the circumstances obtaining on the eve of the First World War, and (c) underline the simultaneity, and conjunctural nature, of British and Arab espousal of an Arab caliphate. The last point is important in relation to the period since the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci, which coincided with the advent of industrial capitalism. This was a period of unprecedented change on a global scale in which the most advanced economies came into contact with the least developed regions of the globe. And yet the fundamental break with tradition which took place *everywhere*, at the same time necessitated a reinvention of tradition whereby those instigating change and those forced to accommodate change, in the words of Marx, 'anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.'[146]

It is concluded that, in any event, the origins of the idea of an Arab caliphate cannot be pinpointed, 'cartesian-newtonian' fashion, to a unique coordinate in time and space. Furthermore, it was proposed that the innovations advocated were, on the part of theorists such as al-Kawakibi, consciously revolutionary, rather than being the surreptitious adoption of specifically European traditions or the unconscious assimilation of European fallacies. This conclusion is based in part on the premis that there was no such thing as a pristine or authentic caliphate and that Islam was always open to adaptation.

The advent of 'New Imperialism' coinciding with the Eastern Crisis of 1875-80 was characterised by Britain's having to compete on a more even footing with other industrialised imperial powers. The rush for overseas territory, usually described as a 'scramble,' was motivated in many instances by the need to prevent other powers from doing the same. Similarly, towards the turn of the twentieth century, powers other than Britain considered using Islam to further her own ends *vis-à-vis* other empires. This new phenomenon has been posited as an example of the 'prophylactics of ideology' whose precondition was the process commencing in 1774 through which Islam in general, and the institution of the caliphate in

---

[146] Marx, 1954, p. 10.

particular, were turned into instruments available for 'modular adoption'[147] by Islamic and non-Islamic powers alike.

By situating the fear of Islam within a more general complex, the departure in relation to Judeophobia is intended to dispel at the outset the notion that the fear of Arabs and Islam is somehow a concomitant of Judeo*philism*. Rather, depending on the circumstances pertaining in a particular location, the fear of Jews/Arabs/Islam is logically consistent with the need to accommodate, placate and collaborate with Jews/Arabs/Islam. In the light of this generalised form of paranoia British Middle Eastern policy at this time is revealed as more internally consistent than it might otherwise seem, being, as it was, fearful of any form of trans-national political association or allegiance perceived as capable of subverting empire.

Finally, in the following chapter it will be shown how, under Lord Kitchener's rule in Egypt, the idea of a British Arabia first emerged in the minds of those who considered themselves capable of realising it. It will be argued here that it was the exigencies of empire which provided the environment for Kitchener's personal ambitions rather than those ambitions determining imperial policy. The force of such ambitions should not be underestimated, though the precise mode of their realisation proposed by Kitchener's acolytes was determined by their belief that the restoration of an Arab caliphate was ineluctable. In their own minds they were simply inserting themselves into an objective process. In a later chapter it will be shown how the hitherto disparate elements described above were subsequently forged into a coherent 'Western Arabian'[148] policy whose central tenet was an Arab caliphate in Mecca under British auspices.

---

[147] This term is attributed to Benedict Anderson, though it is invariably applied to a reverse process whereby forms of national organisation are adopted wholesale by less developed societies. Anderson, 1991, pp. 4 & 135.
[148] This term, which is borrowed from Elizabeth Monroe, recognises the antagonism between British India, and British Egypt, over such matters. Monroe, 1963, p. 36.

CHAPTER 3: The 'Hijaz Crisis' of 1914, the Coming of War, and the Caliphate

3.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the period of Kitchener's tenure in Egypt (1911-1914), however the significance of this period is that it contained, in broad outline, a repeat of the crisis of 1879-82 in respect of Britain's relationship with Islam in the context of an impending inter-imperial confrontation. As in 1879-82 the relationship between the European empires, on the one hand, and between the Ottoman Empire and the Hijaz, on the other, should be seen as aspects of same underlying crisis. It has already been indicated in Chapter 2 that, notwithstanding Kitchener's long-term service in the Middle East, the recurring prevalence of the idea of a revived Arab caliphate among British orientalists cannot be explained by his particular biography. In this chapter it will be shown precisely how the recurrence of these circumstances in 1914, rather than some ideological inheritance, gave rise, once again, to the idea of a British-backed Arab caliphate.

The key features of this period were the Hijaz crisis of 1914 and the onset of a war which placed the Ottoman Empire in an alliance with Germany against Britain. The expectation of war was accompanied, as is generally the case, by a mutual paranoia concerning the intentions of the contending parties. This was especially the case regarding Britain's attitude towards the caliphate and Islam, which seemed to be driven forward by what Britain expected of her imperial rivals and by what they, in turn, expected of Britain. It is in this context that the notion of the 'prophylactics of ideology' comes into its own. Moreover, it was under such circumstances that the particular perspective of British Cairo came to predominate in the formation of British policy in the Middle East. As will become apparent, the emerging imperial vision was to be realised through the manipulation of Islam.

Such an analysis stands in marked opposition to the views of Elie Kedourie whose pre-eminence in this area rests on his detailed account of the so-called 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence' in which the British caliphate project is not accorded the status of a serious enterprise. Kedourie's standing on this issue cannot be ignored it is therefore necessary to take issue with his trivialisation of the precise references to the caliphate contained in Kitchener's message to 'Abdullah, son of the Sharif of Mecca, on 1 November 1914. It will be argued later, at some length and with further documentary support, that the British in Cairo made a *positive* choice to obtain and sustain an alliance with a section of Arab society who they considered to be represented by a single accessible leader and figurehead. This group of people, it was hoped, might turn Islam in their favour, or at least prevent it being turned against them. What the British did not want was an Arab movement reliant on some form of mass or popular politics which they could not control. Rather, they sought to subordinate and subvert mass tendencies via the instrument of Islam[1] which they considered to be fundamental to Arab society, and against which secular politics were viewed as an alien import. Rashid Khalidi expresses this most forcefully when he writes:

> [Britain] was not at ease with the popular movement which had shown its strength in Syria in 1912 and 1913, and echoes of which had already caused restlessness in Egypt. Although she needed them, Britain was reluctant to work directly with determined and dedicated nationalists like 'Aziz 'Ali al- Masri and Rashid Rida, who would never fully accept the tutelage which she intended to exercise over her new "ally."[2]

Kedourie fails utterly to take such factors into consideration and is totally impercipient to such distinctions within the 'Arab movement' at this juncture. Consequently, he is misled into arguing that because Cheetham, as acting chief of the British Agency in Cairo in Kitchener's absence, had reported on 26 October 1914, that *representatives of the Syrian Arabs in Cairo* expected little more than 'a benevolent attitude towards their aspirations for self-government'[3] from Britain, that the embellishments contained in Kitchener's note to 'Abdullah on Turkey's entry into the war 'merely [gave] expression to vague sentiments, devoid of any binding

---

[1] Recall that Britain's fear of the Young Ottomans under 'Abdulhamid, and the CUP, was based largely on their perceived potential for directing Islam against Britain.

[2] Khalidi, 1980, p. 377. Sir Andrew Ryan's formulation, the central axiom of collaborative logic, is most pertinent: 'strong enough to administer, but weak enough to be dependent on us'. Heller, 1983, p. 210, n. 62. Ryan was the 2nd Dragoman at Constantinople and later His Majesty's Minister in Albania. Storrs, 1937, p. 57.

[3] Kedourie, 1976, p. 20, with reference to FO 371/2140 63581/46261, No. 222b of 26 October 1914.

character, which might be useful in attracting and enticing the Sharif.'[4] The despatch to 'Abdullah was, declares Kedourie, 'an otherwise inexplicable and anomalous action.'[5] Consequently, one of the aims of this chapter is to counter Kedourie's 'theory of aberration' regarding British involvement in the revival of an Arab caliphate. This will be achieved by setting British actions concerning the caliphate in the context of the ubiquitous practice of imperial collaboration and the acute necessity of identifying suitable local representatives with whom to establish mutually beneficial arrangements.

3.1 Kitchener in Egypt: The Increasing Necessity for Collaboration.

Although Kitchener's tenure as Consul General in Egypt did not follow directly from Cromer's he was bound to be compared with him. Undoubtedly Cromer was the creator of *British* Egypt and had come to be treated as a virtual viceroy thereby establishing a reputation which Kitchener would aspire to surpass. Cromer was a banker and businessman who lacked the romantic admiration for the bedouin typical of British imperialists. Kitchener, on the other hand, gave little away concerning his personal attitudes and sympathies. He was foremost a soldier who had become a living hero of the British Empire after the 'victory'[6] at Omdurman in 1898. He then became Sirdar (Commander-in-Chief) of the Egyptian Army until he succeeded Eldon Gorst as Consul General in 1911.[7] More importantly, whereas Cromer had been isolated at the apex of a pyramidal structure of imperial rule,[8] Kitchener spoke Arabic and Turkish which perhaps facilitated a more perspicacious form of discourse with important locals thereby opening up a whole range of possibilities for collaboration not available to his predecessor.

---

[4] Ibid., p. 20.
[5] Ibid., p. 20.
[6] More accurately described as a massacre than a battle. Kiernan, 1982, p. 80.
[7] Khalidi, 1980, p. 91.
[8] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

The significance of Kitchener's tenure is that it coincided with a renewed and more urgent interest in the matter of the caliphate among imperial powers and Muslims alike. Unbeknownst to Kitchener, as he took up his post, prominent pan-Islamists were meeting in Berlin to make an appeal to the Germans in the name of the Ottoman caliphate. They wished to arrest the trend exemplified in Italy's occupation of Tripolitania which they regarded as the first piece in a supposed 'domino effect' running from North Africa via the Balkans to Arabia which would result ultimately in an Arab caliphate.[9] At the same time, the German Kaiser, on the authority of a German archaeologist-spy working in Egypt, came to believe that the British Resident in Cairo, Lord Kitchener, was about to take advantage of the Turko-Italian War over Libya in order to establish an Arab caliphate under Egyptian and British protection.[10]

Furthermore, in early 1911, thirty-five Arab deputies from the Ottoman parliament had approached the Sharif of Mecca, Husayn bin 'Ali, with an appeal to raise an Arab rebellion against the Turks.[11] This coincided with a report submitted to the Foreign Office by Eldon Gorst which indicated that Egyptian nationalists suspected Rashid Rida and other local Syrian exiles of intriguing in the Hijaz and Yemen against the Turks. Moreover, the Egyptians supposed that such overtures had the backing of the Anglo-Egyptian Government. Apparently the Egyptian Khedive, 'Abbas Hilmi, had co-opted Rashid Rida in pursuit of his ambitions to establish an Arab caliphate and an empire centred on Cairo which would include Syria, Egypt and Arabia.[12] The British, were as yet unaware that Rashid Rida had, recently formed a secret society whose membership included 'Abdullah, the eldest son of Sharif Husayn.[13] As ever during the era of competing empires and pan-Islamic reaction, fear and rumour ran ahead of fact. Although, according to Donald McKale:

> Extensive research has illustrated that British leaders before World War I, while they accumulated, like the Germans, substantial evidence of the existence of Arab unrest as well as of a small nationalist movement, disagreed over what these factors meant and what Britain's response to them should be.[14]

[9] Landau, 1990, p. 136.
[10] McKale, 1998, p. 30, referring to Max Freiherr von Oppenheimer.
[11] Ibid., p. 11. Dawn, 1973, p. 13.
[12] McKale, 1998, p. 31. This dominion was conceived in the image of that created by Muhammad 'Ali.
[13] McKale, 1998, p. 31. Note however that according to C. E. Dawn it was *probably* not until the first half of 1914 that Rashid Rida met 'Abdullah in Cairo and administered him the oath of the Society of the Arab League. Dawn, 1973, p. 21.
[14] McKale, 1998, p. 30.

Later, during the early months of his administration, Kitchener would recommend, for reasons of imperial defense, the seizure of Southern Syria and certain Arab provinces which would form one or more autonomous Arab states.[15]

The Balkan Wars of 1912-13, like the Turco-Italian War of 1911, had an ultimately contradictory effect within Islam. Firstly, although these were essentially national conflicts, the King of the Bulgarians proclaimed a 'crusade' against the Turks, inducing the latter to rally support in the name of Islam. Sir Gerald Lowther, Ambassador at Constantinople, forwarded the translation of a telegram which the Grand Vizier asked to be sent on to Grey, in which he noted the effect of the Bulgarian declaration on Muslim sentiment in India and Egypt. The Grand Vizier urged Britain to support Islam since, 'England's position in the world has this peculiarity: that one half of the two hundred million Mussulmans who dwell on the earth are under British nationality and in the colonies of the British Empire.'[16] The message continued:

> Now if, in order to meet the enemies invasion with a greater force, the Caliph, as a reply to the crusade so imprudently preached by King Ferdinand, proclaimed a Holy War and summoned to it the whole Mussulman world, would not England run the risk of finding herself faced, both in Egypt and India, by difficulties on the gravity of which it would be superfluous to dwell? But no! The caliph of the Mussulmans would not tolerate the proclamation of a religious war incompatible with the principles of civilisation. Nevertheless, the excitement and ebullition of feeling caused in Mussulman countries by the news of the proclamation of a religious war by the Bulgarian King must not be overlooked; and it is with the object of dissipating the uneasiness existing on this score and the inevitable conclusions to be drawn from it, that, as the representative of he Caliph of the Mussulmans, I address myself to your Lordship in order to point out the greater interests the Sovereign of a hundred million Mussulmans would seem to have in affording effective support to Islam, as Russia has done in the case of Slavism.[17]

The threat of jihad against Britain was so thinly veiled that except for the niceties of diplomatic protocol it might just as well have been naked.

---

[15] Khalidi, 1980, pp. 100-103. Khalidi refers to a meeting of the in July 1912 which was the first occasion on which the British considered an invasion of Ottoman territory on the back of an Arab uprising and realised the necessity of reaching a prior understanding with the French.
[16] FO 800/80, pp. 95- 98. Covering note from Sir G. Lowther, Pera, to Grey, 7 November 1912, enclosing a telegram from the Turkish Grand Vizier.
[17] Ibid.

Secondly, the continual failure of the Turks against European Christian Powers, as perceived by many non-Turkish Muslims within the Ottoman Empire, caused some Arabs to doubt the capacity of the Turks to protect Islam and the caliphate and to seek independent solutions. It was at this time that British consulates in the Arab provinces of the Empire began to report expressions of pro-British sentiment among the local inhabitants with increasing frequency.[18] It was also during this period that many Arabs and members of the British establishment in the Middle East began to contemplate, quite acutely, the disintegration and partitioning of the Ottoman Empire and that the first inklings of opportunities for co-operation and the mutual satisfaction of interests began to appear. Kitchener, himself, concluded that the 'Arab race' would be soon be 'compelled ... to take an independent line of its own.[19]

Whereas German intrigue was largely a matter of conjecture at this stage, French concerns were openly reported. Believing that they were the preferred party in Syria, the French were, naturally, alarmed by recent developments. In December 1912, Defrance, the French Minister in Cairo reported that the Khedive had ambitions in Syria and hoped to co-ordinate matters with the 'Muslim Association of Syria' and the local Masonic Lodges and to put him self forward as a 'pan-Arab' candidate for the caliphate. Moreover, Defrance believed that the Khedive was acting with British support.[20] In turn the British were dismayed by French newspapers reports that Kitchener had received delegations from Syria. Khalidi insists that these reports were incorrect but that both Kitchener, and Cumberbatch, the Consul-General in Beirut, 'had given the French grounds for suspicion.'[21] In November and December, Grey instructed Cumberbatch not to encourage Syrian overtures since British rule in Syria was 'neither practicable nor desirable,'[22] and directed Kitchener to deny such rumours about Syria.[23]

---

[18] Rashid Khalidi provides several examples of such reports between late 1912 and the spring of 1913, corresponding with the First Balkan War. Khalidi, 1980, pp. 265–290.
[19] Ibid., p. 346, quoting CAB/4/5/177B, CID 'International Status of Egypt when Great Britain is at War', 20 June 1913.
[20] Ibid., pp. 269-70.
[21] Ibid., p. 272.
[22] Ibid., p. 278, citing FO 371/1507/33672/50279: minute by Grey, 14 Nov. 1912.
[23] Ibid., citing FO 371/1522/52330: Grey to Kitchener, 7 Dec. 1912.

Kitchener and the staff of the British Agency in Cairo must have become increasingly aware of Islamic sentiment, or perhaps more accurately, of political opinions expressed in the Islamic idiom. The loss of Ottoman territory in the Italian and Balkan Wars was perceived by Muslims as a threat to the caliphate. The Egyptian press, for example, referred to 'the final tearing up of the Khalifa of Islamia.'[24] There were newspaper reports concerning a declaration to the Sultan presented by a delegation of Arabian shaykhs awaiting orders to commence a jihad in order, they said, 'to defend the glory of the Islamic Khalifate with our blood, money and children.'[25] Equally disconcerting were intelligence reports anticipating a possible Sanussi advance on the Hijaz via Egypt in order to claim and save the caliphate.[26] It was as if someone had declared an 'open season' on the caliphate.

It should be stressed that, although, by July 1912, the British Cabinet had considered some form of Arab protectorate, and certain Arabs had made overtures to the Sharif of Mecca regarding a revolt against the Turks,[27] the correspondence of interests remained purely objective. At this juncture, the idea of an Arab caliphate under British influence was firmly established only in the minds of Turkish pan-Islamists, Egyptian nationalists[28] and Britain's imperial competitors. It would, however, take rather more exigent circumstances than those pertaining at the time for the possibility of a British-backed Arab caliph in the person of the then Sharif of Mecca to be regarded as a necessity. It has been emphasised in the introduction to this thesis that the minimum prerequisite of a collaborative arrangement is correspondence of interests, no matter how transient or flimsy. While a challenge to the established caliphate

---

[24] PRO 30/57/43 LL/4, Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo, 28 July, 1912, Translation from the Arabic Press – *El Shaab* of 25 July 1912.
[25] Ibid., LL/43, Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo, Intelligence Report of 22 Jan. 1913 quoting an article from the Egyptian press - *El Moayed*.
[26] Ibid., LL/3, Intelligence News, Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo, 24 Nov. 1912.
[27] Dawn, 1973, p. 14. According to Dawn, certain 'nationalists' had begged Sharif Husayn to assume the leadership of the Arab movement but had not engaged in conspiratorial negotiations regarding an Arab rising. This coincided with a rumour that the government in Constantinople was about to remove Husayn from his post.
[28] There is some disagreement and uncertainty over whether Kitchener and 'Abdullah first met in 1912 or 1913. Khalidi prefers the spring of 1912 rather than early 1913, though in neither case was the meeting reported to London. He also believes that it was Kitchener who took the initiative though concedes that this cannot be established definitely. Kitchener did report, however that 'Abdullah wished to know whether the British would prevent the removal of his father by the Turks. According to 'Abdullah's own account, Kitchener was unable to offer help but left the impression that he may be able to in the future. Khalidi, 1980, p. 348. C. Ernest Dawn asserts that whenever the first meeting took place, it was the source of speculation in the Constantinople press that an Arab revolt was planned with British assistance. This meeting itself followed a rumour in Constantinople

was expected and the demise of the Ottoman Empire seemed imminent, there was neither a situation in which a British advance on Ottoman territory was deemed necessary, nor an obvious candidate for the caliphate who might have a reasonable chance of success. While, the first of these would not occur until the actual onset of war, consideration of the second would arise in anticipation of such a conflict. A crisis over the Sharifate of Mecca during the years before the war would produce an identifiable Arab party which occupied a unique position within Islam, and an incumbent with a pressing need for an alliance with extraneous forces.

3.2 The 'Hijaz Crisis' of 1914

The situation had been growing ever more uncertain for the Sharif Husayn of Mecca and his family since his appointment[29] by 'Abdulhamid in November 1908.[30] According to Hasan Kayali, 'more changes came about in the Hejaz in the first few months following July 1908 than in any other Arab province. The Sultan's pan-Islamic policy which was adopted by the CUP meant that the Turkish Government had to ensure closer control over the pilgrimage, its host the Sharif of Mecca, and its environs.'[31] The Damascus-Medina section of the Hijaz Railway, formally opened in September 1908,[32] had, officially, been developed to facilitate the conveyance of pilgrim traffic to Mecca. The real object of the railway, however, was to facilitate a more centralised control over the peripheral portions of the Ottoman Empire from Constantinople[33] - a fact not missed by the current Sharif and the bedouin tribes-people of the Hijaz whose main means of livelihood had been circumvented. The entire basis of the Sharif's

---

in 1912 that the government was planning to remove Husayn. Dawn, 1973, p. 13. Neither author refers to the discussion of an Arab caliphate at this meeting, whenever it occurred.

[29] The precise circumstances surrounding Sharif Husayn's appointment as Grand Sharif of Mecca is the subject of controversy and uncertainty. Wilson, 1991, p. 206.

[30] Kayali, 1997, p. 148. It is interesting to note that Husayn was the preferred choice of the British Foreign Office who 'exerted influence through the Anglophile grand vizier, Kamil Pasha, as well as the British ambassador.'

[31] Ibid., p. 146.

[32] Ibid., p. 147.

[33] Khairallah, 1991, pp. 84-95.

power, both economic and political, was being undermined, since his ability to 'service' the allegiance of the region's tribes depended on his capacity to extract tribute and offer protection against other tribes and/or extrancous powers. This, in turn, depended on his people's ability to earn 'fees'[34] for the carriage of, and/or granting of permission to carry, goods and pilgrims to and from Mecca.[35] Consequently Husayn would have had no difficulty in raising a revolt in 1910, or in 1913, after the central government threatened to extend the railway to Mecca and introduce the 'Law of the Vilayets.'

The Ottoman Government later sought to circumvent the Sharif's power in Mecca more directly by interfering through the offices of the *Muhafiz* of Medina who could now be reached quite readily by rail or telegraph. Of particular relevance to European views of Islam was the consequence, according to Mary C. Wilson, that 'technological innovations enabled Husayn's religious duties to be separated from his administrative ones and thus his activities were to be confined to the religious sphere.'[36] This is an interesting comment which provides further support for the argument advanced in Chapters 1 and 2 that the supposed unity of secular-temporal and religious-spiritual functions in Islam is historically contingent. Ironically, just as the Ottomans gave a religious rational for extending the imperial railway network to the Hijaz, the Sharif opposed such developments on the basis that reform and centralisation was contrary to religion.[37] Nevertheless, it is clear that the Sharif's economic base was threatened and he was bound to take steps to preserve the capacities inherent in his position within the social and economic structure of the Hijaz. Kayali explains however that the Turks interest in the Hijaz was not primarily economic, since its commercial potential was insignificant. Rather its importance was both strategic and religious.[38] As global conflict seemed increasingly likely this fact enabled the Sharif to enhance his position locally and to increase his standing in the world at large, while causing Britain to view the possession of the Holy Places of Islam by a potential rival, as a strategic threat, much as it had done in 1879-80.

---

[34] The term 'fees' avoids the negative connotations of 'bribes' or 'protection money' which both imply corruption and illegality. Such concepts were inappropriate in the Arabian hinterland where state law had not been imposed.
[35] FO 141/460/1198. Telegram – report from Abdula Kadir Mackawee to Sir R. Wingate, Governor General of the Sudan, 25 February 1914. This despatch reports that the Hijaz tribes are against the extension of the railway and against inroads from the coast at Jiddah or Yanbu' as this would enable European incursion.
[36] Wilson, 1991, pp. 210-11.
[37] Kayali, 1997, p. 171.
[38] Ibid., p. 173.

The situation for Sharif Husayn became once again more precarious at the beginning of 1914 when one of his sons was informed by the Ottoman minister of the interior, Talat Bey, that his father would be removed if he continued to oppose the extension of the railway to Mecca.[39] On 15 January 1914 Constantinople appointed Vehib Pasha, a representative of the CUP, to the post of Governor of the Hijaz. Significantly, according to Kayali, 'this decision was motivated, on the one hand, by the revival of rumors of an alliance of Arabian tribal chiefs under an Arab caliph, and, on the other hand, by the intensifying competition between the Ottoman and British governments for the allegiance of local Arabian potentates.' [40] The ascription of the epithet 'bogey'[41] to Islam has some validity at this stage since the Ottoman's application of their pan-Islamic policy to the Hijaz was driven forward by rumours of a British search for alliances in the Arabian Peninsula,[42] just as Britain's mounting consternation was motivated by Turkish pan-Islam.

Of further significance for the emergence of an Anglo-Sharifian alliance was that 'while Husayn resisted CUP pressure after 1912, he and his sons began to assiduously cultivate ties with the Arab nationalists of Syria and with the British in Cairo.'[43] Whereas, any previous meeting(s) between Kitchener and 'Abdullah (the Sharif's first son) in 1912 or 1913,[44] or between 'Abdullah and the members of certain Syrian Arab secret societies, can be regarded as open-ended and inconsequential, such meetings as occurred *after* the Hijaz crisis of January-February 1914 were conducted with far more importunity and purpose by all parties concerned. It is also at this time that a difference of approach between the Sharif and his son becomes apparent. According to Ernest Dawn, there may have been an unsuccessful approach by Arab nationalists to Husayn in late February,[45] it seems likely, however, that sometime during the first half of 1914 'Abdullah met Rashid Rida in Cairo and was administered the

---

[39] Ochsenwald, 1991, p. 192.
[40] Kayali, 1997, p. 181.
[41] Bury, 1919, pp. 11-12.
[42] Kayali, 1997, p. 181. It should be noted that the Sharif's most closely situated rivals in Arabia also based their claims to supremacy on their religious standing, namely, Ibn Sa'ud, Imam Yahya and al-Idrisi.
[43] Ochsenwald, 1991, p. 196.
[44] Dawn, 1973, p. 19. This meeting or meetings at the Khedive's palace to which 'Abdullah was invited were routine, were concerned, ostensibly at least, with the conditions of pilgrimage for British Indian Muslims.
[45] Ibid., p. 15. According to Dawn, Husayn 'was still not claimed as an adherent by the Arab officers who sought to impress Sir Louis Mallet with the strength of their movement in Iraq and Arabia.'

oath of the 'Society of the Arab League.'[46] Simultaneously, 'Abdullah, impelled by a fear of a Turkish advance on the home territory, took the initiative of writing to Cairo to solicit a meeting with Kitchener.[47] This was the first occasion, in the context of the recent crisis, on which a member of the Sharifian family explicitly sought the aid of the British against the Turks. In the meantime 'Abdullah traveled to Constantinople in the hope of obtaining assurances about his family's position at Mecca. Being unsuccessful he returned via Cairo with the intention of meeting Kitchener, whom he met briefly on 18 April conscious of the Sublime Porte's displeasure at such meetings.[48] Later that day at the 'Abdin Palace, 'Abdullah was visited by Ronald Storrs, Kitchener's deputy and Oriental Secretary. With the clear objective of keeping the Turks out of the Arabian peninsula 'Abdullah conveyed his preference for a treaty between his party (as yet undefined) and Great Britain, similar to the one which already existed between the Amir of Afghanistan and the Government of India.[49]

It is relevant to the aims of this thesis that 'Abdullah's behavior already betrays a sophisticated appreciation of international relations, especially that pertaining between imperial powers. Furthermore, 'Abdullah had reasons to be confident in his dealings with the British in Cairo. According to Elie Kedourie, 'Abdullah later reported that in an earlier meeting with the Khedive in February 1914, 'Abbas Hilmi had confided that although *he* could never trust the British in Egypt, the Hijaz was a different matter. This, he asserted, was because the British would never occupy it on account of their trepidation over offending their Muslim subjects.[50] This constitutes clear evidence that 'Abdullah not only appreciated British Islamophobia but was prepared to exploit it in pursuit of his own interests. He further enhanced his own standing by claiming, erroneously but, as it turned out, to some effect, that the Sharifate was supported by Ibn Sa'ud, the Idrisi and Imam Yahya.[51] Ultimately, and to greater effect, 'Abdullah would be able to combine this discernment with an understanding of Britain's more secular concerns by implying, at his meeting with Storrs, that the proposed Hijaz Railway extension was

---

[46] Ibid., p. 21.
[47] Kedourie, 1976, p. 4. Kedourie calls this approach 'audacious' and very much reduces the episode to the factor of personality, rather than treating it as an instance of collaborative behavior typical of someone in 'Abdullah's position.
[48] Storrs, 1943, p. 122.
[49] Kedourie, 1976, p. 7.
[50] Ibid., p. 11.
[51] Ibid., p. 7.

intended to forestall British involvement in the area. This he compounded with a subtle hint to the effect that the British might find themselves in competition with the Turks for his allegiance since the latter had ordered him not to go to Cairo or to see Kitchener.[52]

Although, it is conceivable that Kitchener was withholding his true intentions from Grey there is much to suggest that he had not sought to encourage 'the Arabs of the Hejaz' at this stage.[53] However, Storrs' own account of his meeting with 'Abdullah, which, remarkably, was not submitted to the Foreign Office until December, indicates that the rejection of 'Abdullah's overtures was not final.[54] Elie Kedourie suggests that 'Abas's ambition to become Caliph – which may have become more lively after the Young Turk *coup d'etat* and Abd al-Hamid's deposition – was also known to Storrs, and we may safely assume it to form the background or context of Storr's conversations with Abdullah.'[55] However, this assertion is supported solely by reference to a memorandum by Storrs written in May 1915! All that can be said is that there is no *direct* evidence that the question of the caliphate played any part in the conversations of April 1914, and one might equally speculate that the issue of an Arab caliphate only became significant in the minds of the British in Cairo after that date. Critically, what seems to have concerned the British more than 'Abbas Hilmi's personal pretensions was the support for his claim to the caliphate proffered by prominent Egyptian nationalists.[56] It would become apparent that, in the same way, British interest in an Arab caliphate had a strong prophylactic component motivated by the real possibility of the project being adopted by a mass movement of nationalists, a movement which they might not be able to contain.

---

[52] Ibid., p. 9.
[53] Ibid., p. 7; Storrs, 1943, p. 122, Note 2; and, FO 141/460/1198 58 pol. 1914, Printed report by Kitchener to Sir E. Grey, 11 April 1914.
[54] Kedourie, 1976, p. 7.
[55] Ibid., p. 11.
[56] PRO 30/57/45 OO/5, Note on the Khedive & the Nationalists, Alexandria, 21 May 1914. The Khedive had been visited by four prominent nationalists who 'hinted that H.H. could count on Nationalist support in the matter of the Caliphate.' It was alas reported that this support was endorsed by members of the Nationalist Party.

3.3 The Significance of the 'al-Masri Affair'

Before 1914 Kitchener might plausibly have denied encouraging any Arab party or individual from believing that any sympathy the British had for their plight might be translated into effective support. This situation was to change drastically with what might conveniently be referred to as 'the al-Masri affair' in which Kitchener secured the release of an activist working for the liberation of the Arabic-speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire from the Turks. Kitchener's efforts on behalf of 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Ali al-Masri had been well publicised in the European and Egyptian press as had been the activist's arrival in Cairo in April. Notwithstanding Kitchener's ostensible purpose in this affair which was to enhance his reputation inside Egypt and to aid his dealings with nationalists,[57] 'Abdullah can only have been reassured when planning his overtures towards the British in early 1914. It was this episode, according to C. Ernest Dawn, which caused 'Abdullah to believe that Kitchener would eventually offer more than he had been prepared to make explicit at the beginning of 1914.[58] Conversely, that the Egyptians regarded al-Masri as a defender of Islam, Rashid Khalidi assumes, must have encouraged Kitchener to explore further the possibility of an accommodation with Arabism.[59]

The tendencies inherent in such encounters intensified after the commencement of hostilities in Europe at the beginning of August 1914. Milne Cheetham, who ran the Cairo residency, reported to London that, whereas al-Masri had rejected approaches from Enver Pasha, in conversations with Director of Intelligence, Gilbert Clayton, he had offered 'to lead the Arabs (Syria and Irak) against the Turks in order to form an Arab Empire under British suzerainty.'[60] Not wishing to alienate the Turks unnecessarily London chose not to encourage al-Masri at this critical stage.[61] Cheetham's report of the meeting records that the movement to which al-

[57] FO 141/460/1198 58 pol. 1914, Printed report by Kitchener to Sir E. Grey, 11 April 1914.
[58] Dawn, 1973, p. 21.
[59] Khalidi, 1980, p. 346.
[60] Kedourie, 1976, p. 26, quoting FO 371/1968, 37584, Cheetham's telegram no. 76, Cairo, 9 Aug. 1914 and telegram to Cheetham no. 87, London, 11 Aug. McKale, 1998, p. 72, quoting FO to Cheetham, 11 Aug. 1914; and Cheetham to Grey, 9 Aug. 1914, IOLR/L/P&S/10/464.
[61] Kedourie, 1976, p. 26, with reference to FO 371/2140, 46261, 'Precis of conversations with Abd El Aziz El Masri', on 16 August 1914, enclosed with Cheetham's despatch no. 143 secret, Cairo 25 August.

Masri belonged was unconnected with the 'Arabian Khaliphate movement' (still undefined) and consequently had so far been unable to attract the support of Rashid Rida. Of further significance to the British, was the fact that the movement had no named leader.[62]

Ultimately, the precise details of such meetings were of less consequence than what certain individuals were prepared to make of them. The initial meeting between al-Masri and Clayton was most likely the occasion for a Cairo War Office Intelligence Department report on Egypt and the Arabian caliphate. This report constituted the first explicit reference, in the context of the war, to the incipient illegitimacy of the Turkish caliphate and to renewed counter claims resulting from the decline of Turkey's power and her consequent lack of fitness for the task. Importantly, the report deprecated the Egyptian claim on the grounds of the Khedive's lack of 'family qualifications' and went on to say that 'the choice of the Mohammedan near East seems now to be centred on the person of the present Emir of Mecca supported by the temporal power of Ibn Sa'ud of Nejd, and the co-operation of the Turkish regular troops in Baghdad who are chiefly recruited from and officered by Arabs.' Furthermore, according to the report, this choice was supported by Rashid Rida and, contrary to Cheetham's report, by al-Masri as well.[63]

3.4 'Appreciation of Situation in Arabia' : Captain Clayton's Memorandum of 6 September 1914

By September 1914 it seemed inevitable that Turkey would ally herself with Germany in the current war, and the idea of supporting some kind of Arab movement against the Turks quickly gained consensus among the British based in Cairo and Constantinople. There was, however, no unanimity over the precise identity of the party to be supported or over the form

---

[62] FO 371/2140 46261 Letter from Milne Cheetham at the British Agency, Cairo, to Sir E. Grey, 24 August 1914, including a precis of an interview of Aziz El Masri conducted by Capt. R. E. M. Russell on 16 August.

which the support should take. Sir Louis Mallet for example, chief among the Turco-philes, favoured a rebellion directed through Ibn Sa'ud and the Shaykh of Kuwait. The prevailing view in Cairo was given expression by Gilbert Clayton in an intelligence report dated 6 September headed 'Appreciation of Situation in Arabia.' This report described a recent[64] combination of the Arab chiefs against Turkey and Turkish counter-efforts to secure their neutrality which had, apparently, been successful in the case of the Sharif of Mecca who 'has now definitely thrown in his lot with Turkey.' In a manner calculated to regenerate British imperial Islamophobia, the report added that 'this action appears to have formed part of a general Pan-Islamic movement, engineered from Constantinople.'[65] Clayton sent a copy of the report directly to Kitchener under a covering memorandum urging him to get in touch with the Sharif and raise with him the possibility of replacing the Ottoman sultan as caliph by a friendly Arab leader, while at the same time recommending the Sharif as the obvious candidate. Clayton appears to have genuinely believed that the Arab chiefs were united behind Husayn, themselves having been encouraged by agents of the Khedive who sought '"an Arabia for the Arabs"' [66] and the caliphate for himself.

There followed an exchange of views regarding the caliphate among British officials with responsibilities in the Middle East of an intensity not seen since the crisis of 1879-80. It would be wrong to assume that all opinions expressed were necessarily forwarded to London or shared with other consulates and agencies. There was a marked tendency to forward, and in some cases actively disseminate, reports which enhanced there own standing or promoted their adopted line of argument. For example, Sir Louis Mallet, during his last days in Turkey transmitted a memorandum by Mr. Ryan, Acting First Dragoman at Constantinople, which anticipated the destruction of the Ottoman Empire 'up to Syria and Mosul' and the likelihood of 'a war of Caliphates.' Nevertheless, Ryan warned against British meddling in the caliphate

---

[63] FO 882 Vol 15 PNA 14/1, Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo – Intelligence news 'Egypt and the Arabian Khalifate', pp. 1-2, 13 August 1914.
[64] David Fromkin speculates that the representation of information regarding the supposed union of Arab chiefs as if it had just been newly acquired from al-Masri rather than from 'Abdullah in February or April was intentional. Fromkin, 1991, p. 101.
[65] FO 882 Vol 13 MIS 14/1, Memo by Intelligence department, WO, Cairo, 'Appreciation of Situation in Arabia', 6 September 1914. Sir Edward Grey was simultaneously in receipt of Clayton's intelligence report– FO 371/2140 51344, Letter from Milne Cheetham to Sir Edward Grey, British Agency, Cairo, 7 September 1914, enclosing the intelligence memorandum of 6 September 1914.
[66] McKale, 1998, pp. 72-3.

issue and recommended that Turkey be allowed to retain some nominal sovereignty over the Holy Cities. This memorandum was the first to recognise the dangers inherent in such a venture and warn against even secret British interference in the Hijaz.[67]

There is no evidence that Lord Kitchener had been made aware of such views and in any case was already pursuing his own agenda. On 22 September he acted on the intelligence report of the 6th by having Cheetham instruct Storrs to make further contact with 'Abdullah. He wished to ascertain whether, in the event of the Caliph and Sublime Porte being under the coercion of Germany taking aggressive action against Britain, 'Abdullah and his father would be 'with or against us.'[68] Kitchener's referring to Turkey in such terms may have been *ad hominem*, that is, designed to appeal specifically to the Sharif's own position within Islam. Alternatively, it may simply have reflected Kitchener's fears about an alliance between Germany and pan-Islam. Certainly, concerns over the possibility of a German backed caliphate were not new and Kitchener in particular had feared a Germano-Turkish alliance since his arrival at the Cairo Residency at a time when the Germans were supporting pan-Islamic elements against Italy in Libya from their consulate in Cairo.[69] His fears had not been without foundation, since, as early as 1912-13, Rashid Rida had been in discussion with a German emissary over the possibility of an independent Arab caliphate conjoining with the Egyptian Khedive ruling over Arabia and Syria.[70] Moreover, by September 1914, such fears were being expressed in public. The newspaper, *The Indiaman*, referred to a 'German campaign to stir up Islamic feeling,' declaring that, 'apparently the German mind can now think of nothing but blood, and is blindly endeavouring to set Islam by the ears in the hope that the resulting chaos would prove to Germany's advantage in the end.'[71]

The belief in the real possibility of an Arab revolt could only have been reinforced by overtures from another of the Arabic–speaking provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In early October Louis Mallet forwarded to the Foreign Office a request from a Sayyid Talib of Basra.

---

[67] FO 371/2140 57234 Louis Mallet to Grey, Therapia, September 22, 1914, No. 604 Confidential.
[68] FO 371/2139 52598 Copy of Telegram No. 219, secret, from Kitchener to Mr. Cheetham, Cairo, FO, September 24, 1914. McKale, 1998, p. 74.
[69] McKale, 1998, p. 33.
[70] Ibid., p. 41.
[71] SAD WP 191/3/23, Press cutting from *The Indiaman*, 11 September 1914.

The magnate wished to prepare the way for negotiations with the British in the event of war with Turkey. He too had been encouraged by past contacts with Lord Kitchener. His message referred to conversations with the Consul-General in Cairo which had taken place three years before,[72] providing yet another example of Kitchener's proficiency in 'opportunity creation.' In the minds of the British in the Middle East such contacts merely reinforced the inevitability of an Arab revolt. The crucial question for them was how best to ensure that the ineluctable would take a form which was advantageous to Britain rather than her rivals. Unfortunately for the policy makers and decision makers hard information was not easily obtained and the political intelligence community was acutely aware of its own state of ignorance. General Maxwell, commanding general of British forces in Egypt, wrote to Kitchener in early October, with reference to the likelihood of an invasion over the Suez Canal and the general lack of preparedness for war in the area. He lamented: 'I do not like being so much in the dark as to what is going on beyond the frontier.'[73] His anxieties had in no way been assuaged by the end of the month when he admitted to Fitzgerald, Kitchener's personal secretary, to having 'a bad Turco-German bogey' and consoled himself with thoughts of a Russian and Greek advance on Turkey combined with a Christian revolt in Lebanon. Maxwell reassured himself that 'an Arab caliphate & this will settle the Islam question for some time.'[74]

As war with Turkey looked increasingly probable, speculation concerning the likely course of events and the options for action intensified. From the outset there was an overwhelming concern with the matter of the caliphate. While opinions varied, all agreed that Britain had an interest in the outcome. In mid-October, Milne Cheetham forwarded a report to the Foreign Office and India Office which raising a number of issues which would remain substantially unresolved for the duration of the war. The central contention of the memorandum, written by Gerald Fitzmaurice, First Dragoman under Mallet, was that it would be to the advantage of Great Britain if the combined spiritual and temporal powers of the Islamic caliphate, the very basis of pan-Islam, were separated. More importantly, it was argued that, regardless of Britain's stance on the issue, such a separation was a likely occurrence, since 'an anti-Turkish

---

[72] FO 371/2140 57074, Telegraphic from Sir L. Mallet, Constantinople, to Sir Edward Grey, 7 October 1914. According to Elie Kedourie (Kedourie, 1976, p. 26), Sayyid Talib was rebuffed, more or less as al-Masri had been.

[73] PRO 30/57/45 OO/45, Letter from Maxwell, Cairo, to Kitchener, 5 October 1914.

Arab movement may lead to an attempt by the Arabs and other Mohammedans to revert to the *de jure* Arab Khalifate' - as opposed to the *de facto* Turkish one. The argumentation was significant; the report went on to say that the Arabs favoured the Imam of Yemen as he was descended from the Prophet's tribe, the Quraysh, 'and, unlike the Khedive is not under the control of a non-Moslem Power.' The author seemed to be unaware of developments in Cairo, since, when referring to Mr. Ryan's memo of 22 September, Fitzmaurice opposed inclusion of any reference to the caliphate in the British proclamation to the Muslims of Egypt and India now being suggested at the Residency. The report most presciently urged a harmonisation between the French and Cairo in advance of any endorsement of the Arab movement and argued for excluding both the Yemen and the Hijaz 'from the sphere of our activities.' In his covering note Cheetham expressed his agreement with Fitzmaurice on the separation of the caliphate from the Sultanate and on the necessity of this being achieved by Muslims themselves. The Dragoman's memorandum seems to have been well received by Grey, especially in relation to the separation of the caliphate from the sultanate. Though, while he agreed that this change should be brought about by Muslims, Grey opined that it may not be possible to leave the Yemen and Hijaz outside the British sphere of action. He argued that since the Turks were now stirring up the Arabs there against British Egypt, the British must act in self-defence.[75] However, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Crewe, demurred on the separation of the caliphate from the Sultanate, 'regard[ing] the creation of a powerful politico-religious entity in Arabia with serious misgivings,' and stated that 'for his own part, he would not encourage it even indirectly.'[76] The significance of these early discussions concerning the caliphate is that the key elements of the debate were, essentially, those that would remain prominent throughout the war.

---

[74] PRO 30/57/70, WO/42, Letter from Maxwell to Fitzgerald, 27 October 1914.
[75] FO 371/2140 57234, Minutes (handwritten) initialled 'GMC' (Milne Cheetham), 14 October 1914 attached to Memorandum (handwritten) by Mr. Fitzmaurice, 11 October 1914, and a letter from Ralph Paget, Foreign Office, 16 October 1914 to the Under Secretary of State, India Office, on behalf of Grey for the attention of The Marquess of Crewe, enclosing a copy of Fitzmaurice's memorandum.
[76] FO 371/2140 61238 File No. 46261, Letter from I. W. Holderness, India Office, Whitehall, London, to the Under Secretary of State, FO, 19 October 1914.

3.5 Kitchener's Declaration for an Arab Caliphate

Undoubtedly there were numerous unmediated pressures felt in Egypt which could not have been full appreciated in London, aggravated by a worrying combination of ignorance, alarming snippets of information, false reports, and disinformation, which forced the pace in Cairo. Throughout October, besides the Islamic periodicals calling for a jihad against Britain,[77] there were rumours of an impending attack on Egypt,[78] and, not for the first time,[79] reports that the 'masses' of Syria had been persuaded that the German Kaiser had converted to Islam and was now fighting the Russians on behalf of Muslims everywhere.[80] Various parties within the British imperial administration had begun to respond to the situation with some haste, initially in an uncoordinated fashion. With the agreement of Kitchener, India suggested sending an army division to the Gulf while London had already instructed Captain Shakespear, Indian Government political officer in Kuwait, to secure by persuasion the neutrality of Ibn Sa'ud. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office advised Cheetham to act along similar lines in respect of Imam Yahya and al-Idrisi in order to preclude their collaboration with the Turks.[81] At the end of October Cheetham reported that he had already despatched agents to the Arab chiefs of Syria and Palestine in response to 'Pan-Arabian' enquiries in Cairo.[82]

This 'scattergun' approach is evidence of the fact that something that might properly be called 'a British Middle Eastern policy' had not yet come into being. Nevertheless, amid the chaos there was a discernable uniformity. With the exception of the Gulf invasion plans, which were purely military in execution if not in final intent,[83] all parties acted to secure local alliances by whatever means that were deemed necessary within their particular sphere of operations. In this context, Cairo's efforts to secure the neutrality or even the active co-operation of the

---

[77] SAD WP 134/1/41-53, Secret – translation of Issue No. 21 of the periodical *Jihani Islam* (The Muslim World) in Arabic, Turkish and Urdu, October 1914.
[78] Kedourie, 1976, p. 13.
[79] Similar rumours, probably encouraged by the Germans, followed the Kaiser's visit to Damascus in 1898. See Chapter 2, Note 133.
[80] McKale, 1998, p. 70.
[81] Ibid., pp. 74-5.
[82] FO 371/2140 63581 File No. 46261, Telegram from Cheetham, Cairo, to FO, No. 223, 26 October 1914.
[83] India's aims in southern Mesopotamia were essentially economic and opportunistic, the proposed invasion being a continuation of peace-time policy by different means.

Sharif of Mecca were unexceptional. However, as soon became apparent to those closely involved the issue of the caliphate, the Sharif's unique position within Islam gave that particular enterprise a privileged position in relation to all other similar efforts at collaboration. The Government in London had cause to appreciate this situation since the Cabinet had received a detailed memorandum from Lord Cromer offering advice on action to be taken in the event of war with Turkey. Like Kitchener, Cromer understood the implications of entering into a state of war with the world's leading Islamic power, seat of the caliphate and guardian of the Holy Places. Most notably, he cautioned against announcing that the Holy Places be handed over to the Sharif of Mecca and stressed the importance of proclaiming to Muslims everywhere that 'there would be no sort of Christian interference.' However, he simultaneously drew attention to the supposed illegitimacy of the Turkish caliphate but thought it improbable that it would be challenged from within Islam.[84] It seems likely that if Cromer had been aware of the action which Kitchener was about to propose that he would have opposed it strongly.

On 31 October 1914, the day from which the British and Ottoman empires were effectively at war, Kitchener in London, obtained Grey's approval for the text of a message to be sent to 'Abdullah. Although well-known and frequently quoted, the English original *of the message actually sent* is worth duplicating in full in order to compare it with the draft approved by the Foreign Office in Telegram No. 303.[85]

> Salaams to the Sherif Abdullah. That which we foresaw has come to pass. Germany has bought the Turkish Government with gold, notwithstanding that Great Britain, France and Russia guaranteed the integrity of the Ottoman Empire if Turkey remained neutral in this war. The Turkish Government have, against the wishes of the Sultan and through German pressure, committed acts of war by invading without provocation the frontiers of Egypt with armed bands followed by Turkish soldiers who are now massed at Akaba to invade Egypt, so that the -cause of the Arabs, which is the cause of freedom, has become the cause also of Great Britain.
>
> If the Amir and Arabs in general assist Great Britain in this conflict that has been forced upon us by Turkey, Great Britain will promise not to intervene in any manner whatsoever, whether in things religious or otherwise. Moreover, recognizing and respecting the sacred and unique office of the Amir Hussein, Great Britain will guarantee the independence, rights and privileges of the Sherifate against all external foreign aggression, in particular that of the Ottomans. *Till*

---

[84] SAD WP 193/3/48-5, 'Memorandum by Lord Cromer Respecting the Steps to be Taken in the Event of War with Turkey', 16 October 1914, Printed for use of the Cabinet, 27 October 1914.
[85] FO 371/2139 65589, Handwritten draft telegram from FO to Mr. Cheetham, Cairo, 31 October 1914. FO 141/460/1198, Telegram from FO to HBM's Agent and Consul General in Egypt, No. 303, November 1, 1914.

> *now we have defended and befriended Islam in the person of the Turks; henceforward it shall be in that of the noble Arab.*
>
> *It may be that an Arab of true race will assume the Caliphate at Mecca or Medina, and so good may come, by the help of God, out of all the evil which is now occurring.*
>
> It would be well if Your Highness could convey to your followers and devotees, who are found throughout the world, in every country, the good tidings of the freedom of the Arabs, and the rising of the sun over Arabia. [emphases added][86]

Elie Kedourie makes much of the 'embellishments' of the version approved by the Foreign Office, made by Storrs and Cheetham,[87] supposedly at the encouragement of Clayton.[88] But, whereas the original begins by addressing 'Abdullah in person and then moves abruptly to negotiating with the 'Arabs in general' the final English version associates the two more convincingly while at the same time adding the very firm promise of non-intervention in '*things religious.*' As will be shown later, declarations of non-interference in matters of religion by Britain were frequently connected with their opposite in practice. It will emerge from this thesis that such reassurances were void of real intent, being either perfunctory or mere tokens, symptomatic of an obsessive paranoia.

The significance of Kitchener's letter to 'Abdullah for this thesis is obvious: it openly declares Britain's hope for an Arab caliph. However, the conventional significance of this communication resides in the fact that Britain would later claim not to have promised or encouraged the transfer of the caliphate to the Sharif of Mecca in person. While the precise wording of the letter no doubt facilitated what is now called 'plausible deniability' it would require extreme sophistry to deny the intentions of Kitchener and his men in Cairo. Two rather simple points may be made against the denial. If at this point someone other than Sharif Husayn was being mooted both as caliph 'at Mecca or Medina' and as representative/leader of the Arabs, this could only have had the opposite effect to that intended. This would have amounted to the suggestion that the Sharifian family subordinate themselves to some other Arab chieftain – quite absurd under the circumstances. Moreover, possible candidacy for the caliphate was at no time broached with any other Arab leader.

---

[86] Reproduced in, Kedourie, 1976, p. 19.
[87] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

3.6 An Excursus on Elie Kedourie's Arguments in Relation to Kitchener's Message to 'Abdullah of 1 November 1914

It is important to address Kedourie's arguments as propounded in, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth*, since it is largely on account of this book that the author continues to be the pre-eminent, if not the definitive, authority on British war-time agreements in the Middle East. *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth* endures as one of the most erudite accounts of the so-called 'McMahon-Husayn Correspondence,' and for which reason has been heavily relied upon here as a secondary source. The challenge being made here, therefore, is primarily on methodological and theoretical grounds and concerns the result, in this instance, that the contingent is promoted at the expense of the necessary, and the trivial to the exclusion of the fundamental. It should also be noted at this point that Kedourie is not *primarily* concerned with the issue of the Arab caliphate. This was not his chosen subject, his main aim being to deprecate the Anglo-Sharifian accords in relation to the other promises and declarations of the time and against which the matter of the caliphate is treated as incidental. The objective here is not to champion the Anglo-Sharifian accords to the detriment of, for example, Balfour's declaration of sympathy to the Zionists. Rather, it is Kedourie's assumption of 'incidentality' which is at issue here since it is at odds with the findings of the investigation being undertaken here. Furthermore, although collateral to the main thesis, it will be argued here that it is only if the *full* import of Britain's intentions over the caliphate are taken into account, in a way which goes beyond a strictly literal or legalistic interpretation of the sources, that the true relationship between the war-time agreements may be fully comprehended.

Kitchener's success in having his message authorised by Grey, has been explained in many terms; in terms of his stature and personality, his sleight of hand, his being misled by Clayton, and even in terms of Grey's oversight or misjudgment due to pressure of work. Elie Kedourie makes use of all of these; his line of argument on this matter may be characterised as a 'theory of aberration,' since he considers that it was only through a series of mishaps that Cairo prevailed at this particular juncture. This view may be opposed on three accounts. Firstly, it is

---

[88] Fromkin, 1991, p. 103.

generally understood, as it was at the time, that India's viewpoint was necessarily partial, being concerned with the security of a particular portion of the British empire rather than the empire as a whole. Furthermore, the Constantinople angle, once equated with Britain's interest in the Middle East and directed towards maintaining cordial relations with Turkey, was by now obsolete, leaving the 'Cairo view' in the ascendant. Cairo was thus able to predominate as the remaining locus of expertise and source of knowledge on the Middle East, Islam and the Arabs, and thereby to form the most compelling component in the British imperial perspective on those subjects. Thirdly, although this cogency was relative rather than absolute, it will be argued here that the 'Cairo view,' as yet in the process of being formulated, was, above all, coherent, if ultimately founded on misapprehension.[89]

Regarding the veracity of the British view in general, it will be recalled that this thesis is *less* concerned with the 'correctness' of British notions of the Caliphate, as measured against, say, the object itself, than with explaining the way in which ideas about an Arab caliphate changed throughout the First World War and after. In the absence of reliable intelligence the coherence of the Cairo view was, *in its early stages*, necessarily internal, giving great scope to the imagination and desires of the individuals concerned. It is impossible, therefore, not to take issue with Elie Kedourie's view that this message was merely a case of indeterminate verbal gratification, since, it was both internally consistent and, more importantly, represented a positive choice for an 'Islamic' solution to Britain's anticipated problems in the Middle East. Furthermore, the communication of the 1st of November took account of, and attempted to reconcile in the imperial interest, all that was then known about the politics of the region by Kitchener's representatives in Egypt.

Kedourie describes Clayton's memorandum of 6 September as 'triggering-off'[90] the whole sequence of events leading up to Kitchener's message of 1 November and beyond to the 'McMahon-Husayn Correspondence.' This occurred largely, argues Kedourie, because Clayton had exaggerated or invented the unity of Arab leaders, a fiction which subsequently

---

[89] Not to be confused with the kind of 'mutual misapprehension' – for example between East and West, Muslim and Christian – assumed by the more epistemologically relativist versions of the critique of orientalism referred to in the Introduction, Sections 1.01 & 1.02.
[90] Kedourie, 1976, p. 25.

became a critical factor in the decision making process. However, it would seem incautious to refer to something as having been 'triggered-off' without also considering the extent to which the gun was already loaded. If the words 'triggering-off' are anything more than handy phraseology it must be taken to mean that Clayton's memo was a *necessary* causal factor in the ensuing sequence of events. This may be countered by pointing out, first, that Kitchener was as aware as anyone else of the state of Arab unity or disunity at that time and did not need to place such reliance on Clayton. Secondly, in any event such an assessment was unimportant since the main concern among the British in Cairo at that time was with what was possible in the future. Furthermore, the memorandum of 6 September only spoke of a 'tendency towards combination' among the chiefs. In contrast to his prevailing approach, Kedourie chose to ignore the effect of Kitchener's well known mode of operation, according to which he was generally content to delegate without committing himself openly, especially when he sought to conceal his personal ambitions and as long as he could rely on others to promote them on his behalf.[91] This is likely to have been the case in this instance. If this is taken into account, Kedourie's charge that Storrs and Cheetham were exceeding instructions in redrafting the November declaration to 'Abdullah looses force and Storrs' undoubted tendency to 'embroider on his superiors'[92] would have been welcomed by Kitchener. Even Kedourie himself admits, 'they may have also thought that this was in line with Kitchener's wishes, since the reference to the Arab caliphate in his message itself opened up *such wide prospects and possibilities*' [emphasis added].[93] But this is precisely the point being made here. One of the central tenets of this thesis is that the idea of an Arab caliphate under the veiled protection of Britain could, in the minds of aspiring policy makers in Cairo, be made consistent with a whole range foreseeable and desirable outcomes in the Middle East.

In this way by relying wholly on the *text* and not the *context* of the written record Kedourie concentrates on the immediate concerns relating to the imminence of war with Turkey rather than the more constructive long-term aspects of the 'Cairo view.' In so doing Kedourie fails to incorporate into his thesis an important aspect of imperialism in general, namely the tendency

---

[91] Fromkin, 1991, pp. 88-95 & 147.
[92] Kedourie, 1976, p. 17.
[93] Kedourie, 1976, p. 20. Kedourie seems unable to decide whether Kitchener was being misled *or* being told what he wanted to hear but does not specifically argue that he was led astray *through* being pandered to.

towards opportunistic expansion. Nevertheless, there are sound archival reasons for taking issue with Kedourie on this matter. He is right in saying that Storrs and Cheetham ironed out the ambiguities of Kitchener's original draft, but one must ask then: if these changes were not in accordance with Kitchener's wishes, why is there no hint in the archival record of any attempt to redress the situation in the ensuing weeks? Rather, as Kedourie himself points out, the general drift of the message to 'Abdullah was if anything amplified in a subsequent proclamation to the Arabs which reiterated British support for an Arab caliphate.[94] Furthermore, this later declaration urges Arab unity, suggesting that the authors did in fact recognise the extant fissiparous tendencies of tribal Arabia, a fact which reinforces the point being made here: that Storrs & co., rather than supposing a present state of unity among the Arabs, were actively engaged in promoting it.

Kedourie does in fact acknowledge, in passing though to little effect, that Kitchener's approach to Husayn 'is to be seen not only as a war-time tactic, but as part of a wider and more far-sighted strategy.'[95] In a private letter to Grey written within days of war being declared on Turkey and quoted at length by Kedourie, Kitchener writes:

> Supposing that the Arabs took up arms against the Turks I think it would be our policy to recognise a new Khalif at Mecca or Medina of the proper race; and guarantee the Holy Places from foreign aggression as well as from all internal interference. If this were done there appears to me to be a possibility for allowing Syria to be organised as an Arab state under the Khalif but also under European consular control and European guidance as regards Government.
>
> France would be greatly weakened by having Syria which is not a remunerative possession and which from its geographical position must lead France astray from her real objective Tunis Algeria Morocco.
>
> I believe it is more sentiment than anything else which induces France to keep up her influence in Syria and if we frankly said, we do not want Syria, they would probably say the same and allow the formation of an Arab state that would enable the new Khalifate to have sufficient revenue to exist on.
>
> I think we might tell the Arabs now that this is what we hope for. When there are signs of its realisation it will be time enough to recommend the matter to France and induce her to accept the situation.[96]

The full import of this rare demonstration of candour on Kitchener's part will be developed

---

[94] See Section 3.8, below.
[95] Kedourie, 1976, p. 32.
[96] FO 800/102, pp. 352-354. Private letter (handwritten) from Kitchener to Grey, 11 November 1914.

more fully in the following chapter. Suffice it to say in relation to the issue at hand that this is hardly consistent with Kitchener's having been misled, or with Kedourie's view that the message of 1 November was a case of meaningless gratification. Moreover, the notion of any misdirection occurring among these people is inappropriate if one views Kitchener, Storrs and Clayton as constituting the nucleus of a community of awareness (or indeed ignorance, depending on one's point of view) with regard to British imperial objectives in the Middle East.

In addition, Kedourie seems troubled by the fact that the wishes of Kitchener's subordinates prevailed over what he seems to view as the better instincts of the Foreign Office. In seeking to delegitimise Cairo's attempts to reach an accord with the Sharif of Mecca as the representative of all Arabs, Kedourie contends, with reference to Clayton's memo of 6 September, that, 'left to themselves, the foreign office would have been very reluctant to approach the Sharif, let alone themselves raise the issue of the Caliphate.'[97] This betrays a certain 'bureacratic conventionalism' - an abstract normative idealism - which supposes that the FO might realistically have operated in a political vacuum, that is, in an environment where their contact with the world was direct and unmediated. On the contrary, London would, *necessarily and routinely*, have depended on information received from those officers of the empire whose representations might well have been distorted by parochial interests or warped by personal ambition.

It is argued here that Kedourie's account of 1 November message barely qualifies as an explanation at all since it takes into account so little of what is known about the context of the official communications of late 1914. Indeed, based on the evidence provided by Kedourie himself, his logic may be turned on its head by arguing that the apparent discrepancy between, Cheetham's communication of 26 October, on the one hand, and his and Storrs' redrafting of Kitchener's message to 'Abdullah six days later, on the other, is explicable only if one takes cognisance of the crucial distinction made by Khalidi. That is, between a broadly based and truly political Arab movement, and a single identifiable figurehead whose authority rests on a

---

[97] Kedourie, 1976, p. 26.

unique position within Islam – a distinction which forms an important part of this thesis.[98] The argument presented here not only explains the general tenor of the message of 1 November but also its specific content, such as the stress on Islam and the Caliphate and the implication of a wider Arab movement represented by the Sharif.

It is only under the weight of Kedourie's exclusively textual, as opposed to contextual, method that Clayton's memo of 6 September might be seen as accidentally 'triggering-off' Cairo's approach to the 'Arab question,' rather than as the manifestation of a more general and necessary tendency towards prophylactic collaboration in all its ramifications. While it will not be argued here that Kitchener, Storrs and Clayton were necessarily sincere in anything other than their pursuit of empire, Kedourie's view, that 'Kitchener and Storrs, assumed that the high-flown rhetoric they affected would be as harmless as they imagined, and as meaningless to its recipients as it was to them,'[99] must be rejected. This judgement is at odds with the thesis, in any case acknowledged tacitly by Kedourie, that the Cairo approach demonstrated a definite purpose based on a genuine, if ultimately mistaken, belief in the nature of Arab politics, and reflected a coherent and internally consistent view of the Arab Middle East.

3.7 The Turkish Proclamation of Jihad against the Entente

Although the first act of aggression in the Middle East had been committed by the Turks in their bombardment of Russian Black Sea ports on 29 October, the latter did not declare war on

---

[98] In a similar vein, Kedourie asserts that Cairo's earlier rebuttals of overtures from al-Masri and Sayyid Talib reflected Britain's true and undiscriminating attitude towards the Arab movement. The arguments presented here apply equally to this view.

[99] Kedourie, 1976, p. 21. In fact, the language used in both Kitchener's original and Storrs' English redraft is rather plain in comparison with some of the 'Arabese' used later by Sir Mark Sykes when addressing the officers of the Arab Legion. He employed such designations as: 'Oh Arabs!' and, 'true sons of the Arab Race.' FO 882 Vol. II AL 17/14, Message drafted by Sykes to be communicated to Officers of the Arab Legion, FO to AB, 30 July 1917.

Turkey until 2 November. Three days later when Britain and France followed suit[100] the War Office Intelligence Department in Cairo reported that Turkey had issued calls to jihad against her Christian enemies in the name of the 'Society for Uniting all the Peoples of the Koran.'[101] Whether the British in Cairo were genuinely alarmed by the immediate threat of Holy War is unclear. Nevertheless, those employed in political intelligence were sufficiently concerned to counteract the kind of anti-British propaganda couched in the Islamic terms which formed part of this and other calls to jihad at the earliest opportunity. Partly, no doubt, due to their recent dealings with the family of the Sharif of Mecca they felt particularly vulnerable to claims that Britain wished to abolish the Sultanate-caliphate and destroy the Ka'ba. Those who supported Kitchener's approach to Islam in the context of the war soon found themselves in a cleft stick. Having *secretly* declared themselves in favour of an Arab caliphate they could either remain confined by their adherence to the 'Qurayshite policy' or expose themselves to the allegation 'that [the] British Government has always been [the] enemy of [the] Khalifate of Islam.'[102]

According to Donald McKale, the series of fatwas, proclamations and manifestos issued by the Turks during November 1914[103] were the result of German pressure on the Sultan, as was the appointment of pan-Islamist, Cemal Pasha,[104] as commander of the 4th Army in Syria. Both were intended to undermine British rule in India and Egypt, and British influence in Afghanistan and the Middle East generally.[105] While it was both customary and to be expected that a fatwa would be issued on the outbreak of war in order to render the conflict legal under shari'a, '[i]n comparison with earlier fatwas this one introduced a novel element as it was

---

[100] McKale, 1998, p. 85.

[101] SAD WP 193/4/42-45, Note from WO Intelligence Department, Cairo, 5 November 1914, attached to a translation of calls to 'Jehad' obtained from a source in Baghdad. This particular declaration made much of Christian atrocities against Muslims during the recent war in the Balkans, and the general desire to convert Muslims to Christianity as exemplified in Spain during the *reconquista*.

[102] FO 371/2147, 80326, Sir W. Townley, Tehran, to Sir E. Grey, December 8, 1914, No. 366, referring to a Turkish Embassy counter-declaration to a pronouncement by the Viceroy of India on the commencement of hostilities. This message ends: 'Finally, it is pointed out that British policy towards Islam has always been based on Mr. Gladstone's statement in House of Commons in 1894 that "as long as this cursed book (the Koran) exists on earth there will be no peace."'

[103] Antonius, 1938, pp. 140-141. The Sultan's call to jihad reached the Sharif of Mecca at the same time as Kitchener's despatch of 31 October. Ibid., p. 142.

[104] McKale, 1998, p. 85. Kayali, 1997, p. 187.

[105] McKale, 1998, p. xii. There was disagreement among German orientalists over whether such propaganda would have any effect at all. The Germans seemed untroubled by the fact that Turkey was acting in concert with one Christian power against others. Ibid., p. 85. Note that Kayali, who provides the Turkish as opposed to

expressly addressed to all Moslems, especially those under the colonial rule of Turkey's adversaries, and not only to the Ottoman subjects,'[106] and might, therefore, be viewed as the 'logical outcome of the pan-Islamic policy initiated by Abdulhamid II.'

Lord Cromer, who would later emerge as an opponent of Cairo's Islamic policy, was confident enough of the failure of the Turkish call to jihad to compose a letter for publication in *The Times* in tones of such mockery and disparagement as to observe: 'there is something almost humorous in the idea that an invitation to war against the infidel could with any hope of success be made to appeal to the adherents of Islam when the Kaliph was himself in alliance with two infidel Governments.'[107] Significantly, in a manner apparently at odds with his subsequent entreaties to avoid meddling in Islam and the issue of the caliphate, Cromer felt content to include an almost insouciant reference to the Sultan's lack of legitimacy 'in the eyes of learned Moslems.' Notwithstanding Cromer's explanation for the failure of Turkey's calls to jihad which, in his view, was mainly propagandist in objective: 'The main reason ... was that Pan-Islamism lacked any form of political mass organization[,] [d]espite the exaggerated notions with regard to its force and impact prevalent in Europe.'[108] This was not a judgement that the British Intelligence Department in Cairo could have made at the time. It will be argued here that Cairo's Islamic policy, constructed around the idea of an Arab caliph in the person of Sharif Husayn, was made possible by a lack of real intelligence regarding his true capacity and would ultimately fail for that very reason.

Although at this early stage, each side was not entirely aware of the other's machinations, by the end of 1914 there was undoubtedly in progress a prophylactic war over effective control of the Holy Places of which the institutional-ideological component was a struggle over the caliphate. This, in a certain sense, resembled a hall of mirrors in which it was impossible to discriminate between the likeness of truth and its distorted image. The British feared that the Sharif of Mecca was already in the hands of the Turks while the Germans considered his collaboration with the British a *fait accompli*. With hindsight it has been possible to ascertain

---

German view, argues that the former's aims were somewhat limited being designed to garner domestic support for the war effort and at most to hamper the Entente's mobilisation campaign in the region. Kayali, 1997, p. 187.

[106] Peters, 1979, p. 91.

[107] FO 633/31 p. 63. Letter to *The Times*, December 15, 1914.

that neither was the case; in fact the Sharif was playing a waiting game and had managed to avoid both endorsing the call to jihad and supplying troops for the Turkish 4th Army in Syria.[109] However, it would emerge that the struggle for the Hijaz was by no means symmetrical. Whereas the Turks, could conceivably take Mecca and Medina by force, the British could only gain effective control indirectly and clandestinely if they were to avoid alienating Islamic opinion both within and beyond the British Empire.

3.8 The British Proclamation to the Arabs of 4 December 1914

In the light of the Turkish call to jihad against the Entente, the December proclamation[110] may be construed as pure counter-propaganda. However, it would be a mistake to view it strictly in these terms since the Sudan Government had already provided an example of such propaganda which had been assessed in a more positive light. As early as 7 November, Wingate, Governor General of the Sudan, had written to Clayton reporting that a proclamation had been distributed among the important religious shaykhs and 'ulama assuring them of Britain's friendly disposition towards Islam. Significantly, Wingate conveyed the notion that these people in general did not 'admit the right of a Sultan to be the Khalifa of Islam.'[111] Wingate being somewhat isolated and ever regretful of not receiving recognition, was always keen to advertise his success in maintaining the allegiance of the religious leaders of the Sudan, and, through them, that of the population as a whole. Five days later he informed Clayton of the supportive messages his government had received in *The Sudan Times* in response to his own proclamation. He wrote:

---

[108] Peters, 1979, p. 94.
[109] Kayali, 1997, p. 187.
[110] It is unclear from the archival record to what degree and extent this proclamation was distributed; however, what is at issue here is the thinking behind the document rather than its effect in the 'field.'
[111] SAD CP 469/7/46, Private letter from Wingate, The Palace, Khartoum, to Clayton, 7 November 1914. This letter refers to telegraphic messages of loyalty and support in *The Sudan Times* from 'Sayed Ali el Morghani' and 'Sharif Yousef el Hindi.'

> Do you think it is realized that such messages as these may result in saving the British Government hundreds of thousands, or perhaps millions of pounds, for I am very hopeful that their effect will be to keep the Sudanese quiet and in good fettle during the present war with Turkey? When it is realised that had these Religious Sheikhs taken a different attitude it might have been necessary to appeal for large British reinforcements in order to maintain our position in this country, I think that some acknowledgement should be forthcoming.

This plea for recognition contains an oblique reference to a view which counted as an axiom for British imperialists operating in the Middle East at this time, specifically that Islam was the key to successful governance in this area. This passage is also significant in that it refers, albeit indirectly, to the reason for this being the preferred mode of rule - namely, that the many could be ruled through the not so many on behalf of the very scarce in order that the vagaries of the masses need not be taken into account.

Elie Kedourie is of the opinion, and there is no particular reason to question his judgement on this particular point, that the December proclamation was 'almost certainly composed by Storrs' and that the Foreign Office was unaware of its publication.[112] The proclamation was addressed to 'the natives of Arabia and the Arab provinces' which implies a distinction between the peninsula and what has subsequently been referred to as the 'northern tier.' The body of the text however begins more precisely by addressing 'the natives of Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia – the countries lying between the Red Sea, Bahr El Arab, Persian Gulf, frontiers of Persia and Anatolia and the Mediterranean Sea.' This could be construed as acknowledging non-Arab and non-Islamic minorities except that the remainder of the document, seven pages in all, besides being contrived in Islamic terms, refers exclusively to Arabs. Significantly, the proclamation (a) defines the Arab area (above), (b) urges Arab unity in order to expel the Turks, (c) promises British recognition of Arab independence, and (d) guarantees defence against the Turks and outside interference. Regardless of whether or not the document was assembled under conditions of ignorance, it would seem reasonable to treat its contents in their entirety and in relation to one another, the ideas expressed in it being so deliberately and closely juxtaposed. The issue of governance is notably absent except for repeated reference to the matter of the caliphate which would seem to constitute the 'principle

---

[112] Kedourie, 1976, p. 21.

of unity' by which the Arab area might be ruled. These considerations are clearly linked in the following sentence:

> Great Britain knows as well as the Muslums that the Islamic Khalifate is a right to the Koreish the tribe of the Great Prophet of Islam and that the Arabs are more powerful than the Turks in the administration of government and are better prepared to uphold the elements of progress and civilisation – also that the Arabs have a better claim for England's goodwill and assistance.[113]

The congruence of supreme government and Arab caliphate is later made explicit:

> The Government of Great Britain therefore promises you help if you help yourselves and take steps to establish *an Empire for the Khalifate to administer your vast countries* and she would not require of you, in return, to help her in fighting the Turks or others but she wishes you to work for yourselves and unite in serving your cause and interests. [emphasis added][114]

One could speculate that certain sections of this document, if disguised under a bogus authorship, might well pass as a founding document of Arab nationalism.

The proclamation goes on to explain Britain's former disinclination to support the Arabs against the Turks in terms of her reluctance to subvert the caliphate and, according to the same logic, rationalises the apparent *volte-face* in terms of the present desire to *save* the caliphate. This document, which refers to Arabs as 'the leaders of Islam,'[115] argues that, on the assumption of the impending fall of the Turkish caliphate, 'there is no nation amongst Muslums who is now capable of upholding the Islamic Khalifate except the Arab nation and no country is more fitted for its seat than the Arab countries.'[116] That is, an area more readily accessible to British influence.

---

[113] PRO FO 141/710/3156, 'An official proclamation from the Government of Great Britain to the natives of Arabia and the Arab provinces', 4 December 1914.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

Remarkably, reference to the December declaration is entirely absent in Ronald Storrs' memoirs.[117] This could be construed as reflecting an unease or guilt at his former sincerity given that he would later have many reasons to deny his part in this whole episode. Alternatively, it is conceivable that the December proclamation represented a sophisticated concoction intended to induce the neutrality of the Arabs by holding out false promises of liberation. However, one would expect to find far more evidence for a deception on this scale than is, in any case, commensurate with an emergent policy still in its extemporary phase, and, moreover, more evidence than the archival record does in fact yield. Rather, it may be concluded that the proclamation of 4 December tends to confirm the underlying import of Kitchener's letter to 'Abdullah of 31 October 1914.[118]

3.9 India's Objections: Differences Emerge

Much has been made of the differences between the Government of India, and Cairo War Office, in their approaches to Middle Eastern policy during the First World War. Briton Cooper Busch appraises the relationship most succinctly, describing it as one of 'mutual ignorance.'[119] Certainly India's objectives were always limited, being confined to more or less immediate material gains in Mesopotamia and effective control of certain strategic points.[120] Conversely, the War Office, through Kitchener and the eyes and ears of his men in Cairo, tended to view the Middle East in relation to the conduct of the war as a whole and in connection with the future of the empire in its entirety. Notwithstanding any longer-term imperial ambitions which Kitchener may have cherished, in view of the anticipated stalemate in Western Europe, he recommended diverting sufficient resources to the Middle East to

---

[117] Storrs, 1943.
[118] See Note 86, above.
[119] Busch, 1971, p. 35.
[120] Namely: Aden, Eastern Arabia and Southern Persia. Kedourie, 1976, p. 29.

remove Turkey from the war thus allowing the Russians and Serbs to concentrate on Austria-Hungary and thereby relieve the Western Front.[121]

Such differences are important when appraising the applicability of strategies of collaboration in the various theatres of conflict and were soon evident in the antagonistic attitudes the two parties adopted towards the issue of an Arab caliphate. However, the respective views of Cairo and India, although antithetical, stemmed from a common premis, namely, that the power of Islam under the direction of a caliph ranged against Britain was a potential danger to the Empire, particularly in India. More importantly, both parties agreed that *to be seen* to oppose, subvert, or meddle in the caliphate in any way could only hasten the realisation of that danger. From this shared premis, nevertheless, India and Egypt drew different conclusions. Whereas India's tendency was to appease or placate the caliphate in its existing form, Cairo wished at least to neutralise the institution or, better still, make an instrument of it for themselves by seeing it transferred to a friendly Arab. Expressed in these terms, these ostensibly opposing viewpoints are reconcilable. If for any reason the existing caliphate ceased to be a menace to the British Empire with its sizeable Muslim population, then the Cairo project would become an unnecessary adventure. On the other hand, an effectively neutralised caliphate under veiled British protection would probably satisfy India. Of course at the time no one imagined that Turkey would one day abolish the caliphate herself.

Initially, Cairo's and India's 'policies' were simply uncoordinated, the substantial differences as yet unrealised. At the end of October Clayton suggested to Cheetham the possibility of employing al-Masri to organise a pan-Arabian revolt using the Turk's Mesopotamian Army. 'In short, Great Britain would supply the sinews of war and the Arabs would supply the fighting element. In this way a close alliance would be cemented between Great Britain and

---

[121] McKale, 1998, p. 95. It is frequently assumed that the First World War was not an imperial war because most of the combat took place in Europe. However, there were very good reasons for concentrating the war effort in Europe. An imperial power which defeats its opponent 'at home' will expect to gain the latter's empire all at once. The converse is not true however, since a power that gains substantial territories overseas would expect to be deprived of them in a like fashion should it capitulate 'at home.' In this context the assault on the Turkish capital (the Dardanelles campaign) was a hybrid example, containing elements of both strategies. The same cannot be said of the 'Alexandretta option,' however. See Section 4.1.

the newly-formed Mohammedan Power, to the mutual advantage of both.'[122] Towards the end of November, the Foreign Office, realising that such a collaborative approach was at odds with India's proposed unilateral offensive in lower Mesopotamia, conveyed Cheetham's concern regarding British designs on Basra and Baghdad.[123] Evidently Kitchener believed that in taking the initiative he was *making* policy rather than *following* it, since, when asked by Maxwell for some indication of the 'ultimate policy ... regarding Palestine and Syria in connection with the Arab movement' Kitchener was forced to admit that 'no distinct line' could be defined at present.[124] Even before Kitchener's offer to 'Abdullah and the Sharif of 31 October had become generally known throughout the relevant departments of government, the Government of India and the India Office were expressing fears of an Arab revolt and of a united Arabia under an Arab caliph. As Grant, the Indian Foreign Secretary, saw it, a failed Arab rebellion supported by Britain would only be embarrassing whereas a successful one would become 'a Frankenstein monster which may be an infinite source of trouble hereafter.'[125] With great prescience Lord Crewe, at the India Office, expressed his preference for 'a weak and disunited Arabia, split up into little principalities so far as is possible under our suzerainty- but incapable of co-ordinated action against us, forming a buffer against the Powers in the West.'[126]

The India Office did not receive a copy of Kitchener's message to 'Abdullah until 12 December: an 'oversight' for which the Foreign Office apologised.[127] Apart from recording his displeasure at his department's not having been consulted, Hirtzel at the Political Department of the India Office, minuted his view that 'the hint to the Arabs to assume the Caliphate at Mecca and Medina does the very thing which this Office has always understood

---

[122] FO 371/2140 77088. Covering letter from Cheetham at the British Agency, Cairo to Grey, No. 177, 15 November 1914, with a copy of a despatch from Lt.Col. Clayton, Intelligence Department, War Office, Egypt, to Cheetham, Cairo, 30 October 1914. It may reasonably be assumed that this putative revolt was understood to be subsumed under the authority of the Sharif of Mecca as caliph.

[123] FO 371/2140 78239. Telegram from Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Viceroy, Foreign Department, 27 November 1914.

[124] FO 371/2139 77224. Letter from Sir John Maxwell to Earl Kitchener, No. 332E, 27 November 1914 with lord Kitchener's reply to Maxwell, 28 November 1914.

[125] Busch, 1971, p. 61, referring to a note by Grant dated 5 December 1914.

[126] Busch, 1971, p. 61.

[127] This seems barely convincing. One possible interpretation would be to suppose that the FO intentionally afforded Cairo a 'clear run' in establishing a policy before either India or the India Office had opportunity to intervene, though the evidence for this is purely circumstantial.

that H.M.G. would *not* do.'[128] This was far less damning, however, than the opinion expressed by Sir Thomas Holderness, the Permanent Under Secretary:

> I doubt if the Foreign Office quite realises wherein the Caliphate consists and what it implies. Unlike the Papacy it must, if it is to be more than a mere empty claim, have the substance of an extensive temporal empire. The Sherif of Mecca could not, I imagine, make good a title to the Caliphate unless he established temporal ascendancy over the states and chiefdoms of Arabia and could enforce his will and exercise political sovereignty over Arabia. The guarantee given by Lord Kitchener was a guarantee to the Sheik of the *status-quo*- "the independence, rights and privileges of the Sherifate." But the *status quo* will not carry him to the Caliphate of Arabia, much less of the Moslem world. If we are to hold out hopes of the latter, we should have to help him in a career of conquest: and I am sure that this is not intended.[129]

Crewe concurred, observing: 'It is dangerous to mix up the Khalifate and the Sherifate, or to suppose that the latter can easily be transformed into the former.'[130] Crewe seems to have mistaken an active endeavour to redirect history for a passive assessment of the past and in so doing his views failed to engage with Kitchener's on what was thought feasible for the future.

Ironically, while India was deprecating Cairo's efforts, less senior representatives of the Indian Government were independently involved in schemes which implicated them in a course of action which both assumed and tended to enhance the status of the Sharif of Mecca in relation to other Arabian chiefs. The Viceroy reported to the Foreign Office in December that the Bombay Government had already agreed with the Resident of Aden's proposal to approach the Sharif of Mecca and guarantee his family's hereditary rights. However, the Foreign Office, wishing to assert their authority and impute some consonance into the proceedings, enjoined: 'But in view of it and of fact that His Majesty's Government have also asked Bin Saud and Sheikh of Koweit to address Grand Sherif ... it is undesirable to approach him through a third channel.'[131]

Captain Shakespear, through whom India had maintained contacts with Ibn Sa'ud, a month later expressed a view which might have been used to support either India or Cairo:

---

[128] Kedourie, 1976, p. 30.
[129] Kedourie, 1976, p. 30. Minute dated 5 January 1915.
[130] Ibid.

> A Jihad, especially if proclaimed at Mecca by one of the Sherif's standing in Islam, is a contingency of which the consequences are unforseeable and incalculable. Such a proclamation would, at least, raise the whole Arab World, . . . This contingency - a 'Jihad,' proclaimed by the acknowledged and accepted descendant of the Prophet at Mecca - I venture to submit needs the most serious consideration, and to be constantly kept in mind at the present critical time in all our dealings with Arab Chiefs in general.[132]

The point of citing such testimony is to illustrate the fact that, without regard to the ultimate viability of their respective preferences, in spite of the ostensible differences between Cairo's and India's attitudes, there was a common understanding regarding the importance of the Sharif of Mecca which derived from his unique position within Islam.

3.10 Conclusion

'Abdullah's reply to Kitchener's was received in Cairo on 13 December. The translated version contained the line 'our country has come to hold most conscientiously to your suggestions'[133] which seemed to summarise the general attitude, and, while committing no-one to anything in particular was not preclusive of future collaboration. The matter of the caliphate was not referred to in the written reply and it may be assumed that this was an issue of some sensitivity for the Sharif too. However, on returning to Cairo on 8 December, Storrs' messenger conveyed orally the express view of the Sharif to the effect 'that the Ottoman caliphate no longer existed.'[134] Importantly, a range of possible future arrangements based on the anticipated demise of the Turkish caliphate had been mutually acknowledged by both parties.

The *formal* correspondences between the situation of 1879-80 and 1914 regarding Britain and the Hijaz are apparent. These, rather than the notion of some linear causal link between these

---

[131] FO 371/2147 83620 Letter from the Viceroy to the Foreign Office, 11 December 1914 and letter from the Foreign Office to the Viceroy, 14 December 1914.
[132] Westrate, 1992, pp. 13-14. Referring to FO 882/5, 149.
[133] Kedourie, 1976, p. 21.

respective episodes, are stressed here in order to emphasise that it was the recurrence of immediate possibilities for collaboration based on a perceived concurrence of interests, which precipitated Cairo's endeavours in 1914. In both episodes Britain, or at least those of her subjects charged with protecting the empire, felt threatened by Islam, not Islam *per se*, but Islam directed by some authority inimical to Britain's imperial interests. In both episodes the authority of the Sharif of Mecca, understood to be the second most eminent individual within Islam, was under threat from the first, namely the Turkish Sultan as caliph. Needless to say, the insecurity of all parties concerned was felt far more acutely in 1914 than it had been in 1879-80, in large part because European imperial rivalry and the desire for autonomy among certain Arabs had intensified during the intervening period. Finally, from the British perspective, the idea of Arab independence was accompanied by vague notions of the inevitable restoration of an Arab caliphate. It was the conjunction of these factors, not in themselves unrelated, which provided both the impetus, and opportunity, for collaboration in each instance.

The points made against what has been described as Elie Kedourie's 'thesis of aberration' need not be repeated here. What has been emphasised in its place, however, is the notion that the origins of Cairo's Islamic policy, or what Elizabeth Monroe has termed the 'Western Arabian'[135] view, were rather more entrenched in circumstance than is generally supposed. This is evidenced by the similarity between certain initiatives undertaken by Cairo and India in spite of their apparent differences and, in turn, the convergence between the latter's underlying assumptions with Turkish, German, and even French expectations, well ahead of the actuality of an Anglo-Sharifian alliance. This suggests, regardless of its ultimate feasibility, a certain universal currency to the idea, in very general terms, of a European power collaborating with an *Arab* caliph in order to subvert the power of pan-Islam and, at the same time, help 'liberate' the Arabs from Turkish rule.

The relative objectivity of the idea of a restored Arab caliphate at this time is further supported by the fact that the idea of ruling 'through' it, as it were, occurred simultaneously to Egyptian

---

[134] Ibid.
[135] Monroe, 1963, p. 36.

nationalists wishing to restore Egyptian hegemony in Syria and Arabia, and to Arab nationalists, proto-nationalists and separatists based in Syria. This fact in turn added an extra dimension to the emerging competition over political pan-Islam which, for the British at least, motivated their competitive bid for the allegiance of the Sharif of Mecca as prime candidate for Arab caliph. Furthermore, such facts could have only encouraged the view, held by the British in Cairo that, one way or another, the restoration of the Arab caliphate was inevitable and had better be turned to Britain's advantage. In other words, intervention in the matter was imperative. It is worth remarking at this point that the British felt unwilling to endorse any Khedival bid for the caliphate since this office was already too closely and too obviously connected with Britain. Moreover, a Khedive as caliph, supported by Egyptian nationalists who presented the same problems to Britain as did the Syrian based nationalists, was unlikely to remain pliant from a British point of view.

The force and apparent reasonableness of Clayton's assessment of 6 September and the action then taken by Kitchener can only have been enhanced by the Turkish response to the outbreak which took the form of a jihad against the allied powers. Moreover, the line taken by Cairo was reinforced rather than undermined by the British declaration to the Arabs of early December 1914. In addition, discussions over press censorship[136] in Britain concerning the matter of the caliphate indicate that deliberations over future intervention in the matter were being undertaken in earnest at all levels of government. On the basis of this evidence the view that the idea of the revival of the Arab caliphate with the aid of Britain was one of central importance in the conduct of Britain's wartime Middle Eastern policy must be upheld.

The foregoing should not be assumed to support the notion that the manipulation taking place during this episode was strictly unilateral. Successful collaboration is, in any event, based on a degree of mutual knowledge and understanding. At this particular juncture, however, the Sharif's estimation of imperial affairs, like al-Masri's, appeared more advanced than Britain's comprehension of either Arab or Islamic politics. Britain's backwardness in this regard, it will be argued later, contributed to the ultimate failure of Cairo's collaborative endeavour. This disproportionality between power and knowledge will be revisited in the conclusion to the

[136] FO 371/2147; and, HO 139/3/3/PT, December 1914, various.

thesis in making certain final comments on some of the alternative approaches to the subject matter referred to in the Introduction.

Finally, the British idea of an Arab caliphate as the basis of a collaborative enterprise had been conceived only in broad outline by the end of 1914. As such the suggestions made to 'Abdullah at the end of October expressed an uncorroborated wish for the future as much as it reflected an informed assessment of historical fact. That the extent and quality of British intelligence very much lagged behind the need for action meant that for the time being the idea of a British-backed Arab caliphate would develop autonomously. It is therefore the *internal* consolidation of the idea and its intimate association with the vision of British suzerainty over the Arab Middle East which will form the basis of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: Removal of the Caliphate from Enemy Influence Becomes the *Sine Qua Non* of British Middle Eastern Policy

4.0 Introduction

By the end of 1914, the idea of a revived Arab caliphate in some kind of arrangement with Britain existed only in outline. In a certain sense, therefore, Kitchener's actions, that is his propositions to the Sharif of Mecca and the December declaration to the Arabs, were ahead of the underlying theory. This chapter will examine how the British understanding of Arab politics and Islam moved from impulsive speculation towards a coherent, if highly abstract, view of a restored Arab caliphate, though still construed on the basis of imperial desire rather than reliable and up-to-date information. The coherence of this vision was already evident in an unusually candid note sent by Kitchener to Grey in January 1915 in which he confided his preference for a British landing at Alexandretta. This, he hoped, would result in an Arab state under a caliph with effective European control.

The significance of the 'Alexandretta option' for this enterprise serves to illustrate the *conceptual* integrity of the 'Cairo vision.' The main components of this theoretical construction are a 'Greater Arabia' severed from Turkey in which an Arab revolt, sympathetic to, and dependent upon, Britain, leads to the restoration of an Arab caliphate in Mecca. The new Arab state was to include Syria as the main source of its revenues and would be *nominally* unified under the caliph though subject to the effective control of Britain. What remained contentious from the outset as indeed it would throughout the war, however, was the question of whether Britain should proceed clandestinely in this matter of central importance to the future of Islam, or declare her aims to the Arabs directly in order to ensure their support against Turkey.

The earliest discussions over the future of the Arabic speaking areas of the Ottoman Empire indicate that questions of collaboration and the need to identify suitable local 'representatives' were paramount. Furthermore, early deliberations over the future of areas such as Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and the Hijaz serve to illustrate the inherent flexibility and adaptability of the British caliphate idea, and to emphasise the key role anticipated for the caliphate in preserving a semblance of unity among territories to be disposed of in a variety of ways. It is significant in this context that Palestine in particular emerges as an unknown quantity, which, if only according to the logic of imperial collaboration, would predispose Britain to approach it in tandem with an *external* collaborator.

An early report ordered by the Governor General of the Sudan is examined in some detail as an outstanding and influential document which, from a British point of view, proposed an 'Arab solution to the Islamic question' and an 'Islamic solution to the Arab question.' The inevitable demise of the Ottoman Empire, it was supposed, would induce Muslims in general, and Arabs in particular, to strive for an independent Arab caliphate. Here too, the imperative of Qurayshite descent was emphasised, as was 'a system of autonomous Arab states.' In conjunction with an external British protectorate, Wingate's more sophisticated solution corresponded neatly with that already proposed in the Kitchener-Clayton-Storrs scheme.

Having outlined the development of the idea of a restored Arab caliphate among the political intelligence officers working in Cairo and Khartoum, this chapter will go on to examine the part played by deliberations over the caliphate in what amounted to the first coordinated attempt to establish Britain's long-term aims with regard to Arabia and the Arabic speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire. It invariably goes unremarked that at least fourteen percent of the final report of the de Bunsen Committee, a sub-committee of the CID, was devoted exclusively to the issue of the caliphate. Although the conclusions of the committee were not definitive, and the occasionally disjointed contributions of the participants did not reflect the abstract coherence assumed in Cairo, considerations over the caliphate emerged as fundamental to the general drift of policy. It will be argued here that the deliberations of the de Bunsen Committee show how the notion of an alternative caliphate under effective British

control became an irreducible precondition of British rule in post-war Arabia and was thereby established as the cornerstone of British Middle Eastern Policy during the great War.

4.1 Towards a Definite and Coherent Caliphate Policy

The link between what is referred to here as the 'Alexandretta option' and British encouragement of an Arab uprising has been acknowledged by several authors[1] it being generally accepted that Kitchener was the leading proponent, one author even referring to it as Kitchener's 'own pet project.'[2] A British landing in northern Syria, ostensibly a purely military concern, was in fact part of a more comprehensive proposal which, according to Isaiah Friedman,

> suggested nothing less than a complete hegemony of the Middle East, an alluring enough prospect to prompt British officers in Cairo to devise a scheme which could simultaneously wrest Syria from the Turks and eliminate rival claimants, [of which the] centre-piece was a landing at Alexandretta, whence the invading force was to cut Turkish communications to Aleppo and foment a local uprising.[3]

John Fisher goes further in saying that 'Kitchener attached such importance to the acquisition of Alexandretta because he believed that its possession represented the lynchpin in a broader strategy evolved by himself and Storrs, whereby the Khalifate would be transferred to Arabia and a substantial Arab Empire would emerge under British auspices.'[4]

---

[1] Khalidi, 1980, p. 369. Westrate, 1992, p. 12, refers to the idea as having been favoured by Kitchener, Wingate, and John Maxwell the commanding general of the British forces in Egypt.
[2] Busch, 1971, p. 35.
[3] Friedman, 1973, p. 97.
[4] Fisher, 1999, p. 2.

A military assault on some part of the Ottoman Empire had been considered as early as 1906 as a result of the 'Aqaba incident'[5] and thereafter came increasingly to be associated with a revolt among the Arabs of the region which would sever (Greater) Arabia from Turkey. By the onset of war in the Middle East the idea of a British attack on Syria was regarded in certain quarters as the means to ruling Arabia through a revived Arab caliphate. In this connection, Kitchener's note to Grey of 11 November 1914[6] (quoted in full in Section 3.6) is worthy of further consideration, since, in spite of its being more usually referred as an illustration of Kitchener's attitude towards France, it indicates that Kitchener had already considered the implications of a wide-open Arabia and offered some relatively concrete solutions. Specifically, the letter envisages an Arabia, united under an Arab caliph guaranteed by Britain *within which* Syria would be controlled by France. It will be seen later that this notion has important implications when considering the relationship between a united Arab caliphate and Britain's support for Zionism in Palestine[7]. This entire scheme is conceptually incoherent without the Arab caliphate as a unifying principal.

The fact that Syria is seen as being essential to the whole scheme as a source of revenue for the impoverished but symbolically vital Hijaz is proof that some kind of unity, no matter how nominal, was envisaged. This letter marks a new departure, insofar as an Arab revolt, originally viewed as an adjunct to a military plan to save Egypt from Turkish invasion, now becomes crucial for the installation of an Arab caliph through which Britain might extend her empire, whether as an end in itself or out of externally imposed necessity. Furthermore, a landing at Alexandretta, soon to become Kitchener's preferred option, is now seen as subordinate to the exigency of an Arab revolt.

Clayton too preferred the 'Alexandretta option' which, in comparison to a landing at Haifa was 'a far more attractive proposition' since it severed the Syrian Army from its base and opened up the greatest range of subsequent actions. Moreover, Alexandretta was linked implicitly to the Arab caliphate idea, though Clayton added a note of caution insisting 'that

---

[5] Khalidi, 1980, Ch. 1, pp. 1-56. This episode which grew out of tensions over the status of the Sinai peninsula (over whether it should form part of Egypt or the Turkish Empire), began with a build-up of British and Turkish forces around the port of 'Aqaba, and ended with a Turkish capitulation in the face of a British ultimatum.
[6] FO 800/102 pp. 352-354. Private letter (handwritten) from Kitchener to Grey, 11 November 1914.

any proposal as regards an Arab Khalifate should come from the Arabs themselves' while allowing that Britain 'guarantee the integrity of the Khalifate [illegible] and of the Holy Places against all external aggression.' It is important to stress, however, that Clayton's caution was over means rather than ends since, with oblique reference to the issue of Qurayshite descent he added that Britain 'desires to see the Khalifate occupied by one who is fully entitled to that high office and who would command the reverence and support of the Mohamedan world.'[8] There appeared to be considerable consensus among Britain's orientalists at this early stage over the issue of Qurayshite descent. Lord Cromer, who was, to say the least, lukewarm about the idea of Britain's involvement in the issue of the caliphate, received advice from his former Oriental Secretary, Boyle, that in the event of the fall of the Turkish Sultanate 'the question of the Khalifate would be a curious one academically.' However, Boyle concluded that 'it is essential that the Khalif be an Arab of Koreish descent.'[9]

By the beginning of March the War Cabinet had decided to proceed with a landing in the Dardanelles without as much as a diversion at Alexandretta. Kitchener and his associates in Cairo were, naturally, disappointed[10] though it is hard to imagine how the 'Cairo scheme' could possibly have been ready for implementation by mid-March. T. E. Lawrence would later boast that he remained 'unrepentant about Alexandretta scheme which was from beginning to end, [his] invention.'[11] There is simply no archival evidence to support this claim. In fact the question over Alexandretta as it emerged in the earliest weeks of the war in the Middle East is indicative of serious deficiency in British thinking about the region. British knowledge about the caliphate was at this stage, scant, to say the least, as was British intelligence concerning the society over which it was intended the new caliph would rule. People like Clayton were, however, sufficiently experienced in imperial governance to prefer local partners with traditional authority over a more secular nationalist leadership with a broad independent political base. This was Clayton's concern when he wrote of 'the Pan-Arabs' in January 1915 that,

---

[7] See Section 5.5, and Note 58, below.
[8] SAD CP 694/3/1-6, Note by Lt. Col. Clayton, DOI, Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo, 3 January 1915.
[9] FO 633/24 p. 56-57. Boyle to Cromer, 3 March 1915.
[10] PRO 30/57/61 WL/5 Birdie to Kitchener, 3 March 1915.
[11] Garnett, 1938, pp. 85-7, Item 32, Letter to D.G. Hogarth, Grand Hotel, Cairo, 18 March 1915.

> they are inflamed with ideas of an independent Arab Empire including Syria and Mesopotamia & all ruled over by an Arab Khalifa at Mecca, and they push [?] for England's guarantee to support this idea. This is going a great deal further than our Gov't is likely to follow, especially as regards Mesopotamia, over which we shall undoubtedly require control. I have therefore avoided coming into close contact with him just lately and have confined myself to very vague generalities.[12]

British Middle Eastern policy taken as a whole, in contrast to the scheme being hatched in Cairo, was far from coherent and evidently wanting at this stage – a fact of which those imperialists operating locally were acutely aware. One of these, Sir Reginald Wingate, based in Khartoum, had a tendency to overcompensate for his remoteness from the centre of policy-making by corresponding with as many people as possible. He did so in order to persuade those with more direct influence in London to adopt a Cairo-centred policy based on some kind of British accord with Islam. In mid-January, Wingate set out his views on Arabian policy from the perspective of the western littoral of the Red Sea. It is significant that, like many other British imperialists in the area, his entire approach was premised upon the primary distinction between the spiritual and temporal dominion of Turkey in Arabia. While he recognised that the Wahhabi and Shi'i populations of Arabia were not susceptible to the spiritual dominion of the Turkish caliphate, the 'pre-eminence of the Turkish Empire in the world of Islam' and its ability to safeguard the Holy Places against Christian European aggression was paramount. He concluded, therefore, that 'provided that the Turkish temporal dominion can be overthrown without raising the religious susceptibilities and fanaticism of the Arabs, the spiritual dominion will probably dissipate at once.' The only danger to Britain in the area then was 'the cry of "Islam in danger."' The success of such endeavours would depend on convincing declarations being issued by Britain to the effect that she had no territorial ambitions in Arabia, especially the Hijaz, and that great Britain was well disposed towards Islam.

A significant difference is apparent between the methodology of the Cairo residency and that of Wingate. Whereas the former started from certain rudimentary ideas about Islam as a whole combined with a strategic view of empire, the latter began by examining the proclivities and

---

[12] SAD WP 194/1/292-294, Private letter from Clayton, Intelligence Office, War Office, Cairo, to Wingate, January 1915.

capacities of each Arab chieftain in terms of their amenability to collaborative arrangements with Britain. Nevertheless, the two approaches were ultimately complimentary due to the congruity of their underlying assumptions concerning Islam and Middle Eastern politics. Although he did not explicitly link the Sharif of Mecca to the idea of an Arab caliph at this stage, Wingate judged the Sharif to be ripe for collaboration due to his vulnerability *vis-à-vis* the Turks and other Arab chiefs, especially Ibn Sa'ud. Furthermore, the Sharif entertained an ambition for 'spiritual dominion in Arabia, and consequently throughout Islam.'[13] Regardless of their different starting points, Wingate's thoughts as recorded in mid-January pointed towards the solution which was already being proposed in Cairo. The convergence of these respective viewpoints is evidenced in a report drafted on his behalf by his private secretary, captain Symes.

4.2 Captain Symes' Report of February 1915

Wingate became increasingly concerned with what he perceived as the 'drift' in Middle Eastern policy and the unwillingness of London and India to take the advice of those like him and Clayton with longstanding experience in the area. He confided to Clayton his reluctance to speak out on matters of policy unless specifically requested.[14] Nevertheless, on receiving Symes' report of 15 February Wingate was induced to write directly to Grey[15] in the hope of influencing the formation of policy in London. Symes' report set out to link the Arab and Muslim 'Questions,' doing so on the stated assumption that Muslims viewed the future of their faith in terms of 'its perpetration as an independent political system, as opposed to a creed or a mere school of ethics.' Significantly, Symes linked the Muslim 'sentimental attachment' to the

---

[13] SAD WP 194/1/92-95, Secret – 'Note on British Policy in Arabia in Reference to the Situation on the Red Sea (Arabian) Littoral', signed R.W., 11 January 1915.
[14] SAD WP 194/2/101-2, Letter from Wingate, Governor General's Office, Khartoum, to Clayton, 18 February 1915.
[15] SAD WP 194/2/178, Letter from Wingate, Khartoum, marked 'Very Private' to Clayton, 27 February 1915, in which he explains that he had 'decided to drop what might perhaps be thought a dog-in-the-manger attitude and let one or two of the Authorities have our views for what they are worth.'

Ottoman Caliphate with the centrality of Arabia and the Holy Places. In view of the impending collapse of the Turkish Empire, therefore,

> it is evident to all that, as a result of the present war, existing conditions may be shattered at their base; and in seeking a means of reconstruction and the preservation of their ideals, the thoughts of many Moslems turn, not unnaturally, to the glory of the former Arabian Empire and the possibility of its revival under a new Arab Khalifa.

He then quoted an unnamed member of the 'Young Arab Party' to the effect that,

> without the guarantee afforded by an independent Khalifate the future state of the Moslems will be that of the Jews – namely, complete political dependency: ... the territorial integrity of the (Asiatic) Arab countries is essential to the existence of such a Khalifate; and ... the inviolability of the Holy Places of Islam to access by non-Moslems can only be secured if their approaches, at any rate by land, are allowed to remain under independent Moslem control.

Importantly, Symes noted that the pan-Arabians were aware of the practical difficulties involved in the realisation of their ideals, especially the tendency towards political fragmentation, but that 'they cl[u]ng to the conception of an Arab Khalifate' as the essential condition for the conservation of 'the temporal and spiritual power of Islam, and justify their hopes by an appeal to sentiment and tradition.' The significance of this report was, firstly, that it corresponded with, and reinforced, the policy already set in motion by Kitchener. Secondly, it appeared to reconcile Cairo's Sharifian policy with the minimum requirements of the secular minded pan-Arabians for whom Islam was an instrument of temporal rule in much the same way as it appeared to the British.

Symes' report concluded that the defeat of Turkey was likely to result in a diminished attachment to the Ottoman caliphate but that neither the complete abolition of the institution nor a caliphate under *direct* British or Christian protection would be acceptable, even to the Muslims of the empire. It followed, therefore, that 'the possibility of re-establishing an Arabian Khalifate will merit very careful consideration.' Symes advised that 'the contingency of its realization should certainly be allowed for in any declaration of British Moslem policy.' On an even more practical level, Symes advised that Britain should offer the Arabs, under a caliph, *protection from the outside*. The report was forthright in indicating the need for a

prophylactic collaborative enterprise motivated by the fear of pan-Islamic reaction against Britain:

> If an undertaking of this kind were given, and stress laid on the traditional claims of the Arabs (Koreish) to the Sceptre of Islam, the destruction of the temporal dominion of Turkey might assume, in Arab and Anglo-phil Moslem eyes, the character of a blow struck on behalf of the rightful protectors of Islam (the Arabs) against the Turkish Usurper of the Khalifate. This interpretation, by safeguarding our reputation as the friend of Islam, would also do much to check the spread of insidious German influences which base their claims to Moslem sympathy on the alliance with Turkey and the convenient fact that Germany is the titular sovereign of no Moslem state.[16]

The significance of this argument, was that it pointed to one collaborative enterprise in particular: that involving the Sharif of Mecca due to his paramountcy based on his Qurayshite descent.

The Foreign Office copy of Captain Symes' report has attached to it copious notes made by Grey's Private Secretary, G. R. Clerk, dated 17 March 1915.[17] Clerk advised that Islam be allowed to exist 'in an independent state' otherwise it would perish and that Muslim disaffection in Egypt and India alongside hostility in Arabia, Persia and Afghanistan might strain Britain's resources to the extent that she become 'a negligible factor in the European war.' The issue of Islam could not have been put in starker terms. If Britain did not deal with the matter effectively the war could be lost. Britain's material interests in Mesopotamia taken in conjunction with the possible alienation of Muslim feelings suggested a solution whereby Britain would encourage the idea of a Muslim state (to include Mesopotamia and an outlet at Alexandretta) in return for a recognition of Britain's special position in the area of Basra and the Persian Gulf. Clerk, however understood the sensitivities entailed in direct involvement in such a project and, therefore, suggested 'a system of autonomous Arab states, recognizing and paying tribute to a spiritual Khalifa at Mecca, but politically independent of him.' Again, the adaptability, and broad appeal within imperial circles, of the caliphate idea is demonstrated, being premised on the functional separation of spiritual and temporal powers and presumed to meet the essential pan-Arab requirement of symbolic unity.

---

[16] SAD WP 134/2/54-62, Report by Captain Symes, Khartoum, 15 February 1915, headed, 'Secret – A Further Note On British Policy In Arabia and its relation to British Moslem Policy.'
[17] FO 800/48 pp. 306-320. Private letter from Wingate, Khartoum, to Grey, 27 February 1915 attached to Symes' report. Ibid., number 306898, March 16, 1915.

Not everyone in receipt of Symes' report was so convinced by his arguments; in fact some were rather concerned by the apparent eagerness with which certain parties were prepared to submit to Arab demands. Although Lord Curzon, soon to become a member of the War Cabinet, accepted that the question of the caliphate was an important one and even agreed on the likelihood of a future Arab caliph, he later wrote to Lord Cromer alarmed that 'the Arabs are now opening their mouths very wide and appear to want a new Arabian State and Khalifate from the Persian Gulf to Egypt and from Egypt to Syria (which it is to include).'[18] Nevertheless, rather than concede to these demands immediately, Curzon advocated a continuation of *ad hoc* arrangements with individual Arab chiefs in a manner which, he anticipated, might well pave the way for an eventual alternative caliphate.

Meanwhile, spurred on no doubt by Symes' persuasive and provocative report, Wingate elaborated a more comprehensive scheme for the Arab Middle East. A draft letter to a friend indicates his growing confidence in promoting his own solutions. Wingate began by pointing out the inconsistency in the declared policy of non-interference in Islam while engaged in a war against the world's leading Islamic state which would in all likelihood result in the fall of the present caliph. There followed the outline of what might be referred to as a 'ring-fencing' policy for Arabia in which an independent Arab caliphate would be surrounded by British colonies. On the presumption that 'most of the Orientals are deceived by outward show' Wingate envisaged a financially dependent Arabian government which, 'would have to give guarantees and securities for this borrowed money and other concessions etc. This would practically put the whole country in charge of Great Britain, although the administration of the country may *apparently* be in the hands of the Arabs. [emphasis added]' The objective of this scheme was the exclusion of other powers and the taming of Islam since, 'if this Arabian Government was formed under the prestige and auspices of the rightful Khalifa of Koreish, with Great Britain as a friend and not an opponent, the effect on the Mohammedans in the British colonies would be marvellous ,' and, 'if it [The Arabian Khalifate] should ever exist, the management of its affairs would in reality be in the hands of Great Britain' and therefore,

---

[18] FO 633/24 pp. 77-79. Letter from Lord Curzon to Cromer, 22 April 1915. Curzon added: 'What evidence have they shown of their capacity to organise or administer such a state?'

'it would not make any difference to Great Britain if the Arabs hold the titles of independence while the management of their affairs is in the hands of British officials.' The true nature of the kind of 'Arab independence' contemplated by Wingate and the underlying purpose of his recommendations is revealed in his concluding remark:

> Before I close this memorandum I must say that most of the Orientals look on things superficially, and therefore they prefer to have simply the name of being independent than any other sort of Government, such as a Protectorate &c.
> Great Britain could follow something of this policy and leave to the [A]rabs the *nominal* independence they are so keen upon and gain all the benefits to which I have already alluded without taking any fresh responsibilities. [emphasis added][19]

Likewise, Wingate's conception of Arab unity was not of a straightforward political unity but of a unity achieved 'through the intermediary of their religion.' Wingate later explained to Hardinge that, 'it is curious how intimately connected are religion and politics amongst the Moslems, and how distinct these two factors may be kept amongst Christians – That is the essential difference between the two and it is often very much misunderstood by the British Public.'[20] What Wingate did *not* conceptualise, however, was some category, unique to Islam, which both united and transcended religion and politics, but a politics conveniently *confined* to religion occupying, as it were, a discrete social space and therefore not incompatible with European political administration introduced exogenously. Naturally such involvement was presumed to be beneficial for those subjected to it. It is from such a conception, generally accepted among the community of oriental 'experts' stationed in Cairo and Khartoum, that the possibility of secular rule by Britain, interposed between the figurehead-caliph and the pious public, emerges.

---

[19] SAD WP 134/3/54-6. Draft of Memorandum by Wingate (in pencil) addressed to 'My dear Friend' dated 9 March 1915. It is unclear to whom the memorandum was addressed or indeed whether the memorandum was ever despatched. Regardless, the document is a pertinent and revealing record of the direction of Wingate's thinking at that time. Importantly, this is the first explicit reference to 'nominal independence.'
[20] SAD WP 134/5/34-6, Private letter from Wingate, Erkowit, to Hardinge, 28 April 1915.

4.3 Further Thoughts from Cairo and London

In early March Storrs wrote to Kitchener's assistant, Fitzgerald, saying that, '[a] North African or Near Eastern Vice-Royalty including Egypt and the Sudan and across the way from Aden to Alexandretta would surely compare in interest and complexity, if not actual size, with India itself.'[21] Although it would have been quite alien to Kitchener's *modus operandi* to promote himself openly as a potential 'Viceroy of the Middle East,' or to associate himself with the idea of a viceroyalty[22] even in the most tenuous way, he saw fit to submit a memorandum to the CID in which he argued quite explicitly that, 'it is to our interests to see an Arab kingdom established in Arabia under the auspices of England, bounded on the north by the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, and containing within it the chief Mohammedan Holy Places, Mecca, Medina, and Kerbala.' In this scheme, in a manner which echoed Wingate's 'ring-fencing policy,' the possession of Mesopotamia in conjunction with Britain's other colonies in the area would effectively secure 'all the approaches to the Mohammedan Holy Places.'[23] Remarkably, the Sharif of Mecca is not referred to here; rather the key emphasis is on the physical protection of the Hijaz.

Ironically, the Committee of Imperial Defence had already been apprised of the merits of the Sharif of Mecca as caliph only two days before, not from Cairo or Khartoum, but by an India Office report. In a manner which pre-empted Kitchener's emphasis on effective control of the Holy Places, the report argued that 'if the *de facto* possessor of the Holy Places is Caliph' and 'if the Grand Sharif of Mecca definitely dissociates himself from the Turks, he will *ipso facto* become Caliph.' Although the author thought this caliphate might be temporary, the only potential danger to it was presumed to come from Ibn Sa'ud who, being a Wahhabi, had little interest in preserving it. However, the India Office had been assured by their agent in the area, Captain Shakespear, that if the present Sultan were to be displaced by Enver Pasha 'the

---

[21] PRO 30/57/47 QQ/18. Letter from Storrs, The Residency, Cairo, to Fitzgerald, 8 March 1915.
[22] There is no record of Kitchener's ever having committed himself on the matter of a Middle Eastern viceroyalty. It was not in his nature to do so, however, it was no secret that he coveted the viceroyalty of India at least up to the outbreak of war in August 1914. Pollock, 2001, p. 371.
[23] CAB 24/1 Secret G-12. CID The War – Alexandretta and Mesopotamia- Memorandum by Lord Kitchener, March 16, 1915.

Caliphate will by common consent of Islam revert to the descendants of the Prophet's family in Mecca, of whom the present head is the Sharif, and who [Capt. Shakespear felt] ... would command Bin Saud's support in such an event rather than his antagonism.' The report added, in a somewhat comforting and self-satisfied tone: 'In that case the question will have solved itself, as we desire, and in favour of a candidate whom we have guaranteed against attack.' What followed, amounted to a version of the 'ring-fencing' policy in which it only remained to 'complete the network of agreements' with local chiefs. The report concluded that 'The "protectorate" over Arabia therefore amounts to nothing more than Arabia for the Arabs under the aegis of Great Britain.'[24] Again, on paper, Kitchener's Sharifian policy appeared to be consistent with existing arrangements in Arabia as well as demands for future independence, at least in the peninsula and desert areas.[25]

4.4 The Search for Historical Collateral: The 'Pirie-Gordon – Lukach Memorandum'

By the time that the sub-committee directed to determine 'British Desiderata in Turkey In Asia' had been convened, the CID had been made aware of the essentials of the 'Cairo scheme.' What the home authority lacked, at this stage, was some historical background to the ideas underlying the particular policy being put before them. Perhaps in appreciation of this deficiency, Clayton as Director of Intelligence in Cairo, ordered two of the most able oriental 'experts' under his command, Lieutenants H. Pirie-Gordon and H. C. Lukach, to prepare a report for submission to the Foreign Office. It is perhaps not surprising that the historical

---

[24] PRO CAB 24/1 G-16, 'The War – The Future Settlement of Eastern Turkey in Asia and Arabia'. Notes by the Secretary, Political and Secret Department, and the Military Secretary, India Office, March 14, 1915. Attached to this report is a telegram from the Viceroy, addressed to the Secretary of State for India, urging complete non-interference in the issue of the caliphate and the future of Arabia.

[25] It is important to note that at this stage British references to Arabia were quite inconsistent. Arabia might refer to (a) the entire Asiatic Arabic-speaking area, or (b) the peninsula, or (c) the peninsula plus the northern deserts, that is, excluding Greater Syria and Mesopotamia. The separation into a 'true' Arabia and the more 'hybrid'

collateral provided by the Cairo Intelligence Office should so unambiguously support the Middle Eastern policy then being advocated. In Section 8.22 of this thesis further examples of historical evidence will be cited which 'happened' to emerge as the 'Cairo scheme' fell apart and were used to rationalise its abandonment.

The Pirie-Gordon/Lukach report is worth examining in some detail since it provided a timely, and seemingly authoritative, argument for the Sharif of Mecca as caliph supported by Britain. This effect was achieved with some subtlety, by and large, with reference to arguments which appeared to rest on a convergence between Islamic orthodoxy and the requirements of modern imperialism. The report began by describing the original caliphate as a spiritual and temporal monarchy, a combination of a 'Vicar of God' with 'Commander of the Faithful' '(*Emir Al Muminin*)' – or in other words: 'Pope and King.' The authors then went on to give an outline history of the caliphate which they conveniently reduced to three stages.

In the first stage, following the death of the Prophet, the caliph was his elective successor and encompassed both theocratic and temporal rule but after the first three caliphs the 'ecclesiastical' aspects of the office receded into the background. In the second stage, under the Abbasids, the caliphate became an hereditary puppet under the protection of the strongest Muslim dynasty whereby the princes '(*emirs*)' were nominally invested by the 'Supreme Imam' and discharged temporal authority themselves. The report went on to describe how, after the Mongol invasions of the 13th century AD, the temporal power of the caliph ceased altogether while the 'ecclesiastical' function survived accidentally. As if pointing towards possibilities for the present epoch, the report described the situation under the Mamelukes which featured 'a spiritual Khalifate free from temporal prerogatives.' The report argued that, 'as long as Egypt remained independent, the Abbasids enjoyed their dignity' raising the renewed prospect of a '"Moslem Papacy bereft of its Temporal Power, maintained by and under the protection of Moslem kings."'[26] The third stage, was characterised by a reversal of

---

periphery appeared somewhat later as a post-rationalisation of imperial policy and is a concomitant of Sykes' notion of 'Levantinism.' See Chapter 2, Note 136.

[26] At this point and elsewhere the report quotes Lukach's book, *The city of dancing dervishes and other studies*, (London, Macmillan, 1914). This work is thoroughly anecdotal and by any standards amateurish. It is an indication of the paucity of serious scholarly works in the area of Islam and the Middle East available in English that this book stands as one of the most authoritative sources in the pre-war era. In this regard, it is perhaps

the original position, in which the principal Muslim monarch must by necessity be the 'Chief Imam.' One might add that only in the second and third stages did the supposed spiritual and temporal powers of the caliph become conceptually distinct, though less functionally separate in the third stage than in the second.

The report is remarkable in that it historicises the relationship between the Islamic faith and secular power, and may have been the first occasion on which it was recognised unequivocally that 'Abdulhamid II 'endeavoured to redress his territorial losses by increased spiritual authority.' The report then lists the currently recognised qualifications for the caliphate - election by the 'Assembly of the Faithful,' possession of certain sacred relics, and possession of the Holy Cities of Islam: Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and the most powerful Muslim throne - but goes on to locate the chink in the present incumbent's armour. It was only before the onset of the present war that the Sultan as 'the greatest prince in Islam, and de facto ruler of the holy cities' could 'ignore what no theological ingenuity can disguise, namely that he is not an Arab of the tribe of the Qoreish.'

Regarding the present situation, Pirie-Gordon and Lukach were of the opinion that:

> The development of the doctrine that the Khalifate belongs of right to the strongest Moslem prince has of late years tended to develop further in the direction of disintegration, and many Mussulman rulers seem now to adhere to the theory that the Khalifate may belong to any powerful Moslem Prince.

It was only towards the end of the report that the Sharif of Mecca was mentioned at all. Both the Sharif and Imam Yahya of Yemen were described as pretenders to the caliphate, however, neither were likely to secure more than local support 'unless [their] pretensions to the possession of the Supreme Imamate were to receive the approval of one or other of the Great Powers having Moslem interests in their own dominions.' Finally, the case against British abstentionism in the matter of the Islamic caliphate is made by a process of imperialist logic according to which all candidates except the Sharif of Mecca are ruled out as unacceptable

---

remarkable that Britain, although the leading imperial power, especially in the domain of Islam, was less productive than either Holland, Germany or Italy, in academic endeavour directed towards an objective assessment of Islamic and Arab history. It would be some years before British orientalists availed themselves of this foreign expertise and fully appreciate the implications of 'Abdulhamid's policy. See Section 8.22.

from a British point of view. The Sultan of Morocco and the Sanussi were discounted on account of their being under French/Spanish and Italian sway respectively, while an enhanced Amir of Afghanistan was thought to be a threat to India. Additionally, the Sultan of Egypt is ruled out on account of the Islamic objection that he is under direct British rule, and Imam Yahya is eliminated due to his not being in possession of the Holy Places:

> Finally there remains the Sherif of Mecca, who, in view of the commanding position which he holds in the eyes of innumerable Moslems in all parts of the world as the actual guardian of the Holy places, and his personal qualities as a Sheikh (? Chief Sheikh) + of the tribe of the Qoreish from which all earlier Khalifs, both orthodox and heterodox, were sprung, is a very reasonable candidate – offensive to no Power inasmuch as he would be under the immediate influence of no other Power, and is already in possession of Mecca, which in its turn could very well be the spiritual capital of the Moslem world and residence of the Supreme Imam.[27]

In the final paragraph of the report the importance of Mecca as the seat of the proposed caliph is re-emphasised by pointing out that being closed to non-Muslims it was, therefore, unlikely to be subject to political intrigue among the powers. In spite of this, the report assumed, because the Sharif would be dependent on Britain, Mecca would effectively be controlled by her.

By the time the de Bunsen Committee was appointed by the Prime Minister on 8 April 1915[28] those in charge of policy making in respect of the Middle East were in possession of a broad range of material which indicated, at times subtly, at other times rather pointedly, the benefits of a collaborative arrangement with the Sharif of Mecca. The emerging proposal, according to which his candidacy for the caliphate would be endorsed by Britain, was posited as a solution to the so-called Arab and Islamic 'Questions.' In this regard the only outstanding consideration, it might be thought, would have been how to promote and support that individual effectively and materially without appearing to interfere in Islam or seeming to violate the Holy Places. It is, on the face of it, rather surprising then that the available material seems to have played so small a part in the deliberations which ensued. The reasons for this will be examined in the following section.

---

[27] FO 141/587 545/1 'A report on the Moslem Khalifate by Lieut. H. Pirie-Gordon, R.N.V.R. & Lieut. H. C. Lukach.', stamped by High Commissioner, Egypt, 29 March 1915, attached to a covering note from the Intelligence Department, WO, Cairo, to Sir Milne Cheetham, The Residency, Cairo, 29 March 1915, signed by Clayton, DoI.

[28] Fromkin, 1991, p. 146.

4.5 'British Desiderata in Turkey In Asia' : The de Bunsen Committee and the Idea of an Arab Caliphate

On the face of it, the de Bunsen report represented a setback for Kitchener's associates in Cairo and Khartoum in as much as it equivocated on the desirability of their 'grand design.' The committee's final enumeration of 'British Desiderata' - nine items in all – included:

> (vii) To ensure that Arabia and the Moslem Holy Places remain under independent Moslem rule. Dependent upon this, we should seek for a settlement which will appeal to, or at least not antagonise, Indian Moslem feeling, and will provide a satisfactory solution of the question of the Khalifate,[29]

and under (ii), 'generally, [the] maintenance of the assurances given to the Sherif of Mecca and the Arabs.' However, the report failed to draw firm conclusions on the matter of the caliphate, tending to defer the issue while deprecating arguments in favour of the Sharif. Nevertheless, the report's broad-brush approach effectively left the field open for solutions along the lines of those sought by Cairo since it raised many questions which had already been anticipated by the intelligence community there. More importantly, however, the committee did establish the removal of the caliphate of Islam from German-Turkish control to *effective* British control as a *sine qua non* of British Middle Eastern policy.

It is only by examining the proceedings of the de Bunsen Committee which led to these conclusions that the significance of the issue of the caliphate is fully revealed. 'The main advantage of the de Bunsen committee was,' according to Elizabeth Monroe, 'that it caused members of the Foreign Office, War Office and India Office, Admiralty and Board of Trade to sit down together and thrash out a programme.'[30] The committee was aided by Maurice Hankey, secretary to the CID, and his new assistant, Sir Mark Sykes. Kitchener was well represented on the committee, on the one hand, by General Sir Charles Callwell, Director-General of Military Operations, and on the other, by Sykes in his capacity as Kitchener's personal representative. Sykes attained his new position through having become known as the

---

[29] CAB 42/3/12 e Bunsen Committee, British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia, printed report dated 30 June 1915.
[30] Monroe, 1963, p. 29. The findings of the Committee had not been published at the time this book was written.

Conservative Party's Ottoman expert, a status conferred upon him as a result of his travels in the Ottoman Empire as a youth, and through having published several books on Islamic matters based largely on his travels.[31] Posterity has given Sykes the reputation of an amateur, a shallow synchretist and a 'fixer.' It was such qualities which would serve him well as a key policy maker in view of the diverse and apparently irreconcilable desiderata which he encountered under Maurice de Bunsen in the spring of 1915. After the de Bunsen Committee Sykes would become '*the* London bureaucrat charged with responsibility for Middle Eastern affairs throughout the war.' [emphasis added][32]

The committee met thirteen times between 12 April and 28 May 1915; four of these meetings were concerned, to a considerable extent, with the issue of the caliphate, the rest, not at all. At those meetings where the caliphate was discussed, Sykes was the outstanding contributor. At the fourth meeting held on 17 April, Sykes reduced the post-war future to two options: (a) a reduced Ottoman Empire with the partition of the non-Turkish portions, and (b) the continuation of Turkey's Asiatic empire partitioned into 'schemes' of interest. Under the first of these, according to Sykes, the caliphate would be transferred to the Sharif of Mecca, Palestine attached to Egypt, Iraq would be made a separate state, and the Arabian chiefs would obtain complete independence. The main advantage of this scheme, argued Sykes, was that the caliphate would be placed under British protection and Islam thereby dissociated from the CUP. Remarkably, the main difficulty with this scheme, it was imagined, was that although the Sharif of Mecca as caliph would be acceptable in India due to the prestige attached to his present position, such an appointment might not be so warmly received in Iraq/Mesopotamia. In Arabia, apparently, he was just another Arab chief.

Under the second option Sykes still insisted that it was essential for the security of India that the caliphate be removed from CUP influences, and that 'the only outward change in the present state of affairs would be that the Sherif of Mecca would be recognised as an independent prince.' The relative advantage of this scheme was that the seat of the caliphate

---

[31] Sykes main publications were: *Through Five Turkish Provinces*, 1900; *Dar Ul Islam*, 1904; and, *The Caliphs' Last Heritage*, 1915, published after the conclusion of the de Bunsen Committee. Sledmere Papers, Christopher Simon Sykes, *The Visitors' Book*, (London, Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1978).
[32] Fromkin, 1991, p. 146.

would be removed to a separate zone lying between those of the powers, i.e. Damascus, rather than to the remoteness of the Hijaz. The argument being that a caliph at Damascus was more accessible and, unlike the Sharif of Mecca, 'in reach of Christian arms owing to the fact that it is fundamental that no Christian should approach the Holy Places.' It was assumed that this arrangement would be satisfactory to the Arabs since the caliph would reside in an Arab area. Significantly, no such scheme had been entertained in Cairo by this time. Further disadvantages of the scheme of partition (zones of interest with Arab caliphate) were indicated by Clerk, Grey's Private Secretary. He maintained that Muslims would be against partition and reiterated a point made by Kitchener to Grey in November 1914,[33] specifically, that an Arabia isolated to the south of an intermediate British zone would be cut off from its source of potential wealth (Syria and Iraq). According to Clerk, 'an Arab State and Khalifate was therefore impossible.'[34]

At the fifth and sixth meetings of the de Bunsen Committee the issue of the caliphate received a brief airing, though there was by now a discernable inclination to negate the course of action implicit in Kitchener's original overtures to the Sharif of Mecca. On the assumption that the Sultan as caliph be removed to Damascus the Sharif of Mecca would merely obtain custody of the holy places. Clerk, however, pointed out that resistance to the removal of the Sultan might be expected from the CUP. The fifth meeting was held the day after Lord Cromer had taken the opportunity of a debate in the House of Lords to effect what amounted to an announcement to the world in general, and to the Muslim world in particular, that Britain would, under no circumstances, interfere in the matter of the caliphate. The full consequences of Cromer's 'campaign' will be examined in the following chapter. Suffice it to say, in the context of the de Bunsen Committee, that the proceedings coincided, perhaps not accidentally, with a period of considerable sensitivity and anxiety over the issue of the Islamic caliphate.

---

[33] See Ch. 3, Note 96.

[34] CAB 27/1 Committee of Imperial Defence, British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia, Report, proceedings and appendices of a Committee appointed by the Prime Minister, 1915, Minutes of the 4th Meeting held at the Foreign Office, 17 April 1915.

While tending to sidestep the caliphate issue, the India Office suggested an exclusively British sphere in a confederated Arabia.[35] This idea induced a number of concerns to be voiced at the sixth meeting. Clerk did not perceive any incongruities between declarations already issued by Britain on Arabia and the caliphate, nor with the agreements made with Kuwait, nor with those about to be made with Ibn Sa'ud. In relation to the Grand Sharif of Mecca, Sykes insisted that it was only essential to 'guard our *protégé* from the aggression of a foreign Power'[36] but not to get involved in disputes between him and other chiefs. Possibly in view of the apparent vagueness and lack of resolve in the proceedings, a few days later the India Office wrote to the secretary of the CID urging effective British control over Arabia, conceived as a 'negative' (i.e. prophylactic) sphere of influence. Evidently surprised at the apparent diffidence with which the 'Cairo view' was being espoused, the India Office quite pointedly suggested that Kitchener 'come off the fence'[37] with regard to his assurances about 'an Arab of true race' and the caliphate.

Matters came to a head at the eighth meeting, which opened with de Bunsen announcing that Sykes wished to make certain observations concerning the caliphate. He began by reiterating the point he had made before: that if the Powers decided on the spheres of influence option, and Muslims generally did not demand a change in the caliphate, it was essential that the caliphate be removed from Anatolia and the likely influences of the CUP. On this occasion de Bunsen himself questioned Britain's entitlement to choose the site of the Sultan's capital. This induced Sykes to insist even more forcefully that this was a difficulty attendant on spheres of interest 'and it was his opinion that if we could not decide to ask for the removal of the Khalifate to Damascus, then it would be necessary for the Committee to recommend partition.' There followed an exchange between Sykes and Clerk, the latter evincing a degree of concern over the prospect of a caliphate shorn of temporal powers, to which Sykes replied that 'the Khalifate could be just as powerful without as with temporal powers.' To Clerk's insistence that, unless both temporal and spiritual powers were combined in the caliphate Muslims would consider Islam doomed, Sykes rejoined with an argument from history – that a

---

[35] Ibid. Minutes of the 5th Meeting held at the Foreign Office, 21 April 1915.
[36] Ibid. Minutes of the 6th Meeting held at the Foreign Office, 23 April 1915.
[37] Sledmere Papers, DDSY(2)/11, Note by the India Office on Arabia, for the Secretary of the CID, Confidential, 27 April 1915.

purely spiritual caliphate would resemble the later Abbasid period when the caliphs power was confined to Baghdad. Finally, Sykes repeated,

> that as far as he was concerned, he felt he could not take the responsibility of recommending the partition of Asiatic Turkey into spheres of interest without stipulating for the simultaneous removal of the Khalifate from the influences which could not help being a menace to it if it were left in Anatolia.

Sir H. Llewelyn-Smith, representing the Board of Trade, who could have known little of either Islam or the caliphate, agreed that as the 'first Moslem Power,' Britain's sphere of influence must contain the seat of the caliphate if possible, adding that, 'certainly it could not remain under the influence of any 'foreign European Power.'[38] In this way, to pseudo-expert and amateur alike, the matter of the caliphate proved decisive in the development of British Middle Eastern policy. More precisely, the removal of the caliphate from Anatolia into the Arab area, had become a *sine qua non* of Britain's policy towards Turkey in Asia.

The report's conclusions were predicated on the ultimate fall of Constantinople and the consequent effect on Indian Muslim feeling and incorporated the view that,

> We should have destroyed the political power of Islam as represented by Turkey, and at the same time, by our annexation of Mesopotamia, have made it clear to all Moslems that any hope of an Arab Khalifate acquiring material wealth and prosperity sufficient to restore a Moslem State that would count among the Governments of the world was henceforth impossible.

The report reproduced Sykes' argument that it would be unacceptable to Britain for the Ottoman capital to 'be situated in the zone of any other Power' since 'we cannot afford to see the Khalifate exposed to foreign influences.' Under 'Miscellaneous Questions' common to each of the proposals considered, the report acknowledged the absence of a central government or predominant chief in Arabia and the need to protect Mesopotamia from attack. However, this issue remained unresolved, it merely being noted that the obvious solution of placing the whole of Arabia under a British protectorate, even 'of a purely negative character,' was inconsistent with the stipulation that 'the Moslem Holy Places should remain under independent Moslem rule.'

---

[38] CAB 27/1 CID, British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia, Minutes of the 8th Meeting held at the Foreign Office, 29 April 1915.

The de Bunsen Report, published on 30 June 1915 included an appendix written by Sykes entitled, 'Note on the Khalifate' which had also been published as a pamphlet by the Foreign Office a few weeks earlier.[39] This memorandum was, to say the least, ambivalent on the question of promoting the Sharif of Mecca as caliph. The note undermined the general tenor of the memoranda and reports which had emanated from the intelligence communities in Cairo and Khartoum, who had stressed the cardinal necessity of the continuity of the caliphate of Islam. Following a brief history of the institution, the note stated that, (a) the caliphate is not hereditary, (b) the stipulation of Qurayshite descent appealed only to 'Arabs of true race,' (c) there was currently no Sunni movement in favour of an alternative caliphate, (d) the caliphate was not recognised in North Africa, Persia, Southern Arabia and Southern Mesopotamia, (e) the caliphate was not essential to Sunnis, and (f) that the possession of the Holy Places does not automatically carry the caliphate with it. Furthermore, the note warned against exaggerating the importance of the caliphate adding that,

> the Caliph's position is neither that of a Pope in religious matters nor Caesar in civil affairs. According to Sunni theories Islam is fixed and sufficient, the Caliph can make no new laws, no dogmatic pronouncements, nor change any matter of religious discipline, it is doubtful whether he can proclaim a general religious war, and it is pretty certain that he cannot call on distant individuals to take part in a local one.

Even indirect control of the caliphate by Britain could not be contemplated and the *appearance* that a caliph had been imposed from outside Islam must be avoided completely. Finally, the report suggests a two track approach, stating that it would be advantageous to Great Britain that the Ottoman dynasty retain some territory where it could continue independently while at the same time the independence of the Sharif of Mecca should also be recognised so allowing [non-Arab Sunnis][40] to determine whether the caliphate remain with the present dynasty or go to the Sharif and his family. Sykes' note on the caliphate was, in the end, thoroughly ambiguous. However, as only two choices of caliphate are allowed for, and removal of the Turks from the Arab peninsula is advocated elsewhere in the report, the point that, 'in event of Ottoman control being removed from Hejaz it is very possible that the Sherif

---

[39] Sledmere Papers, DDSY(2)/4 85, A confidential pamphlet published by the FO entitled 'Note on the Khalifate' by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Mark Sykes.

might assume the title for himself, his connection with the holy places, his intercourse with pilgrims, combined with independence, would give him an especial claim in the eyes of non-Ottoman Sunnis,'[41] can only be taken as endorsement of the Sharif's candidacy for caliph.

The final report considered four options rather than the two set forth by Sykes at the opening of proceedings. The four were: 'A.' Two 'Scheme[s] of Annexation' – one which placed Alexandretta within British territory and the another substituting Haifa for Alexandretta. Each envisaged a continuous band of British territory linking the Mediterranean to the Gulf; 'B. Zones of Interest' – including a British zone extending from Palestine to the Gulf; 'C. Ottoman Independence' – with British annexation of the area around Basra; and, 'D. Ottoman Devolutionary Scheme'– with British annexation of the area around Basra and a British 'sphere of enterprise' linking the Mediterranean with the Gulf.

The committee concluded in favour of course 'D,' preferring course 'B' to 'A.'[42] The order of preference was argued for on the basis that the two most favoured schemes allowed for 'an *outwardly* independent Moslem State' [emphasis added] which 'should therefore soothe apprehension in India.' Although Kitchener was, on the face of it, well represented on the committee, neither of his representatives had much experience in the area under consideration. Besides which Wingate had refrained from 'worrying' him with more substantive reports on the caliphate because he assumed that Kitchener was already receiving such material through the Cabinet.[43] Consequently, in comparison with the deliberations and recommendations of Kitchener's former subordinates in Cairo and Khartoum, the conclusions of the de Bunsen Committee had a rather abstract sense about them. Furthermore, regardless of Britain's readiness to indulge the inhabitants of the region, there was remarkably little discussion of what 'the Arabs' might have wanted out of the war. The overriding concern throughout the entire discussion was that of inter-imperial relations rather than specific collaborative enterprise being hatched in Cairo and Khartoum. Nevertheless, the report left the field wide

---

[40] The report actually says 'Non-Moslem Sunnis,' however it is clear from the context what as intended since elsewhere 'Non-Ottoman Sunnis' are referred to.
[41] CAB 42/3/12, British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia, 30 June 1915.
[42] CAB 27/1 CID, British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia, Minutes of the13th Meeting held at the Foreign Office, 28 May 1915.

open for British opportunism in general, and for the future consolidation and promotion of the 'Cairo view' in particular.

In the final analysis, it may be said that the de Bunsen Report did not determine British policy in the Middle East. Rather it raised a number of questions, to which, it will be argued here, the proponents of a British backed Arab caliphate scheme already believed they had the answers. That Sykes was not in regular contact with military intelligence in Cairo until *after* the Committee had completed its deliberations demonstrates both the general unpreparedness of the British establishment with regard to Islam and the Middle East, and the extent of Sykes' extemporising, at the time. In a manner which tends to confirm these inadequacies, having completed his duties in London in respect of the Committee, only then did Sykes embark on a 'fact-finding tour' of the Near and Middle East.

4.6 Sir Mark Sykes' Tour of the Middle and Near East

As early as 12 June Sykes wrote to Callwell from Athens of having been in touch with an Ottoman prince who sought the help of the Allies in raising a revolt in Turkey. This member of the Ottoman royal family who purported to be popular in Turkey hoped to effect certain reforms including separation of religion from the state. The latter would be achieved through a transfer of the caliphate to a member of the Quraysh, specifically the Sharif of Mecca whose independence in Mecca and Medina he supported. One Ottoman prince, 'Saba-ed-Din,' apparently believed that 'possession of the Caliphate engendered the ill-will both of France and England.'[44] Sykes later wrote from Sofia that he had heard from the ex-Russian dragoman at Constantinople that 'a portion of Moslem clergy' sought Allied help in removing the Ottoman caliphate from the Ottoman dynasty to residence in a 'vaticanised' part of Damascus. According to this scheme the caliph would thereafter be elected. Surprisingly, after Sykes'

[43] SAD WP 134/6/27-29, Private letter from Wingate, Governor-General's Office, Khartoum, to Fitzgerald, 15 May 1915.

endorsement of something similar during the de Bunsen deliberations, he wrote unenthusiastically that, 'the scheme is only conditional on hypothetical events, and nothing more may be heard of it.'[45]

During his six months in the Middle East, Sykes also took the opportunity to canvass opinion in as discreet a manner as possible, on the secret conclusions of the de Bunsen Committee, having already sent draft copies of the report to Athens, Cairo and Delhi.[46] Sir Valentine Chirol, a correspondent on *The Times* with a special interest in the Middle East, thought option 'D' 'the least objectionable' but did not 'underrate the difficulty of setting up any ruler with sufficient authority to preside over such an Arab State, especially as it would include both French and British spheres of influence.' However, Chirol also believed that unless the caliphate were transferred 'into other hands than those of the Ottoman Sultans,'[47] scheme 'D' would not resolve the problem of pan-Islamic propaganda. The conclusions of the Committee began to look a little half-baked. It is interesting, though, that Chirol envisaged a nominally united Arab state divided, somehow, amongst the powers. This was precisely the solution which Sykes had in mind when he negotiated the famous accord with the French a year later.

Scheme 'D' met with disapproval elsewhere. High Commissioner McMahon, for example, preferred outright partition to zones of interest, and an exclusively British Damascus for Islamic reasons. Maxwell, the commanding general of British forces in Egypt, on the other hand, though concurring with the Committee, did so only on the basis that the caliphate be removed from the Ottomans. He insisted that 'the powers of the Entente made the declaration of independence of the Sherif of Mecca a preliminary of the adoption of the devolutionary scheme.' His confidence in such a solution was based on the belief that under such conditions 'the transfer [of the caliphate] would be spontaneously demanded by Moslems generally

---

[44] FO 371/2486 93937, Communication from Sir Mark Sykes, Athens, to DMO Major-General Callwell, No. 4, 12 June 1915.
[45] FO 371/2486 87220. Telegram from 'British Minister' [Mark Sykes], Sofia, to DMO, 28 June 1915, included with, WO to FO, 30 June 1915, B.20/I/94 (M.O.2.), DMO to Under Secretary of State, FO, forwarding information for Grey and requesting that it be passed to McMahon in Cairo.
[46] Kedourie, 1976, p. 62.
[47] Sledmere Papers, DDSY(2)/11 6, Enclosure in Sir Mark Sykes' despatch No. 9 of July 7, 1915 – Memorandum by Sir Valentine Chirol.

without any direction on our part.'[48] He even contemplated Syria under the Egyptian Government with its Sultan confirmed by the Sharif as caliph. This meant that Storr's version of the 'Cairo scheme' could be realised without direct and unilateral interference from Britain. Otherwise he preferred Scheme 'A' (Annexation), though he wanted to see a 'protected native administration' in Qurna-Basra.

On 14 July, Sykes summarised the feeling in Cairo as follows:

> The three Ayalets [i.e. Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine] could ... be under the government of the Sultan of Egypt and the spiritual dominion of the Sherif of Mecca. Worked as one unit these regions are united by language and financially self-supporting.[49]

It would seem, however, that many of those consulted, while formally concurring with the Committee's conclusions, tended to see within Scheme 'D' the fulfillment of their own preferences. In a communication to Wingate, Clayton saw as consistent with 'No.5,'[50] a 'division into *separate states* under the nominal central authority of Turkey but with practically complete autonomy under the guarantee and guidance of the Power in whose zone each state lies' [emphasis added]. He added later that, 'there is one vital necessity, though and that is the sultan of Turkey must give up the Khalifate & leave it to the Moslem world to select a successor.'[51] This scheme amounted to a simple inversion of the situation which had given rise to Britain's perennial fear: pan-Islam under the sway of the CUP. However, two weeks later Clayton confided to Wingate[52] his fear that the fall of Constantinople would not mean the end of the CUP and its pan-Islamic intriguing, anticipating that it would simply relocate its activities to Cairo and al-'Azhar mosque-university. Clayton's paranoia, it seems, was indiscriminate since he also feared the CUP playing its Zionist 'card.' Importantly, Clayton

---

[48] SAD WP 158/7/7-28. Covering note from Clayton, Cairo to Wingate marked 'Very Secret', 6 August 1915, attached to three letters from Sykes, Shepherd's Hotel, Cairo, to Major-General C. E. Callwell, DMI, WO, Whitehall – letters No. 12, 14 & 17, dated 14 July, 14 July & 2 August, respectively.

[49] Kedourie, 1976, p. 64, quoting FO 371/2490, 108253, copies of Sykes' despatches to Callwell, no.s 12 and 14, July 14, 1915.

[50] A reference to Map V which a accompanied 'Scheme "D",' there being two maps showing alternative versions of 'Scheme "A"' (Annexation).

[51] SAD WP 158/6/16-25, Private and Secret letter from Clayton, Intelligence Office, WO, Cairo, to Wingate, 14 July 1915.

[52] SAD WP 158/6/41-45, 'Strictly Private' letter from Clayton, Intelligence Department, WO, Cairo, to Wingate, 27 July 1915.

was in no way satisfied with the results of the de Bunsen Committee and continued to believe that Middle Eastern policy was being allowed to drift.

Except in Cairo and Khartoum, there was little consensus over whom should succeed the Sultan as caliph. While visiting Aden, Sykes was told that Colonel Jacob, Acting Resident, was of the opinion 'that a moribund Caliphate in an atrophied Turkey, even under Russian influence would have fewer potentialities of danger than a Caliphate situated in Arabia where the vital spark of Islam survives.'[53] This was, however, in line with the attitude generally taken by the Indian Government, the Viceroy himself responding indifferently to de Bunsen, his only stipulation being that Britain took no initiative on the issue of the caliphate.[54]

The conclusions of the de Bunsen Committee, besides reflecting Sykes' lack of expertise and experience, were simply the net resultant of the institutional forces represented on the committee itself. Unlike India, and the Foreign Office, the views of the Cairo and Khartoum intelligence communities were not represented directly by a dedicated department but only indirectly via the War and Foreign Offices. Just as the relative emphases placed on the various Middle Eastern theatres of war reflected the standing of the departments supporting them so their relative success in the field would ultimately determine the standing of these departments in formulating future Middle Eastern policy. For example, whereas the advance towards Baghdad, under the command of the Indian Government, had progressed relatively well up to the publication of the de Bunsen report, in the west the Turks had advanced virtually unchecked up to the Suez Canal during January and February. Furthermore, the April landing at Gallipoli, upon which the success of the 'Western Arabian' enterprise would ultimately depend, had quickly run aground. The Arab caliphate scheme would not acquire direct institutional representation until the creation of the Arab Bureau at the end of 1915.

---

[53] Sledmere Papers, DDSY(2)/11 7, Letter from MS to Sir [illegible – probably Edward Grey], No. 16, Aden, 23 July 1915. Note that this letter along with the two communications cited in Note 47 were later forwarded by Callwell to Grey at the FO. FO 371/2490 108253, Secret despatch, DMO, WO to FO, B.20/1/130 (M.O.2.), 6 August 1915.
[54] Busch, 1971, p. 69.

To a considerable degree 'British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia' was produced in a vacuum and depended on people, like Sykes,[55] whose authority was inversely proportional to their expertise in the field of Middle Eastern affairs. This is substantiated in the fact that Sykes, having posed as the 'resident expert,' and having to some degree undermined the scheme of a British sponsored Arab caliphate, was later converted to the ideas of Storrs and Clayton during the months following the report's publication.[56]

4.7 Conclusion

In retrospect, the realisation of the plan for a British Middle East through a landing at Alexandretta during the first weeks of 1915 seems an unlikely event. The possibility may be dismissed if for no other reason than its being based on the conflation into an amorphous 'Arab movement' of disparate tendencies lacking a coordinating leadership. The failure to distinguish between the possible candidacy for caliph by the Sharif of Mecca and an Arab proto-nationalist/separatist movement in Syria would in practice have ensured the early abandonment of the 'grand plan.' It is even conceivable that a British invasion of Syria in conjunction with an Arab uprising there would have precipitated precisely the result which the British later learned to fear – a campaign for an Arab caliphate subordinated to a *popular* Arab nationalist movement. The apparent confidence of those advocating the 'forward policy' at this stage is indicative of the gulf which existed between theory and practice in the development of British Middle Eastern policy. The indefinite deferral of the Alexandretta option by the British Cabinet was, at least in the short term, fortuitous for the 'Western Arabians,' since it allowed them to consolidate their backing of an Arab movement linked to an Arabian caliphate. Apart from illustrating the early coherence of the 'Cairo vision' for a future British Middle East, the issue of the 'Alexandretta option' raises the question of

---

[55] Wingate later warned Clayton not to take Sykes' views too '*au pied de la lettre*' since he was capable but lacked experience and although able to pick peoples brains, his success depended upon whether he had the right material. SAD WP 196/3/11-12, Letter from Wingate to Clayton, 1 September 1915.

whether the removal of the military lynchpin of a landing in northern Syria was the cause of an increased emphasis on the supposed Islamic authority of the Sharif of Mecca in order to advance the Cairo scheme.[57] In other words, it is necessary to ask whether the relinquishment of direct military intervention in support of an early Arab rebellion in Syria made necessary a transfer of effort towards more symbolic undertakings. If so, this would constitute an instance of what has been referred to in the introduction to this thesis as 'the prophylactics of ideology.' Whether this was in fact the case can only be dealt with in the context of Britain's caliphate policy as it evolved throughout the course of the war and, therefore, will be addressed more fully in the following chapters.

The outstanding features of the 'grand plan' which, as long as it was not put into practice, ensured its continued salience and intrinsicality to British Middle Eastern policy-making were its flexibility and almost infinite compatibility. These features were, in turn, based on the belief that the spiritual authority, symbolic unity and nominal independence afforded by a revived Arab caliphate would permit the covert insertion of exclusive British rule superimposed over diverse territorial concessions. The latter might include concessions to Zionists, Arab chieftains and imperial partners/potential rivals such as France, not to mention Britain's material interests in Mesopotamia. The underlying presumption was that 'orientals' would be satisfied with symbolic unity and nominal independence as long as their passions were not misdirected by alien political notions, or by direct agitation introduced from Europe. Hence the preference for a solution to the 'Arab question' which, in theoretical terms at least, overlapped to a large extent with a solution to the 'Islamic question' and found expression in the idea of a revived Arab caliphate. It was this common assumption among British imperialists in the Middle East which ensured the convergence of policy proposals emanating from Cairo and Khartoum respectively. Moreover, the Arab caliphate solution appeared to respond to two countervailing tendencies observed in Arabia: namely the demand for national unity alongside the fissiparous tendency associated with tribalism. Furthermore, notwithstanding an Ottoman Empire wishing to compensate for its relative decline, in

---

[56] Fromkin, 1991, p. 169.

[57] Isaiah Friedman is of the opinion that with the demise of the 'forward policy' High Commissioner McMahon, having inherited Kitchener's idea of a collaborative bridgehead to Mecca, was forced through lack of alternatives

conjunction with an ambient Islamophobia based on the historical relationship between a British Empire with its large number of Muslim subjects in India and Egypt, the British took it as read that the restoration of the Arab caliphate was practically inevitable. Consequently, they were more than ready to accept Symes' far-reaching conclusion that the issue of Islam could not be sidestepped, and if not addressed squarely by Britain might even lose her the war. As will be shown in the following chapter not everyone connected with British Middle Eastern policy found such conclusions palatable and some would later use their eminent status to advocate complete non-interference in all matters associated with Islam and the caliphate.

The role of Islam in the 'Cairo scheme' may be inferred from Storrs' reference to Palestine taken in conjunction with his other statements on Britain's 'Arab policy' in which he promotes the idea of an Arab area with some semblance of unity, as yet undefined. It seems that the unity which was being spoken of was conceived only at a certain level, the symbolic level, in the midst of which would sit, in glorious impotence, the proposed Arab caliph in Mecca. From this office, it was imagined, would be effected some manner of social control via the apparatus of pan-Islam. Interposed unobtrusively between these two more visible extremes would operate the effective, secular and exclusive rule of Britain. It is only on this basis that Britain might conceivably have gained any comfort from the separate 'Moslem Kingdom' in Palestine to which Storrs refers. However, under the symbolic unity embodied in an Arab caliph, dependent on Britain, all manner of secular arrangements could be imagined, including, for example, a Zionist Palestine within which the Muslim inhabitants would be content to entertain a kind of extra-territorial loyalty to the Arab caliph in Mecca.[58]

The 'Pirie-Gordon – Lukach memorandum' represents the first serious attempt to provide historical collateral for a specific solution involving the Sharif of Mecca after considering a number of options on their own merits and according to their desirability from a British imperial perspective. Remarkably, this document historicised the institution of the caliphate

---

to accommodate Husayn. Friedman believes this was implicit in McMahon's letter to the Sharif of Mecca of 24 October 1915, part of the renown 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence.' Friedman, 1973, pp. 101.

[58] This was actually the drift of Storrs' letter to Fitzgerald in which he contemplated large-scale Jewish immigration into Palestine only if it were to be ruled from Egypt. This is further indication of the inappropriateness of the latter-day Arab-Israeli conflict as a framework for the analysis of British policy-making

and, untypically for the time, did not essentialise the Islamic faith and even went so far as to acknowledge the relationship between Turkey and the European empires as the source of 'Abdulhamid's pan-Islam. Accordingly, this report emphasised the impossibility of abstention over the future of Islam, since competing powers were bound to involve themselves to the detriment of Britain's imperial prospects.

The deliberations of the de Bunsen Committee, it has been shown, occurred in a partial vacuum, in so far as the participants were not fully engaged with the arguments being expounded, in Cairo and Khartoum. This disarticulation from the 'front line' of empire and the role played by the dabbler-fixer, Sykes meant that the proceedings and conclusions of the Committee, especially with regard to Britain's attitude towards the future of the caliphate, had a somewhat schematic and abstract air about them. Consequently the Committee's findings raised as many questions as they provided answers for, which Sykes no doubt realised when he embarked on his fact-finding tour of the Middle and Near East only *after* the Committee had issued its report. Importantly for this thesis the Committee was, after all, constituted to confirm British *desiderata* in the region and not to determine the future course of action. Nevertheless, it did establish the requirement that, whatever else might occur, the caliphate of Islam could not be allowed to fall under the control of a power, Islamic or imperial (or worst of all – both!), inimical to Britain. Notwithstanding the centrality of this indispensable condition, the coherence of the schemes devised to bring about this result remained internal to them.

---

during the First World War. PRO 30/57/45 OO/73 Letter from Storrs, British Agency, Cairo to Fitzgerald, 28 December 1914.

CHAPTER 5: The Competition for 'Authentic' Sources and the Emergence of the Idea of British Rule 'Behind the Veil of Islam'

5.0 Introduction

The separate treatment of Wingate's promotion of the idea of a British backed Arab caliphate in which he relied upon the testimony of the two most eminent Islamic figures to be found in the Sudan is not simply a matter of historiographical convenience. Neither does it result from the imposition of an arbitrary narrative demarcation. Rather it reflects the relative autonomy of the respective dialogues and lack of co-ordination in British Middle Eastern policy during the early months of the Great War. It is necessary, therefore, to shift attention away from Cairo towards ideas about the caliphate developed in Khartoum. The aim of this chapter is to show how the Governor General's recourse to 'authentic' testimony with regard to the nature and future of the caliphate influenced the determination of policy in London.

The stimulus for Wingate's newly invigorated espousal of an Arab caliphate in some kind of collaborative arrangement with Britain was his dialogue with the Grand Qadi, an Egyptian by the name of Muhammad Mustafa al-Maraghi, and with the anglophile Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani, CMG,[1] the most prominent Islamic shaykh of British Sudan. The correspondence between Wingate and his two informants concerning the nature and future of the caliphate took place in three phases. The first of these occurred in February and March 1915 and resulted from Wingate's instigation of a process of consultation from which he hoped to obtain 'authentic' Islamic backing for his views. Firstly, he was urged to issue a declaration favourable to Islam and in support of Arab independence, and secondly, he was informed that,

[1] Commander of the Order of St. Michael & St. George – awarded by Cromer. FO 633/24 pp. 45-48. Letter from Wingate, The Palace, Khartoum, to Cromer, 24 February, 1915.

contrary to certain British intentions, the institution of the caliphate necessarily encompassed civil as well as religious powers. Wingate was also warned that Britain should do nothing to violate the independence of the caliphate, while, at the same time, reassured that the Arab government would be poorly resourced, both materially and in terms of political experience, and therefore bound to be dependent upon British support. From the outset, Wingate was in receipt of opinion which reinforced British notions of a *nominally* independent Arabia under a caliphate. The result of these early exchanges was Grey's approval for a confidential declaration supporting the independence of Arabia and the Holy Places. In spite of the passage which stated that the future of the caliphate was a matter for Muslims alone to decide, it is clear from Wingate's correspondence that it was broadly agreed amongst members of the British Middle Eastern establishment that Britain should support the creation of an 'independent' Arab caliphate.

Wingate's propagation of such views created alarm and consternation in certain quarters. The most notably example was Lord Cromer who took the opportunity of a House of Lords debate on Middle Eastern policy to counter anti-British propaganda by urging on his compatriots a policy of absolute non-interference in all matters appertaining to the Islamic religion. Objectively, however, his views, which corresponded with the declared official policy, were at odds with the general import of the de Bunsen committee where it had emerged that the removal of the caliphate from the hands of Britain's enemies was a *sine qua non* of British Middle Eastern policy. In any case Cromer's efforts backfired and sparked an open discussion of the caliphate in the British press in which certain parties advocated, with equal forthrightness, the replacement of the Turkish caliphate because of its lack of Qurayshite pedigree. This brought about a second phase of correspondence in the Sudan in late April/early May in the course of which the Qadi insisted that a sound secular base rather than Qurayshite descent was the critical factor in the selection of the caliphate. It was also pointed out that the 'Cairo scheme' contained a central flaw: specifically that a caliphate visibly dependent on a Christian power would never attract the allegiance of Muslims generally. Wingate's other informant quickly countered this by suggesting to Wingate that Britain rule Arabia 'behind a veil.' While Cromer then adopted the Qadi's objection, Wingate proffered Mirghani's solution.

As a result of the third phase of correspondence, which took place during August 1915, Wingate was persuaded to adopt a 'pan-Arabian' solution. This was predicated on an effective deferral of the caliphate issue until such a time as Sharif Husayn had strengthened his position *vis-à-vis* the other Arab chiefs. In other words a viable caliphate in the hands of Britain's friends meant an 'independent' Arabia. Significantly, the testimony of Wingate's informants did nothing to discourage the belief that the Arabs would be satisfied with a nominal independence and unity under which all manner of territorial dispositions were conceivable. In this way British imperial desiderata along with those of the emergent Arab movement would be realised under the same scheme, a conjunction which, nevertheless, depended upon the return of the caliphate to Arabia.

5.1 Wingate Seeks an 'Authentic' Islamic Voice: The Influence of the Informants Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani, CMG, and Muhammad Mustafa al-Miraghi, the Grand Qadi of the Sudan

It has already been pointed out that Wingate prided himself on the good relations he maintained with the principle shaykhs and notables of Sudan, however his routine affairs assumed a more purposeful bearing following the outbreak of war in the Middle East. As early as November 1914, Wingate had obtained 'assurances of satisfaction with the [Sudan] Government'[2] from the Grand Qadi, Mufti and board of 'ulama and was confident that Enver Pasha's Islamic propaganda would have no effect there. Wingate's cordial relations with the religious leaders of the Sudan gave him the advantage over Cairo and India of ready access to apparently authoritative sources of information on Islam and the politics of Arabia. These

[2] SAD CP 469/7/46, Private letter from Wingate, The Palace, Khartoum, to Clayton, 7 November 1914; and, 469/7/56, Private letter from Wingate, The Palace, Khartoum, to Clayton, 12 November 1914, in which Wingate explains the savings in terms of money and man-power to be obtained by maintaining good relations with such people.

sources, however, were not immune from the particular interests appertaining to their positions, nor from the problems associated with obtaining critical information from those whose status had been conferred by the grace of the person making the inquiry. As Elie Kedourie points out, the 'ulama tended to confirm Wingate's Anglo-Sharifian preferences, 'perhaps out of desire to please, perhaps out of genuine conviction.'[3]

Al-Mirghani was the first to advise Wingate in response to his canvassing of Muslim opinion. In his first note he disparaged the influence of the Turks in Arabia and the Sultan's claim to be the protector of the Holy Places and advised Wingate that 'the title of Khalifa which the Moslems consider most sacred and honourable, is claimed by the Arabs as one of their most holy rights.' As the power with the most Muslim subjects, al-Mirghani thought, Britain should issue a proclamation explaining that the war against Turkey is not a war against Islam and declaring respect for the integrity and independence of the Arab tribes.[4] Clearly Wingate thought these views to be of some consequence since he had notes of his conversations with Mirghani sent to McMahon, the Viceroy and Sir Edward Grey.[5]

Al-Mirghani's submission was, nevertheless, rather modest in comparison to the Grand Qadi's memorandum of 23 March, which, in translation, filled seventeen typed pages devoted entirely to the subject of the caliphate. Miraghi purported to be candid though this must be doubted unless his subsequent espousal of the Sultan of Egypt as caliph can be construed as a genuine change of mind. The Qadi noted the current disquiet concerning the future of Islam, Arabia and the Holy Places and the fact that it had been a source of controversy from the outset, though he stressed that its importance should not be underestimated now. According to Miraghi the caliphate encompassed both civil and religious powers, either one alone being insufficient, but that the latter consisted in nothing more than preserving the authority of the 'ulama, all else in Islam being fixed once and for all. Nevertheless, the caliph 'is a Civil Ruler in every sense of the word and at the same time he is the Defender of the Faith.' Significantly, the Qadi's insistence that, 'if a Mohammedan Khalifa did not possess full civil powers and

---

[3] Kedourie, 1963, p. 210.
[4] SAD WP 194/2/190-194, Translation of a memorandum by Sayyid Ali al-Morghani, undated but thought to be February 1915.

influence, he would be merely like a mute statue and it would be impossible for the Mohammedans to acknowledge him in the sense revealed by their religion,' seemed to undermine the aspirations of Kitchener and his associates in Cairo.

Although the Sharif of Mecca was nowhere mentioned in person, the Qadi's stipulations were unambiguous: an Arab, Qurayshite who is a member of the family of Hashim being the preferred candidate, and Arabia the preferred seat of the caliphate. Elsewhere, in a manner bound to confirm British prejudices (and enhance his own standing), al-Miraghi makes an interesting distinction. According to him, whereas the educated and intelligent Muslim was more concerned with his 'national' rights, 'the Arab ... [,] he is easily led by religion.' He insisted that the 'quietness' of Muslims during the present war should not be explained by Allied policy towards them but by the fact that the most learned Muslims favoured an Arab caliphate. However, their patience and effective neutrality should not be taken for granted nor 'utilised to the benefit of the Allies and prove detrimental to the hopes they cherished for the independence of the Arab country and the Moslems.' Nevertheless, the British declaration in support of the Arabs and Islam had inspired confidence. It was essential, therefore, to sustain the hope of Arab and Muslim independence. The reason that most ordinary Muslims continued to support Turkey was partly that aggression against the Sultan-caliph was viewed as aggression against Islam and, more importantly, that most people were not yet confident that 'a new Arab Khalifate will be formed and given its independence.' It was imperative, then, that the Allies declare their intentions sooner rather than later and help bring about 'an independent Arab kingdom in the country of the Arabs ... governed by an independent Arab Khalifa.'

Al-Miraghi's approach was very much 'carrot and stick.' Whereas, he sought to assuage British anxieties by reassuring Wingate that, 'there would be absolutely no fear of the Arabian Government if formed. This Government must remain for several centuries to come under great obligation to Great Britain: besides, this Government will remain poor and weak for

---

[5] SAD WP 194/2/178, 'Very private' letter from Wingate, Khartoum, to Clayton, 27 February 1915, enclosing copies of letters to McMahon, the Viceroy and Sir E. Grey.

many years to come,'[6] he also issued the veiled threat that there would be trouble for the 'colonists' if Islam were disappointed. Conversely, al-Miraghi's conception of Arab 'independence' coincided neatly with that which Wingate had confided to a friend two weeks earlier,[7] since it was construed, in effect, as a *nominal* independence under which the attentions of the mass of subjects would be directed towards religious rather than secular, political matters. The fly in the ointment was, however, the suggestion of a predominantly secular caliphate in conjunction with maximalist territorial aspirations. In other words the political space reserved for Britain in Wingate's own scheme would be shared with an educated Arab élite.

Regardless of these impediments, Wingate's receipt of the Grand Qadi's memorandum precipitated a positive response from the highest office of British government with responsibilities for Middle Eastern policy. Grey was sent a copy almost immediately[8]. By the end of March the document had been seen by McMahon and Hardinge, and sometime later by Cromer, to whom Wingate conveyed his fears that unless corrective action were taken, Muslims would remain convinced that 'we do not mean to support the independence of an eventual Arab Khalifate.' In the same vein Wingate also referred to rumours circulating the Sudan that Husayn Kamil had been made Sultan of Egypt under the protectorate in order to make him caliph under British aegis and thereby destroy the independence of the Islamic caliphate. He went on to urge a declaration of British policy in order to counter the effects of Austro-German propaganda in the region.[9]

With direct reference to the Grand Qadi's memorandum on the caliphate and Kitchener's support in the Cabinet[10] Grey soon responded by granting Wingate permission to make open declarations of British policy in the following terms:

> You should inform Sir R. Wingate that I authorise him to let it be known, if he thinks it desirable, that H.M.G. will make it an essential condition in any terms of peace that the Arabian

---

[6] SAD WP 194/4/1-17, Translation of a memorandum addressed to His Excellency, General Sir Reginald Wingate by Mohamed Mustafa, Grand Kadi, Khartoum, 23 March 1915.
[7] See Chapter 4, Note 19.
[8] FO 800/48 pp. 326-342, Mohammed Mustafa's memorandum on the Caliphate, 23 March 1915.
[9] SAD WP 194/3/298-301 Letter from Wingate, HQ Egyptian Army, to Cromer, 31 March 1915.
[10] Antonius, 1938, p. 160.

Peninsula and its Moslem Holy Places should remain in the hands of an independent sovereign State.

Exactly how much territory should be included in this state it is not possible to define at this stage.

H.M.G. feel that the question of the Khalifate is one which must be decided by Moslems without the interference from non-Moslem Powers. Should Moslems decide for an Arab Khalif, that decision would naturally therefore be respected by H.M.G., but decision is one for Moslems to make.[11]

Whether this represents a retreat from Kitchener's encouragement of a Sharifian caliphate in November 1914 is a moot point. However, bearing in mind the public relations function of the declaration proposed here, and the fact that no-one in authority had taken the trouble to disabuse Wingate of his presumption that Britain actively sought an Arab caliphate, it might well be concluded that the Sharifian tendency was in no way affected by Telegram No.173.

Clayton conveyed the message to Wingate on behalf of the High Commissioner on 18 April. Wingate appears to have been satisfied with the response and, given the latitude afforded him by Grey, proceeded cautiously. On receipt of Grey's permission, Wingate immediately drafted a declaration employing Grey's language faithfully and asked Symes to distribute Arabic translations to the 'Grand Kadi, Mufti, Sheikh and Ulema, Sayid Ali, Morghani and Sherif Yusef El Hindi' with a note announcing:

> This communication is of a confidential character and no further publicity will be given to it. Should, however, you desire to mention the matter in conversation with any well educated and well disposed religious sheikh in your Province, I am to say that you are at liberty to do so.[12]

5.2 Cromer's Speech in the House of Lords

Prompted in particular by Wingate's reports of rumours concerning Britain's supposed promotion of the Sultan of Egypt as caliph, and impelled by his own concerns over British

---

[11] FO 141/587/545, p. 58, Telegram No. 173 from Grey, FO, to McMahon, 14 April 1915.

meddling in Islam, Lord Cromer took the opportunity afforded by a House of Lords debate to effect what amounted to an announcement to the world that Britain would *not* interfere in the matter of the caliphate. His speech of 20 April began by referring to Arab suspicions over British intentions and proposed that further declarations be drafted 'in conjunction with Moslem authorities themselves.' As part of a performance which had the character of a well rehearsed double-act, Lord Crewe concurred 'that the future of the caliphate must be a matter for the Moslem world itself,' and that Britain must neither impose a caliph on the Muslim world nor 'bring about by forcible means a situation which would in practice compel the choice to fall on a particular individual.' As if in a competition with the Secretary of State for India to see who could do most to assuage Muslim suspicions, Cromer retorted that, 'we might go so far as to give them some sort of assurance that we recognise that *the Caliph should not only be a Moslem* [sic] but a Moslem of such a position as to be independent of any European pressure of any kind or sort.' [emphasis added]

If Cromer's House of Lords announcement had been intended to settle, for the time being, the matter of Britain's disposition towards the caliphate, then it failed spectacularly. Rather than stemming discussion and speculation it induced even more open argument, and even a subtle form of resistance from Cairo. Notwithstanding the moratorium on any discussion of the caliphate in the press which had been issued in December 1914, it was not possible to prevent the reporting of Cromer's speech in the media of the day nor to halt the debate which followed. The publication of a letter by Cromer in *The Times* three days later initiated an exchange which brought to the fore the contradiction lying at the heart of Cromer's endeavour and which undermined what was quickly becoming Britain's 'official' policy of disinterest in the matter of the caliphate. 'Great Britain, as a great Moslem Power'[13] could not be other than interested in what befell the caliphate. While Cromer allowed that the caliph may be other than the Turkish Sultan he emphasised that the caliphate must be politically independent and could not remain under non-Muslim influences. Whereas Cromer's letter gave the impression (intentional no doubt) of his desiring the independence of the caliphate for the sake of Islam, *The Times* editorial comment, although formally agreeing with Cromer, both questioned the

---

[12] SAD WP 134/5/3-6, G S Symes, Erkowit, to Major H. D. Pearson, Assistant DOI, Khartoum, 20 April 1915.
[13] FO 633 32 Speeches &c. 1915, Letter to the Editor of *The Times* headed 'The Khalifate – Lord Cromer's Warning,' written 21 April 1915 and published 24 April 1915.

legitimacy of the present caliphate, and spelled out in the starkest terms Britain's own interest in the 'independence' of the institution itself. *The Times* declared: 'By prescription the KHALIFA should be of the blood of the Koreish, the tribe of the PROPHET. That is a qualification to which the Sultans of Turkey cannot lay claim,' and went on to say that the present Sultan is 'the involuntary instrument of the Committee of Union and Progress, and is now in German bondage. He is thus an independent ruler, such as Islam prefers to venerate, in name alone.'[14]

In other words Britain had an interest in the transfer of the caliphate to someone outside the Ottoman dynasty. A more knowledgeable and discerning reader might have deduced that since both independence and Qurayshite descent were essential conditions of a viable caliphate, and that a good deal of the Muslim world was already under European control, there were few remaining candidates for caliph. Moreover, those that did remain were for the most part Arabian. If anything *The Times*' thoughtful adjunct to Cromer's letter produced precisely the opposite effect to that which Cromer had sought.[15]

Cromer could not have imagined the consequences of his House of Lords 'declaration.' Only the day before the publication of his letter to *The Times* he was confident enough to write to Wingate claiming Lord Curzon's support in advocating the use of 'secret service money' to obtain the co-operation of the Arabs of the peninsula in the current war since 'Arabs are cheap and they would not require very much.'[16] Such a strategy, he hoped, would obviate the need to interfere in the central institutions of Islam.[17] Wingate, however, appeared somewhat satisfied with Cromer's speech, possibly due to the effect it had had on his local informants.[18] The periodical, *The Near East*, reported both the speech, and Cromer's letter to *The Times*

---

[14] Ibid. Editorial Comment in *The Times*, 24 April 1915.

[15] Cromer later insisted, rather unconvincingly, that, 'the real reason why I alluded to the subject [of the caliphate] in the House of Lords and subsequently wrote to the Times was that I wished to snuff out the idea that Sultan Hussein should pose as another candidate. In this I think I have been successful. The notion was certainly more or less entertained in Cairo.' SAD WP 196/2/72-72, Letter from Cromer, Ardgowan, Greenock, to Wingate, 7 August 1915.

[16] SAD WP 134/5/13, Private letter from Cromer to Wingate, 23 April 1915; and, SAD WP 134/5/15-16, Letter from Curzon, Carlton Terrace, London SW, to Cromer, 22 April 1915. Regarding the 'cheapness' of Arabs, nothing could have been further from the truth. See Chapter 7.

[17] This is precisely the opposite of the rationale used by Wingate and more closely corresponds with what eventually occurred.

[18] FO 633/24 pp. 81-2, Wingate to Cromer, 24 April 1915; and, pp. 82-3, Wingate to Cromer, 28 April 1915.

favourably, adding helpfully that, although the legitimacy of the present caliph had been brought into doubt due to its lack of Qurayshite descent, 'if the Moslems themselves have no desire to raise these problems, they have Great Britain's assurance that they will not be raised outside Islam.'[19]

Meanwhile, in London the Islamic Society responded somewhat negatively to *The Times* editorial by objecting to the notion that the caliph need be a member of the Quraysh, since the caliphate had been bequeathed legitimately to Sultan Selim I by the last Abbasid caliph.[20] However, at a general meeting held in mid-May, the Society adopted a more strident position, when the secretary wrote directly to Grey asserting that mere discussion of the caliphate in both the House of Lords and the British press was 'a source of annoyance, irritation and alarm to Muslims.' The letter went on to quote the resolutions of their recent meeting to the effect that there was currently no controversy among Muslims regarding the caliphate, that the present caliph was as respected as any of his predecessors, and there was no desire for change among Muslims. A second resolution declared:

> That Muslims strongly resent and will not tolerate any interference either directly or indirectly on the part of any non-Muslim in the question of the Khalifate as they firmly hold it to be beyond the province of any other people or Government to encroach upon the exclusive prerogative of Muslims regarding this or any other Islamic affair.[21]

It may reasonably be assumed that by 2 May Ronald Storrs was aware of Cromer's speech in the House of Lords and the resulting comment in *The Times*. Since on that day he sent a secret memorandum on the subject of the caliphate to the Foreign Office via the Cairo Residency in which he suggested that it 'will presumably be not disagreeable to Great Britain to have the strongest spiritual in the hands of the weakest temporal power.'[22] The precise meaning of that rather pregnant but cryptic remark becomes obvious when it is realised that also on that day Storrs wrote in more explicit terms to Kitchener's Private Secretary, Fitzgerald, on the same subject. Clearly alarmed by the fuss surrounding the rumours of a British backed Egyptian

---

[19] SAD WP 134/5/38, Copy of *The Near East*, issue of Friday, April 30, 1915, Article headed, 'The Khalifate.'
[20] FO 633/112, News Cuttings, p. 71, a letter published in *The Times*, 27 April 1915, headed 'The Khalifate,' from The Islamic Society, 158 Fleet Street, EC, 24 April 1915.
[21] FO 371/2486 72671, letter from Hon. Offg. Secretary. M. Ehsan El-Bakry, The Islamic Society, London, to Sir Edward Grey, 30 May 1915, enclosing the resolutions of the 'General Meeting of May 14th 1915.'
[22] FO 141/587/545/2, Secret Memorandum by RS (Ronald Storrs) headed 'The Khalifate', Cairo, 2 May 1915.

caliphate, and wishing to hasten matters in the direction originally set by Kitchener, Storrs sent a handwritten note containing the following:

> 3. Khalifate: I enclose a little note, gist of wh. I have given to Sir H. & Clayton. Do not forget the [illegible] majority of Egyptians are wholly indifferent & will always accept the de facto Khalifa, whoever and wherever he may be. As soon as things calm down, Abdalla might be asked here, or some one sent to him (at Jedda). He is most friendly and intelligent.[23]

All things considered, it may be concluded that Cromer's attempt to calm the waters merely presaged a storm, the most immediate effect being in the Sudan where news of Cromer's speech generated a contest for influence amongst Wingate's principal informants.

5.3 The Qadi and al-Mirghani Again

Although the Qadi may well have been satisfied with Cromer's performance in parliament he was most certainly disconcerted by the response it evoked in the British press, particularly that in the London '*Times*, which he was able to read in the columns of *The Sudan Times* in Arabic translation. Before doing so, however, Muhammad Mustafa al-Miraghi again approached Wingate advocating, as he had before, an 'Arabian Sultanate and Khalifate' though, on this occasion the Qadi introduced a note of doubt. The project of an Arab caliphate would, in his view, require a degree of co-operation between the 'ulama and the educated classes, but, he added ominously,

> I consider that the direct assistance of the Allies, although most necessary, may have one serious drawback, because the Mohammedan hates to see the traces of a Christian hand in any matter he thinks related in any way to religion. It is extremely difficult for him to see that Christian Powers have interfered in the formation of the Mohammedan Khalifate and Government.[24]

---

[23] PRO 30/57/47 QQ/21 Hand written note by Storrs, The Residency, Cairo to Fitzgerald, 2 May 1915.
[24] FO 633/24 pp. 83-92, letter from Wingate to Cromer, 1 May 1915, enclosing a memorandum from the Grand Kadi, Mohammed Mustapha. The latter is, in all likelihood, the Qadi's second memorandum to Wingate on the subject of the caliphate as referred to in, SAD WP 101/33/1, Original of Arabic letter from Mohammed Mustafa Meraghi to Wingate, 28 April 1915, with pencil translation; and obliquely in, SAD WP 134/6/19-23. See Notes

Although the recognition of this difficulty, the central contradiction of the whole 'Cairo scheme,' would later determine the precise modalities of the collaborative enterprise eventually worked out between Britain and the Sharif of Mecca, this was not Wingate's most immediate concern.

The Qadi's subsequent reading of *The Times* editorial on the caliphate, in particular what he referred to as 'the clause' declaring the illegitimacy of the Turkish caliphate due to the absence of Qurayshite descent, induced him to write immediately to Wingate to provide him with ample arguments to the contrary. It was not that the Qadi advocated loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate; rather, he asserted the political autonomy of Islam by insisting that it was for Muslims to judge whether the Ottomans had been good for Islam or indeed whether there should be a change in the caliphate. Of equal concern to Wingate was al-Miraghi's effective historicisation of the supposed Qurayshite qualification on the basis of a combination of historical and Islamic arguments. Although a qualified Qurayshite candidate for caliph would have precedence over all others similarly qualified, the crucial factor was the 'general well-being' of Islam.' Al-Miraghi then used a subtle historical argument which had obvious implications for the situation then prevailing to show how, as he believed, the Prophet's original nomination of a Qurayshite caliph was due to the strength of that particular tribe in relation to the others of the region. He added:

> It is evident that the spirit of faith alone, if not supported with sufficient power, is insufficient to ensure continued peace and tranquillity among people because the ambitions and interests of men are so different that it is not possible that religion alone could have sufficient control over them.[25]

Moreover, this statement was a direct contradiction of one the most fundamental tenets underpinning the 'Cairo view,' namely that religion, specifically, Islam, was the key to both understanding and ruling Middle Eastern society. It may be argued even, that the Qadi's view, expressed, as it was, in general terms with universal applicability, indicated a rather more

---

29 and 31, below. Inexplicably, this memorandum was not filed by the Foreign Office until 8 September 1915. FO 371/2486 127420

sophisticated appreciation, not only of his own society, but of the world in general. Had Wingate and the political intelligence community in Cairo been capable of apprehending the full import of this observation they might have saved Britain a lot of time and wasted effort during the remaining course of the war. The British in the Middle East would have done well to assimilate also the following advice from the Qadi:

> It is evident that things which depend on the special conditions and reasons obtaining at one time will only remain and continue to exist as long as these conditions and reasons existed, and will be discontinued when they vanish.[26]

A further effect of the Grand Qadi's memorandum to Wingate is evident in a lengthy note drafted by Storrs four days later in which he emphasised, rather more forcefully than before and with apparent historical backing, the issue of the caliph's Qurayshite descent and the illegitimacy of the present incumbent. Such was the impact of al-Miraghi's testimony that Storrs' previous argument for a new caliphate with incommensurate temporal and spiritual powers was now undermined by his pronouncement that, 'in Islam it [the caliphate] is the title given to the successor of Muhammed, who is vested with *absolute authority in all matters of state, both civil and religious*, as long as he rules in conformity with the law of the Quran and Hadis.' [emphasis added][27] The implications of Storrs' claim, that although the Sultan of Turkey was prayed for in Hyderabad and Bengal this had been a fairly recent phenomenon, are clear, and constitute further evidence of the struggle over the caliphate then taking place among British orientalists.[28]

Elie Kedourie is of the opinion that al-Miraghi's new argument was intended to leave the field open for one caliphate only – an Egyptian one. This would seem correct in view of al-

---

[25] In view of the arguments set out in the Introduction to this thesis against the idea of an 'authentic' caliphate against which all other versions may be measured, there is no need to take issue with Miraghi's view on the issue of Qurayshite descent as Elie Kedourie does. Kedourie, 1963, p. 211.

[26] SAD WP 134/7/15-26, Pencil translation of a submission by Mohammed Mustafa Meraghi, Grand Qadi of the Sudan, to Wingate, undated. This is the document cited and reproduced by Elie Kedourie in, Kedourie, 1963, Appendix, pp. 243–248. Kedourie dates this submission at the end of April/beginning of May 1915, this would seem to be consistent with the available evidence.

[27] FO 882 Vol 13, MIS 15/3, memorandum by Storrs, 'The Khalifate,' dated 6 May 1915; and, FO 141/587/545/3, Memorandum headed 'The Khalifate,' signed RS (Ronald Storrs), 6 May 1915, stamped by High Commissioner, Egypt, 20 May 1915.

[28] Although this was probably aimed at assuaging Indian squeamishness on the issue, it risked taking the potency out of the pan-Islamic 'bogey,' a two-edged sword in any case.

Miragahi's next conversation with Wingate in which he mentions Egypt by name, though not the Sultan himself. Under the conditions prevailing at the time, however, this preference suffered from the same central contradiction as did any alternative caliphate reconstituted with the aid of a European power, namely that a caliphate with too obvious a relationship with a Christian power was not feasible. This was a contradiction that Wingate now implicitly recognised. He immediately confided to Cromer that,

> having had some experience of the Machiavellian methods of Egyptian Nationalists, it occurred to me that he had been put up to this by the Cairo Nationalists in the hope that if His Britannic Majesty's Government sanctioned the arrangement, it would be a means of reasserting Egyptian independence – for, it is obvious, that the new independent Khalif and Sultan could not owe his position and title to a Christian Protector,[29]

adding that 'a recrudescence of Egyptian nationalism under the guise of the embryonic independent sovereign state and Khalifate may be anticipated.'

Al-Miraghi's apparent *volte-face* which, insofar as it detracted from the idea of a British-Sharifian alliance, may well have pleased Lord Cromer, was also the occasion for rivalry between Wingate's two foremost informants who began to compete with one another for the Governor-General's attention. Wingate describes how on this occasion, 'as Sayid Ali el Morghani handed me his suggestion about the Sherif of Mecca within a few minutes of the Grand Kadi's departure, it was clear that he smelt a rat and determined to go one better by announcing his nominee straight away.'[30]

'Ali al-Mirghani's following memorandum of 6 May was, in certain respects, the antithesis of the Qadi's submission of late April/early May. Whereas the latter was almost casuistic in its enunciation, the former was merely declaratory, and, whereas the Qadi supported his position with subtle historical and Islamic arguments, al-Mirghani used none. However, the reception of these submissions by Wingate did not depend on such principles: Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani C.M.G. had the distinct advantage, which he no doubt anticipated, of telling Wingate what he wanted to hear.

---

[29] SAD WP 134/6/19-23, Wingate, Khartoum, to Cromer, 14 May 1915.

Al-Mirghani urged on Wingate an official public declaration to the Arab chiefs on the subject of the Islamic caliphate. The caliphate, he said, should be in Arabia, which must included Syria and Iraq. This was, nevertheless, a flexible position, since, according to Wingate, al-Mirgahni had agreed that parts of Mesopotamia should remain in the British Empire. In an obvious stab at al-Miraghi, al-Mirghani asserted, without offering any justification, that Egypt was unsuitable (as were all other Islamic countries other than Arabia). He acknowledged that there were many Arabian chiefs who were '*Ashraf*,' some of whom would aspire to the caliphate, but stated that the Sharif of Mecca was best suited to the role due to his being located in the Hijaz and his being universally honoured. The possibility that some Arab chiefs might be reluctant to recognise the Sharif as caliph was not a problem, opined al-Mirghani, as long as the majority of Muslims did. However, the Sharif would need both material and moral support. The lack of subtlety in al-Mirghani's presentation was more than compensated for by his appreciation of Wingate's desiderata in the Middle East. In a manner clearly intended to resolve the underlying contradiction of such a collaborative enterprise which his opponent had identified he added:

> It is beyond doubt that Great Britain is the most competent Power to render to the Khalif this assistance and support. Such assistance, however, should be rendered secretly or *behind a very thick veil* in accordance with conditions and circumstances, and to do this Great Britain could utilise the services of some of the Mohammedan Emirs, Sultans and Chiefs who are under her control and protection and whom she could trust. Such assistance, if it come directly from such Chiefs to the Great Emir (Khalif) will be of very great advantage. [emphasis added][31]

Significantly, Wingate did not copy the Qadi's memorandum to Cromer, the Foreign Office, or anyone else as he did al-Mirghani's, merely referring to a conversation in his letter to Cromer of 14 May. However, rather than suppressing the former entirely,[32] he chose to convey its import to Cromer and others in a manner which juxtaposed its covertly threatening aspects to al-Miraghi's more accommodating views. The latter was thus presented as a solution to the problems associated with the Qadi's preferred outcome so dreaded by British imperialists. In this way the 'prophylactic' argument was applied equally to the task of circumventing a

---

[30] Ibid.

[31] FO 633/24 pp. 104-112, Letter from Wingate, Governor-General's Office, Khartoum, to Cromer, 14 May 1915 (as SAD WP 134/6/19-23), enclosing a copy of a Memorandum from Ali al-Morghani on the caliphate.

[32] It is perhaps significant that unlike all similar memoranda filed by Wingate, the translation of this particular document is undated and the Arabic original entirely absent. This suggests that Wingate withheld the Qadi's memorandum from circulation because of its adverse implications for the Sharifian policy.

nationalist (Arab or Egyptian) controlled caliphate as it was to precluding one under the sway of some imperial rival. For example, when writing to Cromer, Wingate simply amplified the gist of al-Mirghani's memorandum whilst flavouring his account with terminology designed to placate his correspondent's scepticism, describing 'an independent Arab Sovereign State and Khalifate' as 'Utopian *at the present stage*' [emphasis added]. He also took the opportunity to point out, once more and with obvious implications for India, that it was only by launching his own propaganda first[33] that he had succeeded in combating 'Turco-German Jehad propaganda' in the Sudan. Wingate's circumspection when dealing with Cromer is illustrated by his rather feeble postscript expressing his hope that 'the Sherif of Mecca idea is entertained.'

The Governor-General circulated al-Mirghani's 6 May memo with enthusiasm to Grey, Hardinge, McMahon and Clayton. To Hardinge, Wingate copied 'two more notes from natives,' the Grand Qadi, and al-Mirghani 'the most powerful religious leader in the Sudan.' However, the note from the Qadi was an earlier one advocating an Arab caliphate, which, therefore conveyed a unanimity which no longer existed. As for al-Mirghani's naming of the Sharif as preferred caliph, Wingate adds that he is 'inclined to think that this nominee has many of the required attributes – he is not on good terms with the Turks, but they greatly fear his power over the Arabs and for that reason they keep him very short of funds.'[34] The following day he wrote a similarly worded letter to Grey urging a declaration to the Muslims due to 'the crisis in their religious and national existence'[35] and suggested giving veiled support to the Sharif via Indian Muslim, chiefs. To Clayton, Wingate was more effusive. Besides passing on al-Mirghani's 6 May memorandum he warned Clayton, as he had Cromer, of a likely Egyptian nationalist bid for an Egyptian caliphate and also repeated the words he had used when writing to the former Consul-General about an 'Arab Sovereign State and Khalifate' being 'Utopian at present.'[36] Although the letter was not substantially different from the one he had sent Cromer, he finished by expressing his wish to keep such views between himself, Clayton and McMahon. However, when writing to the latter on the same

---

[33] There would be many occasions on which Wingate would criticise the Government of India for failing to propagandise their Islamic populations as he had done in the Sudan. For example, SAD WP 135/3/49, Private letter from Wingate to Hardinge, 23 September 1915.
[34] SAD WP 195/2/59-60, Wingate to Hardinge, 14 May 1915.
[35] SAD WP 134/6/30, Private letter from Wingate to Grey, 15 May 1915, enclosing a copy of 'Translation of Memorandum by Ali Morghani of 6th May 1915;' and, FO 371/2486 77713.

day, also enclosing the 6 May memo, Wingate took the opportunity of suggesting that the Sharif of Mecca be contacted via 'Ali al-Mirghani, adding that he had asked Clayton to explain his views personally to him.[37] Significantly, to both McMahon and Clayton, Wingate added the sweetener that, on the basis of some of the comments made by al-Mirghani, 'the Arabs' were beginning to accept that they would have to give up their claims to certain parts of Mesopotamia and Syria. This would tend to confirm one of the arguments of this thesis: that to its British advocates at least, the idea of an Arab caliphate was seen as compatible with, if not actually facilitating, a partitioned, and less than sovereign, Arabia.

Clayton was clearly delighted by al-Mirghani's 6 May memo and was both disappointed and incredulous at the High Commissioner's exclusion of any reference to the caliphate in the declaration to the Arabs then under preparation in Cairo. It is also evident that Clayton felt some urgency over luring the Sharif to the British side with intimations of an enhanced status, since, in referring to the al-Mirghani memo, he wrote to Wingate:

> It came very opportunely as I had been urging on the High Commissioner that the Moslem world was undoubtedly looking for some sign as to our intentions regarding the Khalifate, and suggesting that when he was able to communicate with the Sherif of Mecca, it might not be a bad thing to hint to him "very secretly" that he would not be considered an unsuitable candidate by HMG, should the Moslem World select him.[38]

5.4 Cromer Seeks an 'Authentic' Voice: The Tactic of Deferral

Cromer's response to Wingate's letter of 1 May was a mixed one. Initially he appeared to be convinced by the force of Wingate's argument. He confessed that,

---

[36] SAD WP 195/2/64-67, Wingate, Erkowit, Sudan, to Clayton, 15 May 1915.
[37] SAD WP 134/6/31, Letter from Wingate to McMahon, 15 May 1915, enclosing a copy of 'Translation of Memorandum by Ali Morghani of 6th May 1915;' also, FO 882 MIS 15/5.
[38] SAD WP 195/2/146-151, Private from Clayton, Intelligence Department, WO, Cairo, 22 May 1915.

> as a matter of theory, I rather cotton to the idea of establishing an Arab kingdom – not because it is a very good solution, but rather because if the Turk disappears I do not see any other – at the same time the practical difficulties in the way of doing anything are enormous. Just consider what your Grand Kadi says.

However, Cromer's attention alighted upon the central contradiction of the 'Cairo scheme' when he objected to the fact that, '[the Qadi] wants us to do the stage management of the Khalifate, and at the same time he recognises that if we attempt to stage manage the whole thing will be a failure! Both propositions are probably quite true, but it is rather difficult to reconcile them.'[39] The Governor-General responded positively to the dilemma posed by Cromer by contending that 'we have to work more or less behind the curtain, and I see no reason why we should not help them to that extent without of course committing ourselves to any very definite line in matters which concern the religion pure and simple.'[40] Clearly, for those favouring a British-backed Arab caliph, the *official and declared policy* of non-interference in matter's appertaining to the caliphate and the Islamic religion was precisely that and nothing more.

Evidently appreciating the nature of the 'game' being played by Wingate, and wishing to counter Wingate's efforts in favour of the Sharif of Mecca, Cromer decided to acquire an 'authentic' Islamic source of his own. Living in central London, as he did, he cannot have had much scope. His reply to Wingate's letter of 14 May opened on a note of desperation. Cromer admitted that 'the whole of the question of our future relation with Moslem, more especially in the matter of the Khalifate, bristles with more difficulties than any political problem which I have as yet had to consider' and went on to say that he had been making general enquiries about the credentials and standing of the Sharif of Mecca. The editor of *The Near East* informed Cromer that the Agha Khan[41] believed that, in the event of the disappearance of the

---

[39] SAD WP 134/6/35-6, Letter from Cromer, Wimpole Street, to Wingate, 18 May 1915; and, FO 633/24 p. 280-28, in which he also bemoans the fact that 'there is at present no member of the Government who really has a grasp of Eastern questions.'

[40] SAD WP 134/7/10-11 & 195/4/197-8, Private letter from Wingate, Erkowit, Sudan, to Cromer, 21 June 1915.

[41] In fact Cromer had already been in receipt of suggestions involving the Agha Khan. Gertrude Bell had suggested to Cromer in October 1914 the possibility of a combined assault on the Hijaz by Ibn Saud and the Sharif of Mecca with the encouragement of a proclamation based on consultations with the Agha Khan. FO 633/23 pp. 190 – 195, Letter from Gertrude Bell, Rounton Grange, Northallerton , Yorkshire, to Cromer, 11 October 1914.

Ottoman caliphate, the future caliph should be determined by some kind of 'Mahommaden ecclesiastical synod.'[42]

The immediate consequences of al-Mirghani's declared support and offer of mediation in relation to the Sharif's candidature for caliph were threefold. Both Wingate and Grey[43] sought to capitalise on the opportunity afforded them by al-Mirghani's proposals. Secondly, the India Office and Indian Government[44] responded constructively, giving qualified support to the idea of the Sharif as caliph, though, like the Agha Khan, tended towards a deferral of the whole issue. Thirdly, al-Mirghani later revised his position with regard to time-scale in a manner which tended to converge with the Government of India's position.

The express preference for the Sharif of Mecca as caliph in conjunction with the official policy of non-interference seems to have troubled the India Office barely more than it did Wingate. In response to al-Mirghani's memorandum of 6 May, Thomas Holderness, Permanent Under Secretary at the India Office, referred to the author's advocacy of the Grand Sharif of Mecca as caliph as being

> in general accord with the views of His Majesty's Government, though it is their policy – as stated by Sir E. Grey in his telegram of the 14th April and by the Marquess of Crewe in the House of Lords – to treat the question as one which Moslems should decide for themselves without interference from the Powers,

but thought it unwise to follow the latter with 'secret attempts to intervene through the Muslim chiefs of India.'[45] However, Austen Chamberlain, Secretary for India, believed that Britain should encourage the Sharif through relationships with other Arabian chiefs, not to become

---

[42] SAD WP 134/7/7, Private letter from Cromer to Wingate, 11 June 1915; and, FO 633/24 pp. 283-284.

[43] FO 371/2486 77713/15, Letter from E. A. Crowe, Foreign Office, to the Under Secretary of State, India Office, 19 June 1915 (enclosing Morghani's memorandum of 6 May), which conveys Grey's desire to replicate, in Arabia, the declarations already distributed in Egypt and Sudan on the basis of telegram No. 173 from the FO to HC, Cairo, 14 April 1915 (See Note 11, above). McMahon later informed the Foreign Office that an unsigned leaflet had been distributed by plane on the Hijaz coast guaranteeing the independence of the Arabian Peninsula and Holy Places but without reference to the caliphate. FO 371/2486 87023, Telegram No. 306, McMahon to the FO, 30 June 1915.

[44] SAD WP 134/7/4-5, Private letter from Hardinge, Viceregal Lodge, Simla, to Wingate, 10 June 1915. However, the Viceroy would concur with the Qadi's subsequent remarks which 'knock[ed] the bottom out of the theory that the Khalif must belong to the tribe of "Koreish".' SAD WP 135/1/12, Private letter from Hardinge, Viceregal Lodge, Simla, to Wingate, 15 July 1915.

caliph directly, but as the independent ruler of the Hijaz. Chamberlain assumed that the ultimate success of the caliphate enterprise would depend on the extent to which the caliph claimed sovereignty over the territory of other Arab chiefs. He could not have appreciated that this issue was one which the abstract subtleties of the 'Cairo scheme' had already catered for. Moreover, it was one that Wingate would soon be forced to address directly.

5.5 Wingate's Conversion to 'Pan-Arabianism'

Just as Wingate was making best use of al-Mirghani's latest memorandum to elicit prompt action in support of a liaison with the Sharif, his informant submitted a lengthy addendum which seemed to retreat somewhat from his previous position. It began with the words:

> It is not likely that any development could take place in the question of the Arabian Khalifate, before the fall of Constantinople, because the existing Turkish Khalifate is up till now, the acknowledged Khalifate of Mohammedans, although only nominally, and is respected as such everywhere,

adding that,

> It is not necessary that an Arab Khalifate should be held in readiness to be proclaimed as soon as Constantinople is captured. Nobody expects this to take place with such promptitude, because the Arabian Khalifate, or the Arabian government, hitherto have had no real existence, and it is necessary to give sufficient time for the formation of this new government and the new Khalifate.

This memo acknowledged competing claims to the caliphate and raised the danger of their being backed by rival European Powers. Although al-Mirghani seemed to be conceding to a deferral of the reconstitution of an Arab caliphate, he was, at the same time, doing his utmost to create a sense of urgency among the British which, he hoped, would precipitate their prompt commitment to the Sharif of Mecca. Besides repeating his commendations of the

---

[45] FO 371/2486 84355, Secret letter P. 2299/15 from Holderness, India Office, Whitehall to Under Secretary of

Sharif, al-Mirghani advised that Britain assist the Sharif, both morally and materially, while aiding other chiefs only to a moderate degree, 'the object of this [being] to establish the position of the chosen individual by making him more powerful than the others. This is the only way to give to the would-be-Khalifa, power sufficient to gain for him the respect and reverence of all others. This is the only method to gain for him the support and allegiance of all other chiefs.'[46] Al-Mirghani may, in fact, have apprehended, ahead of the British, one of the key factors which would result in the ultimate failure of the 'Cairo scheme,' namely that the enhancement of the Sharif's temporal power was a precondition of his acquiring the caliphate and not the other way round. At the same time, it seems likely that al-Mirghani's sudden trepidation over too early a commitment by Britain to the Sharif *as caliph* reflected an underlying agenda according to which the idea of a revived Arab caliphate was subordinate to a more comprehensive national (if not outright nationalist) project. In either case, Wingate registered no awareness of the latter possibility and immediately distributed the memorandum to Grey, Hardinge and McMahon,[47] without supporting comment. Hardinge's reply indicated that he was comforted by the apparent convergence of views since he was quite sure that Indian Muslims had 'not so far contemplated the possibility of a change in the Khalifate.'[48]

Any satisfaction which Wingate might have felt could only have been short-lived, since, less than a week later, he received a further submission from the Qadi. Al-Miraghi's note of 18 August assumed and promoted a degree of Arab and Muslim autonomy which even the 'Western Arabians' would have found alarming. Again, the subtlety of the Qadi's reasoning combined with a sophisticated knowledge of British desiderata and British anxieties was demonstrated. The Qadi desired, above all else, Islamic unity rather than to be involved in any intrigue over the question of the caliphate. In order to help Muslims consider their future he urged Britain and her Allies 'to announce their intentions with regard to the countries which they were prepared to consider as subject to the Mahommedan Sultanate,' even going so far as to request Britain's help in building up such a state. It is evident that al-Miraghi was aware

---

State, Foreign Office, 24 June 1915.

[46] SAD WP 135/2/6-11, Pencil translation of a Memorandum by 'Sidi Ali Morghani', dated by the translator, 12 August 1915. Also, FO 882 Vol. 15, PNA 15/3, pp. 12-17, typed copy of above.

[47] SAD WP 135/2/12 –14, letters dated 14 August 1914, to Grey, Hardinge and McMahon, enclosing Morghani's memo of 12 August. Also, FO 371/2486 121174; and, FO 141/461/1198/4.

[48] SAD WP 135/3/3, Secret letter from Hardinge, Viceregal Lodge, Simla, to Wingate, 1 September 1915.

that Britain was contemplating a caliphate whose secular power would be confined to the Hijaz. He contended that if the caliphate were 'to be placed within a small portion (of the Arab country)' then Britain would have no need 'to expunge from the minds of the Mahommedans the fears and suspicions that already exist there,' declaring that Britain's present, seemingly benevolent, disposition towards the Muslim world would be judged as 'a mask to hide their real intentions.' Al-Miraghi then reminded Wingate that the declaration which Britain had already made had caused the recipients to understand that the Arabian peninsula was the only country that would come under the direct rule of the caliph. Unfortunately for Britain, Muslims would not agree to this and as a result would remain attached to the present caliphate.

The Qadi's proposal was not merely maximalist in territorial terms but supposed a long-term material commitment on the part of Britain since he urged Great Britain to declare her support for 'an Arabian Government and Khalifate according to the principles of expansion and development.'[49] Finally, as if to emphasise the confidence and independence of will of Islam and the Arab movement al-Miraghi declined to prejudge either the seat of the caliphate or the identity of the new caliph but instead proposed a general caliphate conference which would preclude the interference of the Powers. If Britain's support for a revived Arab caliphate was ever intended to divert or circumvent the historical development of either pan-Islam, or secular, political Arab nationalism then their task must have looked simultaneously more urgent and more difficult.

Despite appearances, there is no direct evidence of collusion between al-Mirghani and the Qadi at this stage. On the basis of their past behaviour it would seem more likely that the close pursuit of the Qadi's note by a further memorandum from al-Mirghani on 22 August was an indication of their competing for a position in the final disposition of the British Middle East. Although there is no archival evidence, it is conceivable that both men had been approached independently by representatives of the Arab movement based in Syria. In fact there was little of novelty in the Shaykh's latest submission except for its note of urgency and its more practical collaborative posture. On this occasion al-Mirghani emphasised that 'the Arabs are

---

[49] SAD WP 135/2/16-22, Translation of a note addressed to his Excellency Sir Reginald Wingate by 'Sheikh Mohammed Mustafa, Grand Kadi of the Sudan' – original signed 'Mohammed Mustafa' and dated 18 August 1915, Khartoum.

bound by motives of personal interest to look towards Great Britain and to appeal to her for her help.' Again he urged a combination of open but *limited* material aid to Arab chieftains generally, with *greater* but clandestine support to 'the man who is considered to be the suitable and right man to be the head of the future Arabian Government.' In notable contrast to al-Miraghi, however, al-Mirghani being equally aware of British anxieties tended to encourage the notion that Britain would maintain the dominant position in any relationship with the Arabs. However, his stress on the necessary dependence of the inhabitants of Arabia was two-edged. Al-Mirghani explained that the Turks would not wish to relocate their caliphate to the Hijaz because 'the natives in Arabia are mostly nomads and could not support the Khalifa and establish a civilized and modern Government.' However, inclusion of Syria in the scheme was not merely implied since, besides belabouring the urgency of establishing routine and reliable communications with the Sharif of Mecca, which he believed could be achieved from the Sudan, al-Mirghani echoed the logic of the 'Alexandretta option.' He stated his hope that Britain would undertake a temporary occupation of Syria, firstly, on account of the natives 'being better disposed to accept the scheme of the Arabian movement,'[50] and secondly, in order to prevent the Turks from decamping there.

That Wingate was swayed by these latest memoranda - the 'stick' of an independent Islamic revival threatened by al-Miraghi, and the 'carrot' of a backward Arabia dependent on Britain foreshadowed by al-Mirghani - is attested to by a memorandum he and Symes drafted barely a week later. Wingate's 'Note on a British Policy in the Near East,' which he forwarded to McMahon almost immediately,[51] represents a development *and* consolidation of his previously held position. This report took his reasoning to a level of abstract coherence and sophistication which at the time exceeded that achieved by his colleagues in Cairo. Referring to the 'present confusion of ideas and policies' concerning Arabia, and the ineluctability of Muslim criticism from one quarter or another, Wingate announced: 'I am increasingly drawn to an attempted solution on Pan-Arabian lines.' This, he argued 'might wean Sunnite Islam

---

[50] SAD WP 135/2/23-31, Translation of a 'Memorandum by Sayyed Ali El Morghani', C.M.G., dated Khartoum, 22 August 1915.

[51] 882 Vol. 13 MIS 15/10, Letter from Wingate, Governor-General's Office, Khartoum, to McMahon, 27 August 1915, in which Wingate refers to a note on the question of the caliphate which he and Symes had just completed.

from the aggressive pan-Islam of the Ottoman school.' Not every British imperialist would have agreed, however, with his basic assumption,

> that our cardinal aims – apart from any questions of political expediency – are to discredit Pan-Islamism, as exploited by the committee of Union and Progress, as a political creed, *and to secure an enlightened government to the Moslem and Christian populations of non-Turkish race hitherto subject to the Ottoman Empire.* [emphasis added]

On the stated assumption that Ottoman cohesion depended upon the 'fusion of the temporal and spiritual power in the person of the Sultan,' Wingate argued through a series of seemingly logical steps that although no country protected by a Christian power could host the caliphate, and although it was at present unlikely that any 'soi-disant Khalifas' who might emerge from Arabia 'could obtain other than local support,' only the Arabs could effectively counterpoise the Ottoman hold on Islam.

From this apparently irresolvable dilemma Wingate then argued for wholesale British commitment to the most suitable candidate since 'an Arab "Pope" buried away in the sands of the Arabian Peninsula – even though the integrity of these sands is fully secured to him – will appeal to Moslems nowhere.' Anything less than such a comprehensive arrangement, he maintained, would render the outcome 'a new focus ... of political pan-Islamic intrigue.' The core of Wingate's message was that such issues could not be avoided, nor the responsibility of at least attempting such an arrangement shunned. His advocacy of such a scheme verged on the grandiloquent when he declared:

> Approaching the question from this standpoint, I am inclined to the view that in the theory of Arabian union, and by concessions to the Pan-Arabian ideal, may lie not merely a partial solution of many of our present difficulties, but possibly the foundation of a really constructive scheme for the future.

Without noting the irony, Wingate referred to 'the illusive character of Arabian political conceptions' before going on to outline an arrangement whose juxtaposition of constituent elements defied all conventional understanding. However, his proposal stands as a unique demonstration of the inherent flexibility and near-universal compatibility of the British backed caliphate idea. The scheme which he envisaged, incorporated 'the terrestrial independence of the Arabian peninsula,' while preserving 'the principles of Arabian unity ... in the adjacent

countries.'[52] These adjacent countries were to include a British zone extending northwards to Haifa, stretching to the Gulf and including Mesopotamia, adjacent to a French zone in Syria, and even a 'special arrangement' in Palestine. This scheme, under which the so-called 'principle of Arab unity' was adhered to solely through the symbolic device of the Arab caliphate, was in many respects the antecedent of the arrangement which would be worked out some nine months later between Sir Mark Sykes and the French Government. Once again, what was being proposed here illustrates the abiding preconception upon which the whole edifice stands – the presumption that the respective domains of Islam and secular politics could be made to occupy discrete levels of social reality.

5.6 Conclusion

The memoranda which Wingate received from the Grand Qadi and from the honoured Shaykh, and the partiality which Wingate showed in conveying their import are almost paradigmatic of the general process by which interested parties, amongst the forgers and subjects of empire respectively, find one another. The example of al-Mirghani's and al-Miraghi's submissions are an outstanding example of how those suitably placed within subject societies are able, through a sophisticated appreciation of imperial aims and the exploitation of imperialist anxieties, to manipulate their correspondents and thereby influence imperial policy. Though, it must be emphasised, this always takes place within the unequal relations of imperialism. Even in the domain of abstract ideologies, without reference for the time being, to the more foundational social-structural limits on imperial practice, it can be shown how imperial policy is never simply a matter of unilateral imposition. Neither is the interaction one between once-and-for-all predetermined positions. Rather, the relationship may be characterised as one of 'dialectical

---

[52] FO 882 Vol. 13 MIS 15/9/A, pp. 378-381, 'Note on a British Policy in the Near East,' Wingate, Khartoum, 26 August 1915. Wingate declared his pan-Arabian sympathies using precisely the same words in letters written to Cromer and Hardinge the following day. SAD WP 196/2/257-263 & 265-269, Letters from Wingate, Khartoum, to Hardinge and Cromer respectively, 26 August 1915.

extemporisation' according to which the mutual realisation of privileged interests is pursued conjointly and relationally.

In the instance cited the effect was to move Wingate from a vision of a British Middle East based on a politically circumscribed 'spiritual' Arab caliphate towards a more comprehensive pan-Arab scheme, and, less importantly, to enable him to recover from his former diffidence with regard to his superiors in London. It was only from this new position, strengthened by the testimony of his two most able informants, that Wingate was able to counter Cromer's efforts to stifle debate and speculation about the caliphate and as a consequence contribute, perhaps decisively, towards obtaining Grey's support for the 'Cairo scheme.' It is important to stress that the successive options considered by Wingate, a subversion of pan-Islam via an Arab caliphate, and pan-Arabism *under a caliph*, were both conceived within the imperial Islamic problematic and did not at this stage represent a cognitive shift from Islamic-religious to secular-nationalist solutions. The impact which the spectre of mass Arab politics had on the British caliphate policy is the predominant theme of the following chapter.

The examples of al-Mirghani and al-Miraghi provide a demonstration of two ostensibly opposing tendencies. Firstly, a certain convergence and mutual accommodation may be noted between Wingate's and al-Mirghani's preference for a flexibility predicated on a type of caliphate under which almost anything was possible – at least nominally. At the same time these parties moved towards a practical deferral of the caliphate issue, which apparently satisfied pan-Arabians as well as members of the British establishment who were both nervous of direct and immediate support for a new caliphate. The second tendency was one of competition over tradition and the resources of history, each party selecting from tradition(s) according to their agenda. The correspondence between Wingate and his informants indicates how, with regard to the caliphate, Britain as well as Arab and Egyptian nationalists were playing the same game. That is, they each sought to subvert the institution to the furtherance of their respective projects, in which context an alternative caliphate is shown to be an instrument subordinated to a more comprehensive secular scheme.

Undeniably, there is a danger in attempting to post-rationalise the intrinsically incoherent and nonsensical. There is no guarantee that the utterances and statements of any particular British Middle Eastern official or informant, even those occurring within a relatively short span of time, are mutually consistent or based upon an underlying logic. There is, therefore, a question mark over whether two of the most fundamental and widely held ideas among serving British officials in the Middle East are reconcilable or simply the result of muddle and wishful thinking. Firstly, was the belief, encountered in this and earlier chapters, that in Islamic societies political power is transmitted primarily through the medium of religion and that secular politics is subordinated or displaced by religion. Secondly, there was the frequently declared preference, as regards the future of the region, for a purely spiritual caliphate, in spite of the realisation that in the past the caliphate had combined both religious and temporal functions. These developments in the spring of 1915 suggest that, regardless of what had prevailed hitherto, certain parties, both Islamic and British, were contemplating a definite change in the nature of the caliphate and had not misunderstood its supposed 'true' nature. Secondly, they illustrate that what Britain feared most of all was a revived caliphate incorporating the power of pan-Islam and 'modern' secular politics,[53] the latter being understood to be largely absent from, and quite alien to, the Islamic societies of the Middle East. Moreover, this is consistent with the idea of an interposed British rule over the entire region at minimum cost operated at arms length behind the 'veil of Islam.' Finally, in spite of a degree of sophisticated historicisation of the institutions of Islam by one of Wingate's informants, it must be said, that certain misconceptions remained useful, at least in the short term, from the point of view of imperial rule.

An increasing urgency may be discerned in the communications passing between Cairo, London and Khartoum up to the September 1915, however, this urgency had its origin in propaganda and was not dictated by actual events. Although the Sharif of Mecca had emerged as the preferred candidate for caliph, no reliable and routine contact was established between his family and Cairo until the July of 1915. Consequently, the advances that had been made in

---

[53] This conclusion is supported by the fact that one of Britain's main preoccupations in the Middle East before the war was their fear of pan-Islam, and the caliphate in the hands of the CUP. The latter, although regarded as a modern political movement, was widely supposed to have arisen as the result of alien influences, specifically, a

the consolidation of the 'Cairo scheme' remained largely theoretical. Several alternative collaborative options remained open to the British at this stage, though the respective candidates were by no means equally pliant and accommodating, some demanding more independence and autonomy than others. Importantly, none were so closely associated with the future of the caliphate as was the Sharif of Mecca. The consideration of these options and the preparation for practical intervention will be examined in the following chapters.

---

combination of cosmopolitan Jewish intrigue with the methods, if not the principles, of Jacobinism. See Chapter 2, Notes 143 and 145; and, Kedourie, 1956, p. 82.

CHAPTER 6: The 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence' and the Idea of an Arab Caliphate

6.0 Introduction

The central concern of this chapter is the relationship between the British notion of an Arab caliphate and the diplomatic engagement generally known as the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence.' This chapter, therefore extends the analysis from mid-August 1915 - at which point, it will be recalled, the main British contributors to the debate over the future of Arabia had, between them, constructed a coherent vision based largely on the testimony of their respective local 'informants' – to the end of December 1915. It was during this month that it was finally decided to establish an institution, the Arab Bureau, in Cairo charged specifically with the responsibility for propaganda and intelligence gathering and the co-ordination and implementation of policy in the area. More importantly, this was also the point when negotiations with Sharif Husayn had proceeded to the point where British support for a revolt under his leadership was finally confirmed as a central plank in British policy.

The first section of this chapter deals with the initial exchange of letters in August 1915 and the second exchange during September-October 1915. It is significant for the development of this thesis that with the exception of Husayn's first letter to McMahon there was no further mention of the caliphate. This fact, therefore, requires explanation in accordance with the theoretical framework established in the Introduction. With that aim in mind the second section of this chapter will evaluate the impact of the 'al-Faruqi episode' on British thinking concerning the future of the Arab Middle East. In particular, this section will examine how the testimony, of Muhammad al-Faruqi, self-styled representative of the Arab movement, informant and would-be collaborator, resulted in firstly, a modification of the role played by the revival of the Arab caliphate in British plans for an effective extension of imperial control in the region, and secondly, a somewhat cryptic acceptance of Sharif Husayn's demands. It

will be argued, contrary to the generally accepted view, that above all else al-Faruqi's arrival afforded the Cairo Military Intelligence Department an urgently sought opportunity to further their scheme for resolving the 'Arab' and 'Muslim questions' to the satisfaction of British imperial interests.

The final section of the chapter will be devoted to a brief elaboration of a phase of ambiguity in British thinking with regard to the relationship between the assumed functions of an Arab caliphate and secular government in the future Arab state, which occurred as a result of al-Faruqi's testimony. Regarding the central question of this chapter, it will be concluded that for a number of mutually reinforcing reasons the issue of the caliphate receded somewhat during the period of the 'Husayn-McMahon correspondence.' Firstly, this period constitutes a tentative first step from theory towards action in relation to the precise mode of imperial governance to be adopted in the Arab Middle East during which little more of a practical nature could be achieved towards the restoration of the Arab caliphate. Secondly, a policy of deferral of the issue became attractive in order to avoid irresolvable differences, both within the British Middle Eastern establishment, and between the latter and representatives of the Arab movement - both secular and Sharifian. Thirdly, the officially declared policy of disinterest and non-interference in the matter of the caliphate united those who understood the central dilemma of the British caliphate policy (that to succeed, British support must remain invisible), with those who were, in any event, squeamish about intervention in matters of special importance to the Muslim faith. Finally, and most importantly in relation to the specific scheme of collaboration under examination, as far as the various parties engaged in negotiations were concerned, both Arab and British, Sharif Husayn's pre-eminence with regard to the future of the caliphate was no longer a point of contention. In fact, rather than being a proscribed topic it had become the *res iudicata* of British Middle Eastern policy.

6.1 The Part Played in the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence' by the Idea of an Arab Caliphate

6.11 Introduction

Many of the better known accounts of British Middle Eastern policy during the First World War are concerned largely with the comparison of the wartime accords and declarations of sympathy involving Britain and various other 'interested' parties. The series of letters exchanged during the second half of 1915 and early 1916 between Sharif Husayn and the High Commissioner for Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, along with the so-called 'Sykes-Picot Agreement' and the 'Balfour Declaration,' are generally treated in relation to one another in order to determine to what extent they are mutually compatible or contradictory. In particular, the question of whether Palestine, supposedly promised to Zionism in the 'Balfour Declaration,' was included in the area comprising the Arab state as delimited in the 'Husayn-McMahon correspondence' has been the subject of earnest political and academic debate for generations.

Most authors have adopted a straightforward literal-legalistic reading of the agreements and conclude, one way or the other, whether Palestine was specifically included in or excluded from the territory designated by McMahon as 'Arab' in his correspondence with the Sharif.[1] The various stances adopted in this debate have often been reliable indicators of a particular author's position in relation to the latter day Arab-Israeli conflict it being supposed that all imperialists of the former period may be usefully characterised as either pro-Arab, or Zionist Judeophiles. Against this presumption it is argued here that the British hypothesisation of a revived Arab caliphate as an instrument for the attainment of a symbolic unity and nominal sovereignty in Greater Arabia facilitated, in the abstract, i.e. in remoteness from their implementation, a degree and quality of compatibility amongst the various wartime

[1] Stein, 1961; Friedman, 1973; and Kedourie, 1976, all conclude that Palestine was excluded from the area of the Arab state according to the understanding reached between McMahon and Husayn. Antonius, 1938; Sykes, 1967; Tibawi, 1978; and more recently, Fromkin, 1991, maintain that it was included. Sanders, 1984, may be added to the latter and offers a partial explanation which is augmented by the arguments presented here.

'agreements'[2] not generally appreciated. This emerges as an aspect of the inherent flexibility of the 'Cairo scheme' already described. However, the main aim of this thesis is not to propound a revised account of the conduct of British wartime diplomacy, but to adumbrate the trajectory of the idea of an Arab caliphate in British Middle Eastern policy in all its ramifications. This chapter, therefore, will deal with the Husayn-McMahon correspondence only to the extent that it related to the issue of the caliphate with the aim of explaining why by September 1915, and with apparent abruptness, it had ceased to be a matter of explicit concern.

6.12 Antecedents of the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence'

Before going on to examine the correspondence itself it is necessary to show that although it was undertaken with some urgency and under conditions of ignorance regarding the Middle East it represents an extension of British policy rather than, as some authors have asserted, a decisive turn. Specifically in relation to Britain's combined Arab-Islamic policy, the 'Husayn-McMahon correspondence' had antecedents at the highest level of decision making and did not arise out of the negligence, incompetence or subterfuge *of any particular* individual or individuals. It is important to note that the case for continuity between the earlier proposals and what was ultimately agreed between McMahon and Husayn relies heavily on the adaptability afforded by the idea of a revived Arab caliphate.

Undoubtedly, Kitchener's letter to 'Abdullah of October 1914 loomed large in the mind of his successor in Cairo, and being relatively naïve in matters oriental McMahon seems to have placed great store by doing what he thought Kitchener might have done based on what his predecessor had, apparently, already set in motion. In any case McMahon continued to be influenced by those who, having previously worked with Kitchener in Cairo and the Sudan,

---

[2] It is generally pointed out that neither the 'Sykes-Picot Agreement' nor the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence' were regarded as binding by the British diplomatists involved in their making. It is, however, seldom appreciated that the 'Balfour Declaration' was merely an expression of sympathy with the aims of Zionism conveyed in a letter from the Foreign Secretary to a British Jewish peer.

shared the War Minister's outlook and imperial ambitions – in particular Wingate and Clayton.

Foreign Office Telegram No. 173 of 14 April has already been cited. Referring, as it did, to 'an independent sovereign Moslem State' in the context of 'the Arabian Peninsula and its Moslem Holy Places,'[3] this communication, taken in conjunction with Britain's 'official' position of non-interference in matters appertaining to the caliphate, represented a substantial confirmation of the policy being propounded in Cairo. Interestingly, McMahon's reply to Grey concerning his own conveyance of the import of Telegram No. 173 to his subordinates in Egypt and the Sudan hinted at some anxiety over Grey's use of the term 'independent sovereign State.' The High Commissioner explained: '[the] term ... has been interpreted in a *generic* sense because idea of an Arabian unity under one ruler recognised as supreme by the other Arab chiefs is as yet inconceivable to Arab mind.' [emphasis added][4] McMahon added that it would be in British interests to see the Sharif as caliph but that it would be counterproductive to attempt to influence Muslim opinion. In this context he went on to say: 'All we can usefully do to assist Shereef's prospects is to increase public confidence in our determination to safeguard welfare of independence and integrity of Hedjaz.'[5]

Although Elie Kedourie concedes that both McMahon and Storrs believed that expressions such as 'sovereignty' and 'independence,' 'did not bear their ordinary or literal meaning' when used to Arabs'[6] he insists that 'it is by no means certain what interpreting such expressions "in a generic sense" exactly means or entails.'[7] However, the generally accepted sense of 'non-specific,' if taken in conjunction with the prevailing assumption among British orientalists that the extra-territorial religious suzerainty afforded by an Arab caliphate in the Hijaz would facilitate *some kind* of 'nominal sovereignty' throughout Arabia. Unfortunately for Kedourie such a conclusion rests on an appreciation of the internal coherence of the 'Cairo

---

[3] See Chapter 5, Note 11.
[4] 371/2486 60357, Telegraphic No. 188, McMahon to Grey, 14 May 1915.
[5] Apart from alluding to the central, and ultimately fatal, flaw in the Anglo-Sharifian scheme this quotation anticipates the 'official' policy of non-interference formally adopted later in the year. It also contains within it a benchmark against which the sincerity of Britain's adherence to her official disinterest in the matter of the caliphate may be measured – that is, in relation to the extent to which her actions in the Middle East did in fact 'increase public confidence' in the Sharif, for the reasons implied.
[6] Kedourie, 1976, pp. 24-5.

scheme' in which the Sharifian caliphate was a key component, and to which his 'aberrational' thesis is diametrically opposed.

Sometime after 19 May 1915,[8] in accordance with the general meaning of Foreign Office Telegram No. 173,[9] a leaflet was distributed along the Hijaz coast which promised on behalf of the British and Indian governments that on the conclusion of the present war the terms of peace would incorporate the condition that 'the Arabian peninsula and the Mahommedan holy places shall remain independent.'[10] Although Kedourie makes much of the fact that the text of this leaflet was not sent to London until 30 June when Grey's subordinates voiced their concerns over the implications for Aden, implying that it only received retrospective approval, it should be recalled that it was on that very day that the de Bunsen Committee issued its final report which included very similar terms in its final desiderata. In fact the Committee's formulation was more explicit, referring to 'independent Moslem rule' which it linked, albeit imprecisely – one could even say *generically* - to a solution to the question of the caliphate.[11] While the Foreign Office might reasonably have objected to the public declaration of British desiderata in the region, it could not reasonably have found fault with the specific content of the leaflet. Regardless of Foreign Office concerns, taken in conjunction with the message that he had already received from Kitchener, Sharif Husayn's knowledge of this leaflet can only have caused him to believe that he was to have a pivotal and powerful position within the scheme then being developed in Cairo.

Undoubtedly his familiarity with the correspondence referred to above, which in any case reiterated the essentials of Cairo's proclamation of 4 December 1914,[12] gave the naïve

---

[7] Ibid., p. 24.
[8] Clayton refers, on 22 May 1915, to an identical declaration having already been made public. FO 882 Vol. 13, MIS 15/6, Note by Clayton to [Storrs ?? – illegible], Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo, 22 May 1915. However, the Viceroy Of India refers to a 'proclamation issued to Arabs in Arabia, Sudan and Western Desert on 13th June.' FO 371/2486 83311, Despatch from Viceroy to FO, 23 June 1915, in which he refers to having just seen the proclamation and expresses concern that the term 'Arabian Peninsula' restricts their activities in Oman and implies withdrawal from Aden.
[9] Strictly speaking, Telegram No. 173 merely allowed Wingate to 'let it be known'. It was not until 19 May, in response to McMahon's Telegram No. 188 (See Note 4, above), that Grey formally authorised McMahon and Wingate to make a public announcement in accordance with Telegram No. 173. Kedourie, 1976, pp. 23-24.
[10] Ibid., p. 24.
[11] See Section 4.5.
[12] See Section 3.8.

McMahon the confidence to extemporize within the parameters of British Middle-Eastern policy as he now understood them. What McMahon may not have appreciated at this juncture, however, was that British support for an independent Muslim Arabia, including the Holy Places, had already been incorporated into what became known as the 'Constantinople Agreement' – actually a series of correspondences between British, French and Russian foreign ministries conducted between early March and early April 1915. On 12 March the British Ambassador informed the Russian Government that as soon as it becomes known that Russia is to take Constantinople,

> Sir E. Grey will wish to state that throughout the negotiations, His Majesty's Government have stipulated that the Mussulman Holy Places and Arabia shall under all circumstances remain under independent Mussulman dominion.'[13]

The penultimate item of the agreement, a note from the Russian Foreign Minister to the Russian Ambassador in London of 20 March 1915, shows that the Russians concurred with Britain's position on Arab independence. The note also stated that 'the Imperial Government desires that the Caliphate should be separated from Turkey.'[14] Notably, in relation to the latter, no demurral was registered by either Britain or France in the context of this agreement.

Hasan Kayali's view of this agreement is unequivocal: it 'provided the basis for the secret correspondence that took place between the British high commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, and Sharif Husayn between July 1915 and January 1916.'[15] However, Kayali's conclusion may be preferred for the simple reason that the 'terms' of the 'Constantinople Agreement' were reproduced in far more definitive and formal way in the secret 'London

---

[13] Hurewitz, 1956, Vol. II, pp. 8-9. British Memorandum to the Russian Government, 12 March 1915, reproduced as item 2 of, 'The Constantinople Agreement,' 4 March-10 April 1915 [Gregorian dates]. Note, however, that this memorandum records that British desiderata are not yet completely formulated.
[14] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[15] Kayali, 1997, p. 190. So keen is Kedourie to undermine the authority behind the entire Sharifian policy that he avoids direct reference to the 'Constantinople Agreement'. His intention is evident from the fact that instead he cites some of the background documentation, the terms of which, he eagerly points out, were 'much less categorical than what Grey was to tell McMahon on 14 April' – i.e. Telegram No. 173. Kedourie, 1976, p. 57.

Agreement'[16] made between the Entente Powers and Italy on the 26th April 1915, Article 12 of which reads:

> Italy declares that she associates herself in the declaration made by France, Great Britain and Russia to the effect that Arabia and the Moslem Holy Places in Arabia shall be left under the authority of an independent Moslem Power.[17]

Although the issue of the caliphate is not mentioned specifically, the total dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire is contemplated in Article 9 of the agreement. One may infer the implications for the caliphate issue if this fact is taken in conjunction with the terms of Article 12, reproduced above. Moreover, given that the population of the Hijaz was known to be exclusively Muslim, the constant reiteration of a *Muslim* power (singular) in addition to the stipulation of independence seems somewhat superfluous unless something more consequential is intended.

6.13 Husayn's First Letter to McMahon

The letter which Sharif Husayn wrote to High Commissioner McMahon on 14 July 1915 under a covering note from his son, 'Abdullah, to Ronald Storrs, did not arrive in Cairo until 18 August.[18] This letter 'request[ed] ... the approval'[19] of certain provisions which, with one minor and one major addition, were practically identical to the conditions which had been enumerated earlier by the leaders of the nascent 'Arab movement' in Syria in the so-called 'Damascus Protocol.'[20] The major addition, inserted after the provision concerning borders, was the stipulation that 'Great Britain will agree to the proclamation of an Arab caliphate of

---

[16] Significantly, it was the promise of a share in the territorial spoils of the Ottoman Empire which induced Italy to enter the war on the side of the Allies in May against Austria-Hungary, and in August against the Ottoman Empire and Germany.

[17] Hurewitz, 1956, Vol. II, pp. 11-12. Secret (London) Agreement: The Entente Powers and Italy, 26 April 1915, '[Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1920, Misc. No. 7, Cmd. 671].'

[18] Kedourie, 1976, p. 67.

[19] Antonius, 1938, pp. 414 – 415. This was the wording according to Antonius' translation which does not differ significantly from the copies of English translations included in FO 882, Series B, Vol. 19, AB 15/1; and, SAD WP 158/6/29-30.

[20] The 'Protocol' listed the terms on which Arab leaders would support Britain against Turkey. These were, among others: (a) the recognition of the independence of 'the Arab countries' lying within certain borders, (b) the

Islam.' Significantly, the regime envisaged is described as 'The Sharifian Arab Government,' *singular*, and the territory under its jurisdiction was to include the Arabian peninsula and all the other Arabic-speaking areas south of the 37th parallel. Elie Kedourie's and David Fromkin's description of the letter as a 'demand'[21] may be justified by the barely concealed threat with which the letter ended. Husayn warned that if he did not receive an affirmative reply within thirty days of the letter's arrival in Cairo 'the entire Arab nation' reserved the right to act freely in absolution of anything agreed earlier, meaning, in November and December 1914 between his son 'Abdullah and the British Agency in Cairo.

Kedourie describes the Sharif's letter as 'audacious,' and Fromkin refers to the recipients being 'surprised' since its arrival was 'sudden' and its contents 'unexpected,' though, he concedes, not 'unreasonable.' In view of the fact that Wingate had written to Grey a month earlier saying that he would 'not be altogether surprised if the Sherif himself [did] not secretly seek our assistance,'[22] it is difficult to believe that the Foreign Secretary, at least, was so surprised at the suddenness of the letter's arrival. Secondly, both the territory referred to, and the nature of Arab government contemplated by Husayn were consonant with the declaration to the Arabs issued by Cairo on 4 December 1914.[23] Notwithstanding the fact that the latter was a rather vague document, and that it may subsequently have been regarded by the British as a mistake, only the profoundest contempt for its recipients could have disallowed them such an interpretation.

Certainly, the British were, at this time, unaware of the 'Damascus Protocol,' and of the moral backing which Husayn had received from the Syrian Arab secret societies (as it turned out - an overture prompted by weakness). One may speculate that the British would have reacted differently had they known what had precipitated the demands on the Arab side. None of this, however, explains British consternation. Apart from the fact that the British had lost the initiative at this point in their dealings with the Arabs what must have caused great alarm, especially in Cairo was the manifestly *secular* nature of the demands and the inversion of the

---

abolition of capitulations, (c) the conclusion of an alliance between Britain and 'the future independent Arab state,' and (d) the granting of economic preference to Britain. Antonius, 1938, pp. 157-8.

[21] Kedourie, 1976, p. 66; and Fromkin, 1989, p. 174.

[22] SAD WP 196/1/162-3, Wingate, Khartoum, to Grey, 20 July 1915.

relationship between temporal and spiritual authority they had hitherto assumed. Much of the extant literature on the subject focuses on the issue of borders,[24] however these can only have been of such concern if taken in conjunction with the precise nature of Arab rule as suggested in Husayn's letter. On the face of it the scheme proposed therein simply left no political 'space' for British or European rule. Although Britain was supposedly in a privileged relationship with the new Arab state *vis-à-vis* the other Powers, the absolute, as opposed to nominal, sovereignty assumed meant that the relationship would simply be too even-handed for any imperial power wishing to exert indefinite and effectively exclusive control.

The conjunction of a *single and undivided* Arab government with the Sharifian caliphate, although within the bounds of reasonable inference based on Britain's pronouncements in the Middle East, was the antithesis of the circumscribed and 'domesticated' Arabia upon which the 'Cairo scheme' rested. Moreover, taken at face value, the idea of a revived Arab caliphate referred to by Husayn lacked the kind of flexibility the British were hoping for, that is a flexibility which could encompass varying degrees of Arab independence and sovereignty, and even the involvement of other Powers. It was these facts, rather than the issue of borders *per se* which so alarmed the British. On the presumption of the kind of flexibility reflected in McMahon's notion of 'generic independence' and embodied in the British notion of a revived Arab caliphate there is little of significance to divide the terms of Husayn's opening gambit from the already established presumptions of the 'Cairo scheme.' However, Husayn appears to have interpreted the notion of 'independence' rather too literally for the British. Ironically, it would take the later arrival of a representative of the *secular* Arab movement in Cairo to qualify the Sharif's demands in such a way as to restore the degree of flexibility and compliance which the British found necessary.

In fact, between the despatching of Husayn's letter on 14 July and its arrival in Cairo on 18 August, the main proponents of the 'Cairo scheme' were moving even closer to the overtly secular nationalist position underlying the Sharif's demands on behalf of 'the entire Arab nation.' The apparent idiosyncrasy of Wingate's conversion to pan-Arabism is mitigated by

---

[23] See Section 3.8.
[24] See authors listed in Note 1, above.

the fact that Clayton had moved towards advocating 'an early proclamation of the independence of Arabia' on the grounds that it would 'go far towards increasing the claims of the Sherif to the Khalifate.' He was also quite clear in his own mind that 'the idea of the Khalifa as not only the religious head but also the greatest temporal power in Islam appeals strongly to a large section of Moslems who dream of a mighty Mohammedan Empire once more taking the lead in the world.' Although he thought such an enterprise unrealisable he argued that 'nothing less than the *real independence* of the Khalifate will satisfy them and any shadow of protection by a Christian Power would be fatal.' [emphasis added][25] There was, however, a sound imperialist rationale underpinning his argument since Clayton put it to Wingate that French involvement in Syria in particular, and, indeed, European partition of the 'Arab speaking countries' in general, might well induce a 'Holy War' on the part of a Qurayshite caliph.[26] The significance of these arguments is twofold. Firstly, Clayton could not have been surprised at the conjoining of caliphate and Arab empire in Husayn's letter, and secondly, the official policy of disinterest in the matter of the caliphate was seen as a necessary adjunct to the Sharifian caliphate policy rather than its antithesis.

In replying to the Sharif's first letter to McMahon it is evident that the Foreign Office wished to detach Husayn from his wider constituency and curtail his standing for 'Arabs in general.' On the basis of suggestions from the India Office, Grey approved McMahon's proposed reply allowing him to add, if he thought it advisable, a private message offering discussions in Egypt on the 'independence, rights and privileges' of the *Sharif*, to be conducted with 'Abdullah or some other representative. Regarding the caliphate, Grey suggested that 'Lord Kitchener's communication of last November'[27] might be referred to solely in the context of

---

[25] SAD WP 135/1/53-4, Note by Lt Col G. F. Clayton, DoI, Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo, 24 July 1915. On the necessity for secrecy in this regard, Clayton had been equally explicit in a minute to the War Office. He wrote of the Sharif, 'To place him in a position in which he might be said to be under British Protection would be detrimental to his chance of succeeding to the independent Khalifate which alone would be acceptable to the bulk of Moslem opinion.' FO 882 (Series B) Vol. 19, KH 15/2, Minute by Clayton to Sir Milne Cheetham, Intelligence Department, War Office, London, 14 July 1915. With the exception of Clayton's open advocacy of the renunciation of the caliphate by the Turkish Sultan, Wingate was 'generally in agreement with [his] statement of policy' but urged him not to show the note of 24 July to anyone. FO 882 (Series B) Vol. 19, KH 15/5, Telegram from Governor General, Erkowit, to Clayton, Cairo, 31 July 1915.

[26] SAD WP 135/1/44-51, Private letter from Clayton, Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo, to Wingate, 27 July 1915, enclosing a summary of interviews with Syrians interviewed at various times.

[27] FO 141 461 1198/3, Telegram from Foreign Office to High Commissioner, Egypt, No. 598, 25 August 1915. Kitchener's original message is quoted in full in Section 3.5.

His Majesty's Government's 'welcom[ing] the resumption of the Khalifate by an Arab of true race.' It is telling that a preliminary draft of the relevant passage merely referred to the 'acknowledgement'[28] of the resumption of the caliphate. However, the back-translation of the final Arabic version of this document provided by George Antonius is far less ambiguous on the identity of the intended caliph since 'an Arab of true race' reads as 'a true Arab born of the blessed stock of the Prophet.'[29] This adjustment, taken in conjunction with the precondition that the Sharif be proclaimed caliph 'with the consent of his co-religionists,' can only be taken as a true indication of the British Government's policy at that time.

In the event, McMahon did 'not fully avail [him]self of the permission to make certain additions to the message.' His reasoning merely highlights the significance which was attached to the Sharif's ultimate assumption of the caliphate. The High Commissioner wrote to Grey:

> The moment in my opinion has not arrived when we can usefully discuss even a preliminary agreement, and it might at this stage injure the Sherif's chances of the Khaliphate to advertise his dealings with us by sending a son or other notable to treat with us.
> I have also omitted any explicit mention of the Sherif as the future Khaliph as the terms of my message will be sufficiently clear to him on this point. To do so moreover might limit the extent to which he might otherwise make use of my letter.[30]

Regardless of what McMahon's reply did or did not resolve, the matter of the caliphate, if mentally abstracted from all other issues (which of course it could not be in practice), appears to have been settled once and for all as far as the intentions of these two parties were concerned. If for no other reason, it should not be surprising, then, that the matter received almost no further attention in the remaining exchange of documents known as the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence.'

It is conceivable that, in avoiding any allusion to the matter of the caliphate in his first letter to Husayn, the High Commissioner was acting on the advice of Ronald Storrs who, in any case, was closely involved its drafting.[31] Storrs had argued that,

---

[28] Kedourie, 1976, p. 69.
[29] Antonius, 1938, p. 416, Appendix A, item No. 2. 'Sir Henry McMahon's First Note to the Sharif Husain, Cairo, August 30, 1915.'
[30] FO 141 461 1198/5, Letter No. 94 from McMahon, The Residency, Ramleh, to Sir E. Grey, 26 August 1915.

> The situation ... requires no action in the sense of canvassing *or proposals of any kind*, and demands only a guarantee for the non-violation by external aggression of the Holy Places and the approaches thereto. But it will be observed that even with these limitations the actual Sherif of Mecca will necessarily be brought into prominence as being the recognised guardian of the Holy Places; and if this recognition should in any way further his candidature for the Khalifate, it will presumably be not disagreeable to Great Britain to have the strongest spiritual in the hands of the weakest temporal power. [emphasis added][32]

The feelings of satisfaction and resolution felt in certain quarters concerning the Sharif's first letter and McMahon's reply of 30 August, and the extent to which this depended on the likelihood of Husayn's eventual assumption of the caliphate, is evident in the views expressed later by Storrs. Kitchener was advised by his Oriental Secretary that if the Sharif were soon be 'able to conciliate his powerful neighbours of Nejd, Yemen and Asir, and to impress upon them that he has no idea of pretending to any temporal rights within their territories, his chances of a general – though hardly yet of a universal recognition as Caliph will be very good.'[33] Wingate, by now fully apprised of both Husayn's demands and of certain proposals regarding McMahon's reply, expressed similar satisfaction in the flexibility afforded by a Sharifian caliphate. Wingate intimated to a friend that as far as the idea of allotting 'Zones of Interest' to individual Powers was concerned, he did 'not think that the Mohammedan supporters of the "Arab Union" would object.'[34] Ironically, it was Clayton, who had done so much to promote the Arab caliphate idea, who now saw danger in the scheme. He confessed to Wingate: 'if it were really to succeed should we not have created rather a "Frankenstein"!' adding that, 'a mighty Mohammedan Empire situated in the heart of the British Empire is a questionable advantage.'[35]

Although McMahon replied within thirty days as requested, he did not respond definitively to the Sharif's most concrete and definite demands regarding the territorial limits of Arab independence. The Sharif responded promptly on 9 September. This letter, though less strident

---

[31] With reference to the drafting of the reply Clayton later told Wingate, 'it was apparently run by Storrs.' SAD WP 196/3/94-98, Pencil note from Clayton while convalescing at the Anglo-American Hospital, written on 'Intelligence Office, WO, Cairo' - headed paper, 8 September 1915.
[32] FO 141/587/545/2, Secret Memorandum by RS [Ronald Storrs] headed 'The Khalifate,' Cairo, 2 May 1915 – not to be confused with Storrs' more historical memo also entitled 'The Khalifate' but dated 6 May, referred to in Chapter 5, Note 27.
[33] PRO 30/57/47 QQ/38, Letter from Storrs, The Residency, Bacos, Alexandria, to Fitzgerald, 6 September 1915.
[34] SAD WP 196/3/74-77, Letter from Wingate to Wigram, 6 September 1915.

than the first, went on to justify the territory required by Arabs in terms of its representing the natural limits of the 'populations of our race' adding that the proposed boundaries were 'vitally and economically essential.' There was very little of an Islamic nature about the arguments presented by Husayn on this occasion. The only reference to the caliphate must have caused pangs of discomfort among those Britons who saw it as an effective sop designed to subvert, mitigate and redirect demands by Arabs for sovereignty of a more conventionally political nature. Husayn simply wrote:

> For our aim, O respected minister, is to ensure that the conditions which are essential to our future shall be secured on a foundation of reality, and not on highly-decorated phrases and titles. As for the caliphate, God have mercy on its soul and comfort the Moslems for their loss![36]

Within days of this letter being received in Cairo, events were to occur which would hasten a qualified accommodation of Husayn's demands. The following section will examine the impact of Muhammad al-Faruqi's arrival in Egypt on British concerns over the caliphate particularly in relation to their appreciation of pan-Arabism.

6.2 The 'al-Faruqi Episode' and the Modification of the 'Cairo Scheme'

Ostensibly, the arrival in Cairo of Arab political activist and Ottoman army officer, Muhammad al-Faruqi marked the first major setback for, Cairo's Arab caliphate policy as it has been set out here. The purpose of this section is to determine the effect of the 'al-Faruqi episode' upon the development of that policy and, in particular, whether this event constituted a vitiation, or confirmation, of the prejudices and assumptions of those who adhered to the idea of British rule behind the 'veil' of a revived Arab caliphate.

---

[35] SAD WP 196/3/94-98. See Note 31, above.
[36] Antonius, 1938, p. 417, Appendix A, item No. 3. 'The Sharif Husain's Second Note to Sir Henry McMahon, Mecca, Shawwal 29, 1333. [September 9, 1915.].'

The relevance of al-Faruqi's dialogue with the Cairo Intelligence Department is that it is generally considered to have *induced* the British to accept the territorial and political demands conveyed by Sharif Husayn in his correspondence with High Commissioner McMahon during August and September 1915. The letter conveying this acceptance, which itself contains no reference to the subject of the caliphate, has become the most famous constituent of the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence.' This, in turn, became the most controversial of the 'agreements' made between Britain and the various parties to the war in he Middle East. Some have gone further: this note, according to George Antonius, writing in 1938,

> is by far the most important in the whole correspondence, and may perhaps be regarded as the most important international document in the history of the Arab national movement. It contains the pledges which brought the Arabs into the War, openly on the side of the Allies.[37]

The significance conventionally accorded the episode is adequately reflected in David Fromkin's view that,

> not only the McMahon letters, but also—and more importantly—the negotiations with France, Russia, and later Italy that ultimately resulted in the Sykes-Picot-Sazanov Agreement and subsequent Allied secret treaty understandings were among the results of Lieutenant al-Faruqi's hoax.[38]

Elie Kedourie describes the event as having 'a far-reaching influence'[39] on the subsequent actions of the authorities in Cairo. Eliezer Tauber is equally emphatic about the significance of al-Faruqi's arrival:

> A comparison of McMahon's first letter to Husayn, of 30 August, with his second, of 24 October, shows that the arrival in Cairo of the deserter Muhammad Sharif al-Faruqi brought a complete turnabout in the British attitude towards Husayn and the Arab movement. What he told the British, and to which they gave absolute credence, brought the British to accept the lion's share of Husayn's demands, and they considered him the authorized leader of a powerful Arab movement.[40]

What the above quotations suggest is that the British authorities in Cairo were, quite simply, deceived by the testimony of this individual into doing something they would not otherwise

---

[37] Ibid., p. 169.
[38] Fromkin, 1991, p. 189.
[39] Kedourie, 1976, p. 73.
[40] Tauber, 1993, p. 76.

have done, and that the consequences were momentous. Against these common assumptions it will be argued here that the occasion of al-Faruqi's arrival in Cairo provided Clayton, among others, with an opportunity[41] to promote the 'Cairo scheme' with even greater conviction than they had done earlier. Furthermore, the same people were able to convince themselves that al-Faruqi, along with the secular Arab movement he purported to represent, had become 'unwitting instruments, much less interested in an Arab nation than in a pan-Arab union presided over by an Arab caliph, which Britain could utilize to preserve and even increase its power and influence in the Middle East.'[42]

In early September the Military Intelligence Office in Cairo compiled a report based on conversations with an unnamed informant which referred to a committee of junior officers in Syria who hoped to displace Turkish rule in Syria, Mesopotamia and the Hijaz. Their first scheme had come to nothing, apparently due to the failure of the British to land at Alexandretta in February, but, the report went on: 'They hope to find [a] leader when action has given him a chance to show himself. Their Sultan is to be temporal only, and to have no power in the Hedjas, which is to go under the Sherif as Khalifa. The Sherif is party to their scheme.'[43] Collectively, the 'Committee-men,' were assumed to be a great mobilising force in both Syria and Mesopotamia since they were 'members of the largest land-owning families,' and 'of course all their tenants in the army will follow them to any extent.' It is significant that the social basis of the Arab leadership's power is identified in this way. Although this authority was assumed to have been of a secular, as opposed to a religious, nature it was of a sort which the British might feel comfortable with since it did not depend on the political autonomy of the mass of the population. More importantly, it was compatible with a scheme of collaboration involving a *dependent*, yet influential, elite.

---

[41] That the encounter with al-Faruqi was regarded in certain quarters as timely and propitious is evidenced by various remarks made during the following weeks. Moreover, various private communications by Clayton and Wingate on the subject were rife with the metaphors of opportunism: SAD WP 134/4/10-13, 'Strictly private' letter from Clayton, Intelligence Department, WO, Cairo, to Wingate, 9 October 1915; SAD WP 158/9/27-34, 'Strictly Private' letter from Clayton, Cairo, to Wingate, 13 October 1915; SAD WP 236/3/18-20, Private letter from Wingate to Callwell, 19 October 1915; and, SAD WP 197/1/175-8, 'Strictly private' letter from Wingate to Clayton, 20 October 1915.

[42] McKale, 1998, p. 154.

[43] Sledmere Papers, DDSY/(2) 4 90, Copy of Secret Report of an Informant, MI Office, Cairo, 5 September 1915.

This report, it transpired, was the result of Cairo's first interrogation of al-Faruqi. The officer had arrived in Cairo on 1 September after deserting the Ottoman army at Gallipoli and crossing over to the British lines. He had agreed to do so at a secret meeting with other members of al-'Ahd in Aleppo some time after the earlier rebellion plan had failed. At Gallipoli he had declared himself to be a member of the same secret society as 'Aziz 'Ali al-Masri and expressed a desire to meet with Sharif Husayn. Al-Faruqi was immediately despatched to Egypt.[44]

A more thorough interrogation was conducted on 12 September by a Lebanese assistant who submitted a report of his findings together with a translation of a comprehensive statement by al-Faruqi. It was this subsequent testimony which has been described, with only *partial* justification, as comprising a hoax or a confidence trick, though it will be argued here that regardless of al-Faruqi's intentions Clayton and his colleagues were more than willing 'victims.' In his statement al-Faruqi describes how he had come into contact with the Arab secret society, 'Fetat al-Arab' (al-'Arabiah al-Fatah), in Damascus and how members of the society 'had already paid allegiance to the Sherif of Mecca as Khalifa' and renounced their allegiance to the Sultan of Turkey. He was also aware of the Sharif's contact with the Egyptian High Commissioner and presumed that the British were willing to support Husayn with arms and ammunition in pursuance of the latter's overriding aim, namely the establishment of an Arab empire under his own leadership. The Sharif's dominions were initially understood to include those of 'the Sherif and those who follow him.' It had been the dissatisfaction felt in Damascus with this strictly 'dynastic'[45] definition of the area of Arab independence which had prompted the society to insist on the northern limit of the 'Mersina-Diarbekr' line. Al-Faruqi also told of how the conspiring Arab officers who had been sent to Constantinople had undertaken to reach the Sharif and continue to work towards a revolt with their 'brethren in Syria.' The interrogator's report went on to emphasise al-Faruqi's Arab, as opposed to Muslim, credentials and his belief that help in the form of arms and ammunition would be required from a European power, preferably Britain.

---

[44] Tauber, 1993, pp. 66 & 70-71.

[45] This is not to suggest that the leadership of the Arab movement in Damascus would have articulated their concern precisely in this way. The notion of rule referred to here corresponds closely to a description of the

The form of Arab government envisaged by the Arab movement was expressed in terms of five 'Principles of Government.' Most importantly, in relation to the argument being propounded here, two of these rested explicitly on the re-establishment of an Arab caliphate. The centrality of this feature as a principle of unity under which a variety of governmental forms were thought feasible is evident in the wording of the report. Not only did it include the rather obvious condition that a treaty be established with Britain 'based on an exchange of interests,' but the overriding stipulation that, 'the Arab countries [are] to be governed by the principles of decentralisation; each country to have the sort of government which best suits it, but to be ruled by the Central government, i.e. the seat of the Khalifate.' The third principle named Sharif Husayn of Mecca as 'Khalifa and Sultan of the new empire.' Somewhat contradictorily, though in a conspicuous attempt to assuage British fears concerning Islam, the fourth and fifth 'principles' stated that 'although the new empire we wish to establish is to be headed by a Khalifa, its basis will be national and not religious. It will be an Arab, not a Moslem, Empire,' adding that 'Christian Arabs, Druses and Neseiria will have the same rights as Moslems, but the Jews will be governed by a special law.'[46]

It is clear from the foregoing that whatever the precise genesis of these 'principles' as recorded on 12 September they coincided very closely with the private aspirations of Clayton, Wingate and, perhaps more consequentially, Sykes. The envisaged Arab state was based on a flexible notion of the institution of the caliphate as somehow distinct from the actual government of the various countries within the anticipated Arab empire. As such, and in spite of the forthrightness of al-Faruqi's testimony, the report could not have posed a threat to the adherents of the 'Cairo scheme.' Al-Faruqi's exaggerations and straightforward falsehoods were somewhat superfluous. If the official record is to be believed, it would seem that what impressed Clayton was the extent to which the aspirations of Arab movement confirmed, and conformed to, the views already held in Cairo regarding the preferred solution to the 'Arab' and 'Muslim questions.' These were, in most important respects, identical to the scheme now

---

dynasteia of King Ptolemy as 'wherever his writ ran at any moment.' Finley, 'The Ancient Greeks and Their Nation', p. 131, quoted in, Davidson, 2000, p. 23.

being proposed on behalf of the Arab movement. In other words it was not the power of this movement which impressed Clayton but the compatibility of its aims with Britain's. Clayton would later tell Tyrrell, Grey's private secretary, that, 'the proposition is an attractive one and would appear to fall in with the general movement which we hope that the acceptance of our proposals will start.'[47]

In fact the 12 September intelligence report indicated little more than a widespread support for Sharif Husayn and the borders he had already demanded, plus a resolve to obtain a *semblance* of Arab unity and independence in the Arabic-speaking countries lying south of the 37th parallel. Rather than instigating a significant shift in the balance of power between the respective parties to a putative collaborative alliance, the 'information' contained within this report may be better construed as part of a rather desperate, though none the less, audacious, bid to impress the British in the hope of securing such an arrangement.

Clayton did not report the results of the al-Faruqi interview to McMahon for submission to London until 11 October.[48] Although it is almost certain that there were further interrogations[49] there is no suggestion that anything of further significance emerged. It seems likely that much of what al-Faruqi was reported to have said had emerged in a process of negotiation in which he may have re-presented his views in such a way as to seem compatible with British desiderata. This would have enabled Clayton to interpret the aims of the Arab movement in a way which would mollify to his political masters in London.[50] The effect of the 'al-Faruqi episode' is that whereas, hitherto, it had been assumed by supporters of the 'Cairo scheme' that an Arab caliphate would constitute a spiritual 'veil' behind which Britain would rule. Now it seemed to perform the function of reconciling two forms of *secular* rule, British and Arab, and of subsuming pan-Arabism under a pliant and accessible figurehead - effective Arab government being fragmented and local, while Sharifian rule would serve to

---

[46] FO 882 Vol. 15, PNA 15/6, Report by the Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo, 12 September 1915, comprising 'Statement of Captain "X",' and 'Notes on Captain "X" and his statement' signed by 'Naum Shoucair.'
[47] FO 882 Vol II, AP 15/6, Letter from Clayton to Tyrrell, 30 October 1915.
[48] FO 882 Vol. 15, PNA 15/8, Clayton, Intelligence Department, WO, Cairo, to McMahon, 11 October 1915.
[49] Kedourie, 1976, p. 73.

promote a semblance of unity, independence and sovereignty. It was only on the basis of such a construction that Clayton might have imagined that Arab 'independence' was compatible with a predominantly British Middle East. Only under the caliphate could there be a 'Greater Arabia' which was at once unified and, either exclusively British, or predominantly British with some concessionary role allotted to France.

Suffice it to say that Clayton's attempt to precipitate an agreement based on the demands made by Husayn in his letter to McMahon of 14 July, and repeated on 9 September, was ultimately successful. His efforts resulted in an ambiguously qualified acceptance of the Arab party's delimitation of the borders of the hoped-for Arab Kingdom. In this way the advocates of the 'Cairo scheme' attained their immediate objective: the consummation of a collaborative alliance with Sharif Husayn, the foremost candidate for Arab caliph.

It has been shown that the immediate effect of al-Faruqi's visit to Cairo on British plans for the region was to shift the emphasis from a purely 'Islamic solution' to the problem of imperial expansion into the Middle East, towards an accommodation with secular Arabism in which the caliphate would, none the less, play an essential role. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this episode initiated a phase of ambiguity and, on occasions, inconsistency among British Arabists regarding the precise relationship between the caliphate and the anticipated form of secular government. Furthermore, notwithstanding the 'positive,' i.e. constructive empire-building, aspects of Britain's caliphate policy there was a re-emphasis of the Turco-German pan-Islamic 'bogey.' For example Mark Sykes advocated that Britain 'propagandize Islam in a definite and offensive manner' without 'making apology for our acts but attacking the enemy on the score of injustices, crime, unorthodoxy, and hypocrisy, in our own press, in the native press, and by means of leaflets.'[51] Similarly, Major Vivian Gabriel, a close associate of Kitchener at the War Office with responsibilities in the Near Eastern arena, although not greatly impressed by the secular Arab movement thought it worth supporting in order to undermine German pan-Islam

---

[50] FO 882 Vol. 13, MIS 15/13, Clayton's 'Memorandum on conversations held with Lt. Mohammed Sherif El Farugi in the Turkish Army,' enclosed with, Lt.Gen. Maxwell CIC, Egypt, to the Sec. WO, London, 12 October 1915.

[51] FO 882/13 MIS 15/16, Despatch No. 23 from Sykes on SS Khyber, Reed Sea, to Callwell, DMO, WO, London, 15 November 1915, enclosing a 22 page report by Sykes dated 28 October 1915. The report contained

by removing the geographic focus of Islam outside the Turco-German sphere.[52] Wingate also continued the stress the importance of the 'Islamic question' for Britain. He told the War Office that 'Arab *racial and religious* affinities provide a binding force that cannot be ignored' [emphasis added] and hoped that 'by upholding the principle of Arab Nationality, we shall be ... [*inter alia*] creating an efficient counterpoise to Turkish Pan-Islamism.'[53]

Increasingly during the last three months of 1915 the 'official' policy of non-interference in the matter of the caliphate was reiterated and, as far as public declarations were concerned, enforced. In December McMahon was forced to placate the Foreign Office in even more solemn terms. He regretted giving the impression that he had been 'actively interesting [himself] in the question of the Khalifate' adding:

> I need hardly say that I have always carefully abstained from doing so. The matter is one which, as I have myself stated to H.M.G. on more than one occasion, must be left entirely to the Moslem. I have moreover no reason whatever to think that any British official here is departing from this correct attitude.[54]

However, as the remainder of this thesis will indicate officials in Cairo and London would 'actively interest' themselves in the question of the caliphate for several years to come.

Grey was apprised of the conclusions drawn by the Cairo Intelligence Department concerning their contact with al-Faruqi in McMahon's letter of 18 October. In this both the 'carrot' of the apparent flexibility of the Arab party's offer, and the 'stick' of the dire consequences of refusal or even delayed acceptance, had been conveyed in the starkest terms.[55] The immediate effect was that at a sub-committee of the War Cabinet

> Grey was convinced by arguments suggesting that negotiations with the Arabs had reached a critical stage and that a tangible demonstration of British strength was necessary to ensure their unity and loyalty. .... The Arab kingdom, if it were realised, would be under British auspices

---

the following sections: Section I – Military Situation in Mesopotamia, Section II – Indian Moslems and the War, and Section III – General Situation.

[52] FO 882 Vol II, AP 15/8 Minute from WO to Director of Military Operations (DMO), 21 November 1915, enclosing a 5-page memorandum by Major Gabriel, headed 'Note on Arab Movement.'

[53] SAD WP 135/7/179-182, Private letter from Wingate to Callwell, War Office, London, 23 December 1915.

[54] FO 141/587/545/14, Telegram from High Commissioner, Egypt, to Sir A. Nicholson, FO, London, 31 December '15.

[55] SAD WP 158/9/54-55, Telegram from McMahon to Sir Edward Grey, 18 October 1915.

> whilst, if it failed, Britain, by virtue of her support of it, would have a strong moral claim to occupy and retain those territories pertaining to it.[56]

Grey's attitude, so described, is indicative of a concurrent 'maximum' *and* 'minimum' programme. At the same time the al-Faruqi episode enabled the Arabists in Cairo and Khartoum to modify their original, rather grandiose, scheme in favour of something which took account, and advantage, of the apparent weakness of the Arab party. This transformation, then, is precisely the opposite of that depicted by Kedourie.

On the basis of the arguments constructed by Clayton and then relayed by McMahon to Grey, the High Commissioner was authorised to draft a constructive response to the Sharif's demands. The reply of 24 October[57] is (in)famous for its passage concerning Britain's preparedness to recognise, with certain modifications, the boundaries of Arab independence. The ensuing dispute concerning McMahon's assurances to Husayn, between the parties involved, and later among historians, is not of concern here. That no explicit mention is made of the caliphate in this document, nor in the subsequent letters comprising the 'Husayn-McMahon Correspondence,' is explicable by the fact that it was no longer a point of contention and was, for the time being, considered settled by all parties concerned. Rather, for the time being the idea of a Sharifian caliphate operated *implicitly* and continued to perform an essential, though frequently ambiguous, role within the alliance then being forged. In fact, it was the inherent vagueness of the 'Cairo scheme,' based on the restoration of the Arab caliphate which, accounted for its currency. It will be shown later that it was only as the relationship moved from the level of abstraction at which affairs had thus far been conducted to one of concreteness that the practical limitations and contradictions inherent in the scheme were revealed.

---

[56] Fisher, 1999, pp. 19-20, referring to, CAB 42/4/22/2, Meeting of the Dardanelles Committee, 21 October 1915. It is significant that the logic of this argument regarding 'the strong moral claim' is identical to that underpinning Britain's later endorsement of the Zionist colonisation of Palestine.

6.3 Conclusion

Late 1915 marked the apogee of abstract coherence with regard to Britain's Arab caliphate policy during the course of the First World War. It is important, therefore, to recapitulate in some detail before going on to deal with period during which practice began to impact on theory in a decisive way. It has been noted that the issue of the caliphate, which had been an essential constituent of the imperial scheme of collaboration hatched in Cairo since October 1914, played no further part in the 'Husayn-McMahon correspondence' after the Sharif's oblique but rather prescient reference in his letter of 9 September 1915. The main objective of this chapter has been to explain this fact. It should be noted, first, that what had been established as the 'official' position - that the future of the caliphate was not the concern of Britain and should be decided by Muslims alone, had, in fact, been self-imposed as an integral part of the caliphate policy from the outset. Kitchener's letter to 'Abdullah of 31 October 1914 referred to Britain's non-intervention in 'things religious.'[58] The reiteration of this 'official' policy at various intervals cannot in itself, therefore, be taken as proof that the transfer of the caliphate to Arabia had become a taboo topic. Notwithstanding British consternation at the secular nature of Sharif Husayn's opening demands, *from a British point of view* there was an underlying conceptual continuity between the Husayn-McMahon negotiations and the earlier dealings between Cairo and the Hijaz based on a common understanding over the future of the caliphate. Furthermore, it has been shown that, although largely absent from the correspondence itself, the caliphate continued to play a pivotal role in British thinking about the Middle East during this period.

Regarding the 'al-Faruqi episode,' although historian Donald McKale believes that Clayton was simply 'duped,'[59] he provides a number of collateral reasons for al-Faruqi's apparent success. These include: the anticipation of failure at Gallipoli which would require relief in the form of an Arab rebellion; the fact that Bulgaria had joined the Central Powers' offensive

---

[57] Antonius, 1938, pp. 419-20, Appendix A, item No. 4. 'Sir Henry McMahon's Second Note to the Sharif Husain, Cairo, October 24, 1915;' also, Kedourie, 1976, p. 97; and, FO 882 Vol. 19, AB 15/9, High Commissioner, Intelligence Department, War Office, Cairo, to Sherif of Mecca, 24 October 1915.
[58] See Chapter 3, Note 86.

against Serbia on 6 October; the general fear of a German-backed jihad, especially one involving al-Sanussi on the western flank of Egypt; and, finally, the fear of an imminent attack on Egypt from the direction of the Suez Canal. Undoubtedly these immediate military-strategic factors created an atmosphere of urgency, even desperation, during the later months of 1915 and most certainly played a part in nudging Britain towards a collaborative alliance with a movement that barely existed. However, they do not explain why the specific content of al-Faruqi's 'proposal' was so attractive. One may add to McKale's list of urgent considerations one quite specific to the triangular relationship which obtained between Cairo, al-Faruqi and the Sharif of Mecca. Given that certain Cairo officials had already accepted the inevitability of the fall of the Turkish caliphate and its removal to Arabia, al-Faruqi's claim that the Syrian secret societies had already reached an understanding with Husayn and Faysal can only have induced the fear that the secular Arab movement might, at some stage, 'run away' with the Sharif and, by extension, the Arab caliphate. In other words, the British, in seeking a collaborative alliance, would find themselves in some kind of competition over the Sharif and the caliphate and, therefore, needed to act decisively in order to rectify the adverse relationship of local political forces.

It is significant in assessing the impact of the 'al-Faruqi episode' that the 'Damascus Protocol' did not refer explicitly to the caliphate. Furthermore, it is generally agreed that it was the weakness, rather than the strength, of the secular Arab movement (such as it was) that had led al-Faruqi to confirm the prejudices and beliefs of his British imperial interlocutors. This would suggest that al-Faruqi's subsequent incorporation of the caliphate issue into his professed programme was intended to appeal to the prejudices of the British as far as they were known to him. It seems likely that, in the course of his dealings with Clayton, it would have become apparent to al-Faruqi that Husayn had already been nominated as the preferred candidate for the caliphate by Kitchener and McMahon. It may be assumed, therefore, that al-Faruqi endorsed this arrangement simply because it was a matter which had already been settled. Al-Faruqi may also have come to realise that his movement also, needed the symbolic leadership of Sharif Husayn. Notwithstanding al-Faruqi's secularism, it may be assumed that the requirement of a 'principle of unity' was an objective factor common to his scheme and that

---

[59] McKale, 1998, p. 154.

being promoted by the British in Cairo. It has been argued that Clayton was neither 'duped' nor the victim of an elaborate hoax, however, the veracity or otherwise of al-Faruqi's 'testimony,' of which we only have Clayton's record, is not an issue here. What both parties required from the opportunity was an effect – specifically the furtherance of a particular collaborative alliance. The *semblance* of Arab unity, sovereignty and independence required by both parties and contained in the idea of a revived Arab caliphate facilitated what would these days be termed 'constructive ambiguity.' This would enable any likely practical stumbling blocks and points of difference to be deferred, at least through a period of seemingly productive collaboration during which the respective aims and interests of Britain and the Arab parties might be advanced.

It would appear that the officially recorded testimony of al-Faruqi resulted not from deception but from negotiation, in which the Arab movement's ambassador to British Cairo qualified and tempered Sharif Husayn's original demands and restored the kind of equilibrium between Arab caliphate and Arab government which Britain preferred. The point must be made, however, that the al-Faruqi-Clayton accord was, in part, a product of Britain's necessary reliance upon a small number of informants. That is, individuals possessing specific capacities within their own social and political milieu who, concomitantly, had an interest in the changes about to effect the political environment in which they were situated. Notwithstanding, the actual weakness of the political movements which al-Faruqi purported to represent, which Clayton may *privately* have acknowledged,[60] al-Faruqi's strength lay in his accurate assessment of British desiderata which enabled him to tailor his demands to conform with the prejudices and preconceptions of his interlocutor. The apparent correspondence of al-Faruqi's proposals with Clayton's own ideas about the future of Arabia was, therefore, besides being a result of the objective requirement for a principle of unity, in part a consequence of British ignorance about the region. Undoubtedly it was a case of Clayton's 'desire to form and influence policy getting in the way of dispassionate evaluation of intelligence.'[61] However, there were simply no alternative sources of information by which to corroborate or invalidate

---

[60] For example, Kedourie maintains that a careful reading of al-Faruqi's statement *at the time* would have shown that the Arab secret societies in Syria were already a spent force. Kedourie, 1976, p. 78. It must be equally likely that Clayton conducted such a reading but chose to disregard the evidence as detrimental to his agenda.
[61] Ibid., p. 77.

the Clayton-Faruqi concoction. Finally, in relation to this episode, the possibility must be allowed for that just as the British regarded the caliphate as a cover for imperial aggrandisement, the understanding over the caliphate was also a smoke screen behind which the Arabs hoped to attain secular power. They were aware of Britain's fear of pan-Islam and chose to exploit it.

There can be no question that the British would have wished to steer a course between the Scylla of pan-Islam and the Charybdis of *popular*[62] nationalism. To the British in Cairo the conjoining of al-Faruqi's Arab movement with the Sharif's potential in relation to the caliphate represented the mutual cancellation of these two hazards. As a result of Clayton's engagement with al-Faruqi in September 1915 the abstract simplicity of the original 'Cairo scheme' had been disturbed. In the process of its gradual realisation it underwent a subtle modification in which issues of immediate practical significance were distinguished from what could be deferred. It was acknowledged that before Britain's desiderata in the Middle East (including Sharif Husayn's accession to the caliphate) could be obtained, and before Britain would be in a position to sponsor an Arab revolt, the Foreign Office would need to reach an accord with her main ally, France - an eventuality already provided for in McMahon's second letter. There was, therefore, a suspension of the caliphate issue *in practice* pending further developments in these areas.

Nevertheless, by the end of 1915 there is a certain ambiguity in British thinking regarding the relationship between the idea of an Arab caliphate and a more secular version of pan-Arabism. This ambiguity was overlaid by the *apparent* convergence of views which had taken place between the enthusiasts in Cairo and the War Office, on the one hand, and the gainsayers in India and the Foreign Office, on the other. This was a superficial harmony however, as fragile as the understanding reached between Britain and the Sharif. Whereas, for the 'Sharifians' the shift from the use of rhetoric geared to the problem of pan-Islamism to the idioms of secular nationalism had been a positive response to the 'al-Faruqi episode,' for the others, the more

---

[62] 'Popular' nationalism is taken to mean, either a national movement which is accompanied by demands for democracy, or a movement led by a demagogue who purports to represent 'the will of the people' and in the absence of popular democratic representation is forced to initiate symbolic acts of confrontation against internal and external enemies.

earnest adherence to Britain's official attitude of disinterest in the caliphate concealed a genuine squeamishness with regard to such grandiose projects. In a certain sense the 'nationalist turn' in British thinking post-Faruqi came as something of a relief amongst those who had deep-seated reservations about interfering in the traditions of Islam. This change of emphasis rationalised a more rigid insistence that reference to British support for the Sharif of Mecca as caliph be avoided completely by enabling a more open support for the Arabs in secular terms. On the one hand, there were those in the Government of India who sought to undermine any arrangement involving Britain and an Arab caliphate and whose endorsement of the 'official policy' was undoubtedly sincere, and, on the other, those who were content to defer the issue on practical grounds in the hope of obtaining a degree of secular underpinning for a Sharifian caliphate in the meantime. For these reasons, it becomes increasingly difficult, during the second half of 1915, to determine whether the 'Islamic bogey' was being raised sincerely or opportunistically whenever the adherents to the Cairo scheme felt unsure about their ability to persuade on more rational grounds.

Al-Faruqi's testament was even used to assuage those, again mostly members of the Indian Government, who were as fearful of a strong Arab state as they were of an Arab caliphate. In retrospect, it can be seen how the modified scheme of a weak and divided Arab 'empire' merely brings to the fore the *objective* requirement, shared by those British imperialists in favour of a Sharifian solution and the leadership of the Arab movement alike, for a political-ideological device which might give a semblance of unity and independence in the future Arab state. The fact that the British had already chosen to further their intervention through an accommodation with the Sharif of Mecca on account of his supposed pre-eminence within Islam met the requirement of the more secular conception of an internally divided, and variously governed, Arab 'empire' for a principle of unity. Consequently, the Sharif's candidature for the caliphate had gained an additional, rather than an alternative, significance. That is an internal, national, as opposed to an external, Islamic, one.

It has been noted that the British preference for an Islamic solution to the problems of imperial rule in the Middle East had been partly motivated by an aversion to mass secular politics, that is, collaborative alliances with élites who were likely to be more dependent on their local

subordinates than on their imperial sponsors. What attracted certain individuals to the combination of al-Faruqi and the Sharif was that they embodied a particular articulation of forces which subordinated the secular Arab movement to the symbolic leadership of Sharif Husayn as *Arab* caliph. The relationship between Arabism and Islam in British thinking at this stage is best illustrated by reference to the views of Sir Mark Sykes. In his capacity as a key advisor to the cabinet committees dealing with the Middle East Sykes observed:

> With regard to the Arab question, the fire, the spiritual fire, lies in Arabia proper, the intellect and the organising power lie in Syria and Palestine, centred particularly at Beirut. I should like also to mention that *the intellectual movement, which is behind the Arab movement, is not revolutionary* like the Young Turk, because education in Syria, unlike modern education in India and in Turkey, has been confined in Syria to the property owning classes, and consequently you have not a lot of very poor men who have got a little education and greater ambitions. That is an important point with regard to the intellectual force at the back of this movement. [emphasis added][63]

This was then, above all, an élite, rather than a popular, movement.

Although, it will be recalled, Clayton had insisted on the 'real independence of the Khaliphate,'[64] he could do so precisely because he thought genuine Arab unity, independence and sovereignty a practical impossibility. Besides which, a Sharifian caliphate with secular power confined to a formally independent and sovereign Hijaz would suffice. In this regard, the al-Faruqi episode allowed the British authorities in Cairo to believe that they could harness certain features of pan-Islam and pan-Arabism in an arrangement according to which Arabia would be partitioned under the nominal unity and independence of an Arab caliph. The latter would be maintained as a hostage of the British Empire in such a way that both pan-Islam and Arab nationalism would, they hoped, be rendered innocuous from a European imperial standpoint. By the end of 1915 the matter of removing the caliphate from Turkey and the influence of Germany had been resolved *in theory*. By constituting a principle of unity and providing a simulacrum of sovereignty a Sharifian caliphate contained within it an answer to the central problem of a subverted pan-Arabism as conceived in Cairo. On the face of it, al-

---

[63] Sledmere Papers, DDSY/(2) 4 95, 'Printed document for CID, Secret G.-46, War Committee, Meeting Held at 10, Downing Street, Thursday, December 16, 1915. Evidence of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, Bart., M.P., on the Arab Question.' This evidence was presented before Prime Minister Asquith, Kitchener, Balfour and Lloyd-George. See Chapter 2, Note 136, for the background to Sykes' attitude.
[64] See Note 25, above.

Faruqi's Arab movement provided the secular underpinning for the Sharif's anticipated caliphate bid. However, the precondition of secular power merely emphasised the Sharif's necessary dependence on Britain, since the entire move was premised on the deprecation of *independent* Arab capacity for political organisation. From the British point of view the accommodation of Husayn resulting from the 'al-Faruqi episode' was, at the same time, the subversion of the secular Arab movement. The enormity of the practical task of re-ordering the Middle East along these lines is obvious. The following chapter will examine the practical unfolding, and indeed unravelling, of this project, and the impact that such an experience had on Britain's interest in the future of the caliphate.

CHAPTER 7: From Theory to Practice: The Impact of the Hijaz Revolt on the Idea of an Arab Caliphate

7.0 Introduction

The prime concern of this thesis is with British perceptions, knowledge and understanding of Islam in connection with the *idea* of a possible revival of the Arab caliphate. However, it is necessary at this point in the enquiry to reiterate one of the theoretical premises of the thesis, introduced in the context of Edward Said's notion of 'intertextuality': specifically, that in the long run knowledge (or ideology) does not develop autonomously. Ideas and perceptions *concerning the encountered world* must ultimately find confirmation in external reality. Put simply: *in the long run*, ideas do not have an independent life of their own; neither is an idea bound to be realised simply because it exists in the minds of the powerful. There has to be a point at which the ideological chickens come home to roost in the practical world which nurtured them.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to show, in connection with the early experience of the Hijaz revolt, and by cursory reference to the context of the social milieu of the Arabian peninsula, how the caliphate idea met its demise. Thus far, this thesis has been concerned with the internal coherence of Britain's ideas concerning the future of the caliphate and the Arab Middle East. During the period covered in this chapter (the year 1916) the advocates of the 'Cairo scheme,' in moving from a speculative-theoretical phase to one of practical implementation, were forced to grasp its fundamental contradiction which hitherto may only have been inferred in the abstract. The Sharif's Arab movement had become the preferred collaborative option for Britain, firstly, because of its lack of independent capacity for political organisation, but also on account of the Sharif's position within Islam and his pre-eminence in the caliphate stakes. It emerged in the course of the Revolt that the first reason necessitated military intervention while the second precluded it.

Before dealing with the Revolt itself, however, it is necessary to refer to several preliminary matters which, though not relating explicitly to the issue of the caliphate, had some bearing on the articulation of the caliphate idea within British Middle Eastern circles at that time. The question of a landing at Alexandretta will be referred to once again, since its resolution in the negative made the instigation of the revolt against the Turks even more pressing. The creation of the Arab Bureau and the negotiation of an agreement with France are included since they were both important prerequisites for the eventual raising of a rebellion in the Hijaz which was anticipated to have a far-reaching impact on the future disposition of the Arab Middle East.

As will be shown in the rest of this chapter, consequent to the repudiation of the 'Alexandretta option,' the implementation of Britain's caliphate policy as adumbrated in the famed 'Husayn-McMahon correspondence' was determined, initially by Britain's failure to engage *proximally* with the Arab movement in Syria, and, subsequently, by her inability to do so in *direct* association with the Sharif's forces in the Arabian peninsula. As this chapter will indicate, the dilemma for the British was that there was an unequivocal pay-off between the possibilities for a purely *political* exploitation of Sharif Husayn on the one hand, and the possibility of *actually* supporting him on the other. In other words: within the framework of the British caliphate policy, to aid him effectively was to render him worthless.

7.1 The Return of 'The Alexandretta Option'

The full consequences of the failure to land at Alexandretta earlier in the war had not been appreciated until September 1915. Although the actual effect of Cemal Pasha's destruction of the nascent Syrian Arab nationalist movement must always remain a matter of conjecture, the mere suggestion of a British attack on Alexandretta to be welcomed by a separatist insurrection must have been a major contributory factor leading to the violent suppression

which took place in Syria during February and March 1915.[1] By 1916 the advocates of the 'Cairo scheme' must have become acutely aware that they had, thus far, obtained nothing more than an accord with the Sharif of Mecca and a verbal understanding with a self-styled representative of 'the Arab movement' - itself an unknown quantity - neither of which said anything about what was to be done. Of all the spheres of conflict involving the British up to this point, the 'Western Arabian' theatre was unique in not having been embroiled in actual combat. Reading the correspondence of these people almost a century later, one might be excused for believing that they operated in a separate world, insulated from the hazards and privations of war as experienced in the Dardanelles, Mesopotamia and the Western Front. They dealt in propaganda, rumour, and intelligence rather than the more visceral aspects of conflict. However, the débâcles at Gallipoli[2] and Ctesiphon[3] soon impinged on their ambitions. So dire was the situation by the end of 1915 that Lord Hardinge, being inimical to the entire 'Cairo scheme,' was able to derive comfort from the belief that unless Britain made some gains on the battlefield[4] McMahon's promises to Husayn would amount to little.

The urgency felt in Cairo and Khartoum towards the end of 1915 manifested itself in two ways. Firstly, a good deal of energy was directed towards convincing London of the need for a Cairo-based department directed towards the development and implementation of policy in respect of Islam and the Arab Middle East which would act as a counterweight to the Government of India. Secondly, there was a revival of the 'Alexandretta option.' The renewed advocacy of a landing at this northerly port as a means of realising Britain's war aims in the region was prompted by al-Faruqi's insistence that an Allied landing in that vicinity was a prerequisite of any action by the Sharif. It was perceived, therefore, as a precondition of the entire Anglo-Sharifian scheme.[5] While visiting the Dardanelles in November, Kitchener, who had been an original advocate of the scheme, was, once again, convinced by McMahon's and Maxwell's arguments of the desirability of a landing at Alexandretta. He later told the Prime

---

[1] Westrate, 1992, p. 15.
[2] The evacuation of the Gallipoli peninsula was effected in two phases: the first from 18 to 20 December 1915, and the second from 8 to 9 January 1916.
[3] The 'Battle of Ctesiphon' was fought on 22 November 1915 and resulted in the retreat of the British forces to Kut al-'Amarah.
[4] SAD WP 197/3/287-90, Letter from Hardinge, Viceroy's Camp, India, to Wingate, 28 December, 1915.
[5] FO 882 Vol. 13, MIS 15/17, Mark Sykes' telegram to FO for DMO, WO, 20 November 1915. This was passed on to the FO by McMahon. FO 371/2486 175418, Telegram from McMahon, Cairo to FO, 20 November, 1915.

Minister that, 'the political situation in the East in our opinion so seriously affects the purely military situations as to outweigh those military disadvantages which might otherwise be weighty.'[6]

In respect of the earlier abandonment of the 'Alexandretta option' Isaiah Friedman remarked that,

> with the prospects of the 'forward plan' vanishing, McMahon became all the more eager to accommodate Hussein, expecting from him a double advantage: of detaching the Arabs from the Turk and using them to lay the foundation for British predominance in the area. This was implicit in McMahon's crucial letter of 24 October 1915.[7]

If Friedman is correct, then the 'final' rejection of the plan by the War Cabinet in October[8]-December 1915 was accompanied by further commitment to the Sharif of Mecca by agreeing to fund Husayn to the tune of £20,000 in preparation for a revolt. As far as the War Council was concerned, the 'Alexandretta option' had been replaced by an offensive to be launched from Egypt, which, in conjunction with an agreement with the French over the partition of Greater Syria, comprised the preconditions for the effective backing of the Arab movement.[9]

However, in the minds of those most directly associated with the 'Cairo scheme' there was indeed a pay-off between military intervention and political/moral support for what was now perceived as a seamless whole incorporating the Sharif and the Arab movement. Wingate lamented the abandonment of the 'forward policy' but argued that a Turco-German jihad might yet be avoided if Britain responded generously to the Sharif's proposals.[10] In a letter to Sykes, Clayton conceded that, 'with regard to the forward policy, I think too much time has been lost, and that to pursue it would be extremely difficult, if not dangerous,' though he remained convinced that, 'combined with a carefully engineered Arab movement, it *would*

---

[6] Wilson, 1990, p. 224, quoting a telegram from Kitchener to Asquith, 13 November 1915.
[7] Friedman, 1973, p. 101.
[8] CAB 42/4/15, Dardanelles Committee, 21 October 1915, Annex 1 to verbatim minutes: 'The Present And Prospective Situation in Syria and Mesopotamia,' Appendix II ' Operations in Syria.' Notes by Admiralty War Staff.
[9] FO 882 Vol. II, ARB 15/4, Letter from Mark Sykes to Clayton, Thursday, 20 December, 1920, referring to a War Council decision of 13 December 1915.
[10] SAD WP 135/7/119-24, private letter from Wingate to Parker, 10 December 1915.

have gone far to restore our position all over the East.' [emphasis added][11] Clayton's assessment was prescient. As will be seen later, a transfer of military effort from Syria to the coast of Arabia was precluded by the very reasons that Britain had sought an alliance with the Sharif of Mecca in the first place: his prominence within Islam and his dominion over the Holy Places.

7.2 The Arab Bureau: The Institutional Expression of the Cairo 'Grand Plan'

It has already been stated that throughout 1915 the grandeur of the plan for Britain's control of the Arab Middle East hatched in Cairo was not matched by the degree of coherent institutional support afforded it. That is, its advocates were not combined in such a way as to possess the kind of distinct organisational pedigree associated with the War Office, Foreign Office, India Office or the Government of India. Essentially, the Cairo Residency served these other departments via the Foreign Office. Already by the beginning of December 1915 the Foreign Office had taken steps to centralise communications with the Arab movement by prescribing that all correspondence be referred to McMahon in Cairo.[12] It remained however for Wingate and Clayton to press for a dedicated Bureau in Cairo rather than London.[13]

It had generally been the case that the 'Western Arabian' view had been communicated in London either by Mark Sykes or, to an ever diminishing degree, by Lord Kitchener when not

---

[11] Sledmere Papers, DDSY(2)/11 10, Letter from Clayton to Sykes from Intelligence department, WO, Cairo, 13 December 1915.

[12] SAD WP 135/7/16, Telegram from FO to the High Commissioner, Cairo, 2 December 1915. That in practice the division of responsibilities between Cairo and India continued to cause problems is evidenced by Clayton's terse response to the news that a treaty had been concluded between Delhi and Ibn Sa'ud on 26 December. He told Wingate that he had asked the Residency 'that terms of Treaty should be telegraphed here' and had added with pointed understatement that 'it may have a considerable bearing on Arab question as a whole.' SAD WP 197/3/317, Telegram from Clayton, Cairo to Hakimam, Khartoum, 31 December 1915.

otherwise engaged. It was Sykes who first made specific proposals for a 'department of the Near East responsible for Egypt, Arabia ands Mesopotamia under a Secretary or Under Secretary.' Sykes' rationale for this particular remit is significant in that, except for the inclusion of Egypt, it corresponds with the delimitation of the Arab national area as promoted by Sharif Husayn and Muhammad al-Faruqi. In October 1915 Sykes explained to Lord Robert Cecil, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs:

> You will notice that the area I suggest is one in language and practically in race and its unification under one department would give the Government of the day an engine to deal with the Arab situation both national, strategic, and economic, a personelle of wide and intimate acquaintance with the problems, and consequently give English statesmen an opportunity of following a consistent line.

To Sykes, the inveterate synchretiser, the Arab area stipulated by al-Faruqi and the Sharif provided territorial definition to the vague caliphate-viceroyalty idea originated by Storrs in 1914 which Sykes was now urging on Kitchener via Fitzgerald.[14] Moreover, the geographical area so defined corresponded to an established sphere of imperial experience and orientalist 'expertise.' Somewhat inconsistently, in London Sykes recommended the formation of an 'Islamic Bureau.' He did so in the hope of reconciling the discordant views of Islam held by officials in Egypt and India respectively, and in anticipation that Germany's manipulation of Islam would 'not end with the war.'[15] However, this was rejected by the Committee of Imperial Defence on the grounds that the new bureau would appear to be dealing with the whole of Islam when in fact its concern would be limited to the Arabs.[16]

As might have been expected, the Government of India were anxious over what amounted to the institutionalisation of the 'Western Arabian' view and a challenge to their exclusive

---

[13] SAD WP 135/7/28-30, Private Letter from Clayton to Parker, 3 December 1915; SAD WP 135/7/119-24, Private letter from Wingate to Parker, 10 December 1915; and FO 882, Vol II, AP 15/14, letter from Clayton to Parker, 10 December 1915.

[14] PRO 30/57/70 WO/48, Covering note from Sykes to Fitzgerald attached to a memorandum in the form of a letter also to Fitzgerald, dated 30 January 1915. Also, PRO 30/57/59 WI/93, Letter from Lord Esher, Roman Camp, Callander, to Fitzgerald, 2 February 1916, in which Esher concurs with the viceroyalty idea – i.e. with Kitchener as incumbent – in reply to Fitzgerald's recent advocacy of it to him.

[15] Sledmere Papers, DDSY (2)/12 Appendix A. 1, Letter from Mark Sykes to Lord Robert Cecil, 4 October 1915. Copied to George Clerk, senior clerk at the Foreign Office, Fitzgerald, Kitchener's personal military secretary; and, Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India.

authority over matters pertaining to the Gulf, Eastern Arabia and Mesopotamia. Clayton's response to the Viceroy's concern is instructive in so far as it is explicitly links the caliphate with *nominal* leadership. He confided to Wingate:

> India seems obsessed with idea that we mean to form a powerful Arab kingdom. Such was never the intention and would in any case be impracticable. Whole idea was to retain friendship of Arabs by agreeing to recognize principle of Arab independence and promising to assist them to establish such forms of administration under British and French guidance as may be found most suitable in the various districts. The various ruling chiefs will naturally remain practically independent and, though the Sherif might become the nominal head of the Arab confederation and thus qualify himself to assume the Khalifate, the lack of cohesion which is always quoted is our main safeguard against the establishment of a united Arab Kingdom which might be a threat against British interests.[17]

The differences over the Arab Bureau brought the issue of the caliphate to the fore. Wingate was of the view that India's backing of Ibn Sa'ud to the detriment of Sharif Husayn's standing would ensure the continuation of the Turkish caliphate. So incensed was Wingate at India's obduracy that he took the unusual step of requesting the High Commissioner to convey his representations directly to the Foreign Office.[18]

Finally, it was decided to establish an 'Arab Bureau' in Cairo where all Middle Eastern intelligence and propaganda would be centralised. According to its constitution the first function of the Bureau was 'to harmonise British Political Activity in the near East, and to keep the Foreign Office, India Office, Admiralty, War Office and Government of India, simultaneously informed of the general tendency of German and Turkish policy.' The centrality of Islam, however, was evident in the second stipulated function which acknowledged both the 'Indian problem' and the relevance of Islam to some of Britain's imperial allies. The subsidiary purpose of the Bureau was to 'co-ordinate propaganda in favour of Great Britain among non-Indian Moslems without clashing with the susceptibilities of Indian Moslems and the Entente Powers.'[19] Although the Bureau was responsible for

---

[16] FO 882 ARB 16/4, 'Committee of Imperial Defence, Establishment of an Arab Bureau in Cairo, Report of an Inter-Departmental Conference,' January 10, 1916. The committee was composed of representatives of the War Office, Foreign Office, India Office and the Admiralty.
[17] FO 882/12 IND 16/1, Telegram from Clayton to Governor General, Khartoum, 28 January 1916.
[18] FO 882 Vol. 8, IS 16/2, Telegram from the Governor General, Khartoum, to Clayton, Cairo, 15 February 1916.
[19] CAB 42/7/24, Secret 230-B, Committee of Imperial Defence, Meeting of 7 January 1916. 'Establishment of an Arab Bureau in Cairo, Report of an Inter-Departmental Conference;' and, FO 882, ARB 15/3, 'Constitution and Function of the Arabian Bureau,' undated.

propaganda and intelligence throughout the entire Arab region, the divergent *modi operandi* are evident in the fact that, in 'Egypt, Arabia and Turkey' these functions were to be exercised 'directly' through 'native agents,' whereas in the case of 'Aden, Mesopotamia and Persian Gulf' they were to be conducted 'indirectly' through their respective 'Political Officers.' Given the discrepant proclivities of Cairo and India and the tendency for informants and information gatherers to reinforce each other's views the antagonism over the future of the caliphate was more likely to be reinforced than resolved.

Nevertheless, Bruce Westrate is correct in his view that, 'the decision to incorporate the new bureau into Cairo's intelligence network had the ineradicable effect of identifying it closely with wartime Cairo's view of the Arab world.'[20] The significance of the Arab Bureau for this thesis is not that it was constitutionally bound to a particular Middle Eastern policy – let alone the revival of an Arab caliphate, since o*fficially* the Bureau was not the institutional expression of that idea. Rather it combined, either directly or through association, many of the individuals already engaged in political intelligence work in the region who already favoured that particular outcome. As such the Bureau was, *in practical effect*, the institutional embodiment of the 'Cairo vision' and went some way towards facilitating the sort of coordination of Britain's Arab policy predicated upon the Sharif of Mecca's pre-eminence in any future bid for the caliphate.

7.3 Sykes-Picot and the Caliphate

Before going on to examine the impact of the Arab Revolt on the idea of a an Arab caliphate in British thinking it is important to establish the true nature of the relationship between the provisional Anglo-French understanding of 1916 and the initiatives taken in Cairo in preparation for a revolt. There is fundamental disagreement amongst historians over the

[20] Westrate, 1992, p. 32.

relationship between the Anglo-Sharifian accords[21] and the so-called 'Sykes-Picot Agreement.' Whereas, for example, John Fisher maintains that there was 'incompatibility between the "Arab" policy embodied in the McMahon correspondence and Sykes-Picot Agreement,'[22] Elie Kedourie believes that the two agreements were ultimately reconcileable.[23] Although it is not difficult to show that agreement with the French was sought primarily in order to fulfill the policy which had been advanced on the basis of the promises made to Husayn, it does not follow from this that these accords were, in fact, compatible. All that will be argued here is that in the minds of officials in Cairo there was indeed a compatibility predicated on the idea of a nominal unity and sovereignty embodied in the restoration of the Arab caliphate in the person of Sharif Husayn of Mecca.

In support of the notion that 'Sykes-Picot' came out of 'Husayn-McMahon' it is worth recalling that Sykes himself considered that the scheme of 'a progressive state under the suzerainty of the Sherif' would merely 'be *qualified* by agreements with France and Great Britain.' [emphasis added][24] A Foreign Office memorandum addressed to the High Commissioner in December 1915 referred simply to a meeting with Picot 'regarding the future French sphere *in* the proposed Arab state.' [emphasis added][25] While negotiations were under way, a War Office memorandum written to Sir Arthur Nicholson (who had headed the negotiations before being replaced by Sykes) referred, within the context of 'the approximate limits of the country which we and the French propose to let [the Sharif] rule,' to 'British and French spheres of influence *in that district*.' [emphasis added][26] Elsewhere, Nicholson referred to combined French and British assistance 'in the creation of an Arab State or

---

[21] It is a usual exercise on undergraduate Middle Eastern history courses to 'contrast and compare' these with the British Government's expression of sympathy with Zionism, better known as the Balfour Declaration. There is something of a hierarchy suggested in the generally accepted titles: 'Agreement' followed by 'Declaration' followed by 'Correspondence' which is not suggested by, for example, the terms 'Accord,' 'Provisional Understanding,' and 'Expression of Sympathy,' which, it might be argued, are equally valid.
[22] Fisher, 1999, p. 87.
[23] Kedourie, 1976, pp. 126 & 232.
[24] FO 882 Vol. 13, MIS 15/18, Telegram from Sykes to Cox, 22 November 1915.
[25] FO 882 Vol II, AP 15/17, Despatch from the Foreign Office to the High Commissioner, Egypt, 27 December 1915, enclosing a memorandum of 21December regarding the 'Arab Question.'
[26] FO 371/2767 3851, MacDonagh, War Office to Sir Arthur Nicholson, 6 January 1916.

Confederation of Arab States.'[27] The priority in this arrangement was made explicit in a subsequent meeting War Committee where it was stated that,

> it soon became apparent that the Arabs expected as a sine qua non condition of their entry into the war on the side of the Entente to be guaranteed a free Arab State or Confederation of States; and it became essential, therefore, to arrive at some understanding with the French on the question, in view of their interests in Syria.[28]

Regardless of whether either assertion was true or not, it was generally believed by British 'Arabists' that not only had Kitchener started the Arab movement by suggesting 'the creation of an Arab Khalifate at Mecca and the freedom of the Arab race'[29] but, according to Sykes, had personally 'ordered the Anglo-French negotiations.'[30] Furthermore, the order of priorities is clear when it is realised that Clayton, for example, believed that the Sykes-Picot agreement ought merely to 'serve as a useful guide' and that 'this understanding should remain an informal one.'[31]

The operative salience of Sharifian rule as conceived in Cairo and Khartoum is evidenced in Wingate's understanding of the relationship between the two agreements. He opined in the April of 1916 that McMahon's letter to Husayn of 26 October 1915 'would appear to include the districts in question in the sphere of influence over which we were prepared to admit the Sherif's *nominal* authority, although it is sufficiently vaguely worded as to admit of the eventual extension of French influence in these regions.' [emphasis added][32] It is not surprising then that M. Picot should have deprecated the strength of the Arab movement[33] and of pan-Islam. It would have been plain that Britain's special relationship with Sharif Husayn in conjunction with a revived Arab caliphate in Mecca would have afforded a rival imperial power an extra-territorial authority, albeit vicarious, within their own area of influence. It was

---

[27] FO 371/2767 23579, Arthur Nicholson to Grey, Foreign Office, 2 February 1916. This is the same report as that presented at the War Committee of 23 March: CAB 42/11/9, Minutes of 79th Meeting of the War Committee.
[28] CAB 42/11/5, Secret, Arab Question, Note by the Secretary War Committee of 18 March 1916.
[29] SAD CP 694/4/1-3, secret printed report headed: 'The Sherif Of Mecca and the Arab Movement,' signed by the General Staff, War Office, 1 July 1916.
[30] PRO 30/57/91 GA2/8, Letter from Mark Sykes to George Arthur (appointed as Kitchener's official biographer after his death), 12 September 1916.
[31] SAD CP 694/4/4-6, Note on the Arab Question, signed GFC, 5 July 1916.
[32] SAD WP 136/5/66-68, Private letter from Wingate, Erkowit, to Clayton, 24 April 1916.

recorded in cabinet minutes that when Sykes entered the discussions 'he had only the de Bunsen Report to guide him.'[34] The centrality of the caliphate in this important document has been given considerable emphasis in a previous chapter. Nevertheless, the part played by the caliphate issue in Britain's negotiation of the 1916 Anglo-French agreement may only be inferred, since nowhere is it made explicit. For example, at the same time that the Anglo-French negotiations over the disposition of 'Greater Syria' were being conducted Sykes expressed the view that,

> The Mosque of Omar represents, next to Mecca, the most holy and venerable shrine in Islam, and it must be a *sine qua non* that the mosque of Omar itself should be under the sole control of Moslems, and that the Chief of the Arabian confederation should have an equal voice in the administration of Palestine.[35]

While the caliphate is not explicitly referred to, Sykes' insistence provides evidence of the extra-territoriality implicit in the notion of some form of 'Islamic' rule by the Sharif extending into areas lying beyond the bounds of his secular jurisdiction. It may even be argued that the arrangements envisaged in the Anglo-French agreement in relation to the 'sub-contracting' of imperial spheres of influence within a unitary Arab state (or confederation of states), could only be contemplated by the British, on the presumption of their collaborative alliance with the Sharif of Mecca based on his unique position within Islam. In other words it was the specific nature of the Husayn-McMahon understanding predicated on the Sharif's eligibility for the caliphate which both necessitated the Sykes-Picot agreement and provided the basis of a theoretical reconciliation of the two accords.

---

[33] FO 882 Vol. II, AP 15/9, record of meeting between Nicholson and Picot being the results of the second meeting of the Committee to discuss Arab Question and Syria – attended by those at the first meeting plus M.Picot, 23 November 1915.
[34] CAB 42/11/5, Secret –Arab Question, Note by the Secretary. This note was circulated at the meeting of the War Committee of 23 March 1916 per the minutes of the 79th meeting filed under CAB 42/11/9.
[35] FO 882, Vol. 16, SP 16/2, War Department, Secret Series, Section 1, Note by Sir Mark Sykes, 5 January 1916.

7.4 The Arab Revolt and the Caliphate: Ideology in the Face of Practice

According to the original conception of what has been referred to as the 'Grand plan,' a revolt against Turkey by the tribes of the Hijaz led by the Sharif of Mecca ought to have presaged the consummation of the Western Arabian vision whose theoretical coherence, it has been argued, rested on the eventual restoration of the caliphate to Arabia. Providing an explanation of the fact that this was not the outcome, and that the idea of replacing the Ottoman caliphate with one at Mecca lost favour among members of the Arab Bureau during the course of the Revolt, is the object of this section. The tactical and logistical minutiae of the Revolt, therefore, are pertinent to this purpose only in so far as they impinge on British attitudes to the matter of the caliphate.

Bruce Westrate's remark that, 'as for the caliphate, the Arab bureau had *initially* hoped to establish Hussein as caliph in order to enhance the international prestige of the hoped for Arab federation.' [emphasis per original][36] is an indication of the changes that were about to occur. It is to be expected that the rather speculative issue of the caliphate might temporarily recede into the background during a period of military conflict, and certainly the matter was discussed less intensely during the early months of the Revolt. Nevertheless, there was a discernible change in the import of references to those issues once the Revolt started, that is, from one of hopeful anticipation to one of reluctant association. Though it should be stated that already by the end of 1915 the Cairo authority's project had encountered an impediment to its practical implementation. The seemingly irrevocable rejection of the 'Alexandretta option' by the War Cabinet in November 1915[37] was the occasion for Clayton to remark that too much stress had been laid on the 'positive' advantages of an alliance with the Arabs. Clayton believed that the 'very great "negative" advantages of denying them [the Arabs] to the Germans and Turks have been rather overlooked.' This was perhaps the first indication of a retreat from the original grand empire-building scheme.

---

[36] Westrate, 1992, p. 143.
[37] CAB 42/5/8, Summary Notes of a Meeting of the War Committee, Nov. 12, 1915; and, Busch, 1971, pp. 115-6.

Already, then, some six months before its inception, the Arab Revolt was being re-depicted not as a stage in the realisation of the 'Grand plan' but purely in terms of its prophylactic effect. The latter would come to function as the Arab Bureau's 'fall-back position.' The consequences of such a reappraisal are far-reaching. If the success of a project is to be measured according to its diminishing effect on some malign influence rather than by its contribution towards the fulfillment of some seminal vision, its implementation may be abandoned should that negative influence be deemed innocuous or otherwise removed. The full implications of this observation will be reexamined in the following chapter.

7.41 Preparation for the Revolt and the Early Deprecation of the Sharif's Capacity for Aggrandisement

For those who were enthusiastic about the idea of an Arab revolt, it was important to emphasise and enhance whenever possible both the secular *and* spiritual prestige of Sharif Husayn. Within the Anglo-Sharifian scheme the two factors were intimately related: his primacy in terms of the caliphate and his fitness to lead the Arab people in revolt being mutually dependent. However, whereas Husayn's standing in secular matters depended on his *potential* in the religious sphere, his attainment of the caliphate would hinge on his *actual* attainment of secular authority. Although, the Sharif had grasped this explicitly, a fact which had been explained by McMahon to Grey,[38] the British in Cairo were unaware of the true magnitude of Sharif Husayn's potential. The conceptualisation of their collaborative enterprise, therefore, was based on assessments which were to a considerable degree speculative, being based on prejudice, supposition and wishful thinking. In this context Bruce Westrate's description of the situation is most apt:

> In June 1916 Sherif Hussein of Mecca raised the standard of revolt. In the frenetic weeks preceding this event the Arab Bureau was busy plumbing the depths of scholarly arcana for the most basic anthropological and geographic information about Turkish territories. At the time,

[38] FO 371/2767 30674, telegram from McMahon, the Residency, Cairo, No. 26, to Grey, 7 February 1916, attached to 'The literal Translation of a Letter addressed to the "Honourable Sayyid," (Ali El Morghani), sealed and dated at Mecca, the 28th December 1915.'

> the British were alarmingly ignorant with respect to geographic and political conditions in the Arabian Peninsula.[39]

Britain's pressing for an Arab revolt in early 1916 was borne partly out of desperation, with the situation in both Europe and the Middle East. The spring/summer of 1916 would turn out to be the lowest point of the war for Britain, the Easter of 1916 being the absolute nadir of British fortunes. Besides the surrender at Kut on 29 April, coming only four months after the evacuation of Gallipoli, closer to home cracks were beginning to show in the apparently solid edifice of the British Empire with the Easter Rising in Ireland on the 24th. On the Western front some two months later, more British soldiers perished on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme than were lost in any single day of fighting throughout the entire war.[40] One may assume that success against the Turks in Arabia, even if achieved vicariously, would have been most welcome.

The problem for the Arab Bureau and its associates, however, was that as often as they made arguments in favour of the Sharif, others, in particular those employed by the Government of India, would provide evidence which denigrated his status. In January Sir Percy Cox circulated a memorandum reporting that neither Ibn Sa'ud nor the Shaykh of Kuwait had the slightest interest in the question of the caliphate.[41] On seeing this report, Wingate responded as he had done to the interventions of the Agha Khan by pointing out that Ibn Sa'ud was a Wahhabi and therefore would not be expected to have an interest in the matter of the caliphate. When commenting on the Indian objection to a strong and independent Arabia to Clayton, Wingate responded by inferring the obvious: that 'the Indian fear that the Arab State thus constituted might become a menace to British interests is sufficiently discounted by the views expressed by these and other Eastern Arabian chiefs.'[42]

---

[39] Westrate, 1992, p. 55.
[40] Gilbert, 1995, p. 260.
[41] SAD WP 136/1/17-18, Copy of telegram No. I.G. 1912, despatched 5 January 1916. General Force "D" to Intrusive Cairo, Chief of General Staff, Secretary of State and Egypt, reporting Sir P. Cox's interview with 'Ibn Saoud near Bahrein' on 26 December 1915, and with the 'new Sheikh of Koweit, Prince Jabar Ibn Mubarak,' date not given. Cox proffered a rather different view in April 1918. See Chapter 8, Note 18.
[42] SAD WP 136/2/56, Draft of telegram from Hakimam [Wingate] to Clayton, Cairo, No. 122, 15 February 1916. The views contained in this letter were later conveyed by the High Commissioner to the Foreign Office: FO 141 587 545/15, Letter from McMahon to Grey, No. 34, 29 February 1916.

Clayton went further by insisting that it was precisely these fissiparous tendencies, presumed to be inherent within Arabian society, which they intended to rely on. It is only within this context that the subtlety (at least too subtle for India) of the idea of a nominal unity and sovereignty to be expressed through the caliphate and intended to satisfy the demands of pan-Arabism without prejudicing British rule, may be fully apprehended. He argued that Sharif Husayn's lack of influence in many areas was 'one of the advantageous aspects of our scheme & one of our great safeguards against a really powerful temporal Khalifate as opposed to the spiritual one which we hope will be produced out of the present chaos.' Clayton later told Wingate, again in relation to India's 'obsess[ion] with the idea that we mean to form a powerful Arab kingdom,' that, 'the various ruling chiefs will naturally remain practically independent ... though the Sherif might become the *nominal* head of the Arab confederation and thus qualify himself to assume the Khalifate.'[43] He was yet to realise that even the latter would be precluded by the structural incapacity of the Sharif which he now celebrated. Moreover, the evident duplicity of this formulation was not to everyone's liking. While the Permanent Under Secretary at the India Office appreciated that the policy 'enabled [the Arabs] to present a suitable façade to the world' he minuted that 'the danger of it ... lies in its disingenuousness.'[44]

Importantly, the Arab Bureau now argued for their policy in terms which diverged significantly from the original rationale. Where once they spoke of 'capturing Islam'[45] for the benefit of Britain, they now merely assumed that for Britain 'the threat of Islam will have ceased to exist if Islam can be divided against itself.'[46] While this may not have been in contravention of Kitchener's original intention it represents a development not suggested explicitly at the beginning of the war. It would appear that besides acknowledging the need to 'settle up with France in regard to Syria'[47] Cairo now sought to recast their scheme in terms which might appeal to India.

---

[43] FO 882 Vol. 8, IND/16/1, Telegram from Clayton to the Governor General, Khartoum, 28 January 1916.
[44] L/P&S/10/586, P 705, Minute by Holderness, 23 February 1916.
[45] This is according to the phrase coined by David Fromkin in the title of Chapter 10, Fromkin, 1991.
[46] Quoted from the 'Arabia Reports' of the week ending 16 February 1916. Ibid.
[47] Thus characterised by Sykes in PRO 30/57/70 WO/48a, see Note 14, above.

In a manner which illustrates the pure instrumentality of Arab unity from a British point of view, when the Indian Government cited some Nawab's objection to 'a pan-Arab union with a temporal authority for the Sherif,' Sir Ronald Storrs told Clayton that only 'sufficient cohesion, if only for a sufficient time to expel the Turks' had ever been contemplated. Though he did allow that 'some form of religious supremacy for the Sherif, should surely be within the bounds of practicability.'[48] One aspect of the 'Cairo vision,' the functional separation of incommensurate temporal and religious authority based on the essential condition of the eventual restoration of the Arab caliphate, remained intact. McMahon, however, went further still by satisfying Grey of the fact that the Arab movement *necessarily* lacked 'organization and cohesion.' The High Commissioner came close to undermining the entire scheme by arguing that it would be impossible 'to perfect a general organized Arab combination against the Turks.'[49]

As ever, Cairo continued to receive information via the courtesy of interested parties. While the Sharif informed the High Commissioner in February that although all of 'the persons upon whom they could depend' in Syria had been killed or dispersed by the Turks, his son, Faysal, still expected that a force 'of not less than 100,000' would congregate there with which they hoped to commence the 'movement.'[50] To this the Sharif attached a request for £50,000 per month in addition to which the messenger conveyed a verbal request from 'Abdullah for £3,000 'for myself for my scheme.' This he would use to convene a powerful committee of Muslims gathered from Arab countries who would then 'offer' the Caliphate to his father.[51] The sheer vanity of Faysal's hope would not be grasped in Cairo for another two months but once apprehended would have marked consequences for the eventual conduct of the Revolt.

There are indications that the staff of the Cairo Residency were still capable of deceiving themselves in order to maintain the integrity of their vision. For example, Clayton had no

---

[48] FO 141 587 545/15, pp. 103-118. Handwritten notes on the caliphate, stamped by the High Commissioner, 6 March 1916, including notes 'of certain conversations between Lt. Colonel The Nawab Sir Afsur Mulk Bahadur K.C.I.E. M.V.O. of Hyderabad, India, and Lt. General Sir Edwin Locke Elliot, dealing with the district of Hadjaz, and the Mohamadan religion as it effects the political situation in the present war,' and, Note from Storrs, The Residency, Cairo, to Clayton, 6 March 1916.
[49] FO 371/2767 54229, Telegram No. 204, from McMahon, Egypt, to the Foreign Office, 21 March 1916.
[50] FO 882 Vol. 19, AB 16/5, Sherif of Mecca to HC, 18 February 1916.
[51] Kedourie, 1976, pp. 120-121.

problem in arguing that the Sharif's recent overtures to Imam Yahya, and his intention to wean al-Idrisi from the Turks, constituted 'further proof of the manner in which the Sherif has been able to expand his influence and of the extreme value of having him definitely on our side.'[52] – even though it quite obviously did nothing of the sort. During March, however, Wingate and Clayton[53] were able to confide to one another that they were satisfied with the way things were now moving, Wingate being 'full of hope that the Arab Policy which we initiated so long ago is really going to materialize.'[54] Surprisingly, this policy received a welcome fillip *vis-à-vis* the objections of the Indian Government. Captain Lawrence, now working for the Arab Bureau, reported from Basra that Shakespear of the Indian Political Service, and Political Agent in Kuwait, had written, shortly before his death that, 'if the Sultan of Turkey were to disappear the Khalifate by the common consent of Islam would fall to the family of the Prophet the present representative of which is the Sherif of Mecca. In this case he would command the support of the Ibn Saud.' These words were of particular significance coming from someone who, apparently, had 'entered into relations of political and personal friendship with Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud.'[55] Shakespear's original report was by now well over a year old and might reasonably have been considered obsolete, however, a note had been added pointedly to Lawrence's cablegram which said: 'This posthumous dictum of Major Shakespeare [sic] is of interest in regard to India contention that Sherif is of no influence in Arabia generally.'[56]

7.42 The Confinement of the Revolt to the Hijaz

On 18 April 1916 the Sharif wrote a letter to McMahon in which he emphasised the fact that a revolt could not possibly commence in Syria due to the large number of Turkish troops stationed there, unless Britain landed in Syria in order to sever the railway connecting it to

---

[52] SAD WP 136/3/1, Letter from Clayton, Army HQ, The Force in Egypt, Cairo, to Wingate, 3 March 1916.
[53] SAD CP 693/10/17-18, Letter from Clayton, Intelligence Section (Cairo), General HQ, EEF, to Wingate, 28 March 1916.
[54] SAD CP 470/1/94-101, Private letter from Wingate, at a 'Camp near El Obeid,' to Clayton, 17 March 1916.
[55] Fromkin, 1991, p. 107.
[56] FO 141 857 545/15, p. 122, Cablegram from Capt. Lawrence, Basra, to Intrusive, Cairo, 9 April 1916, containing an extract from a letter from Shakespear, Riadh, to Cox, 17 January 1915. Seven days later

Anatolia.[57] According to Eliezer Tauber, Faysal had already decided that the revolt should be started in Hijaz and not Syria and had 'also recommended that his father postpone the Revolt until contacts with the British were concluded, and preferably until a landing by the allies at Alexandretta.'[58] While the British had always sought a collaborative alliance with an Arab party who would remain dependent on its imperial sponsor it would always be a fine balance. However, once an intervention in Syria had been ruled out, Sharif Husayn and the increasingly elusive 'Arab movement' must have appeared to them as something of a liability with no organisational capacity of their own.

Clayton's reaction to the news was unequivocal being one of chagrin. He confided to Wingate:

> The SHERIF allows that SYRIA is useless for revolutionary purposes. Can we expect that the HEDJAZ Arabs with their proverbial lack of organisation, and far from their base, can do more than waste our money and supplies in a series of aimless and indecisive raids in a country which they are too uncivilised ever to rule as it should be ruled?

His overriding concern, however, seemed to be for the ultimate transfer of the caliphate to the Sharif, since he added that, 'if the SHERIF is sufficiently powerful temporally to accept the Khalifate if offered to him by consensus of Moslem opinion, it is sufficient.' Wingate's reply is instructive in linking the Sharif's prospects of becoming caliph to the features of Syria referred to earlier. The Governor General offered the view that although,

> it might be more convenient if the Sherif would confine his activity to the "desert" and Southern Arabia ... it must be remembered that his desire to strengthen his position in the Syrian hinterland is intimately connected with his aspirations to the Khalifate, and that these latter aspirations are at least as important an influence on his actions as his hostility to the Turks.[59]

Wingate was less equivocal the following day when he explained more fully his reservations about limiting the Sharif's operations to the Hijaz. He wrote: 'I do not think we ought to risk a serious difference of opinion with him on this point, as no doubt his aspirations, especially in

---

Shakespear was killed while witnessing a battle between Ibn Sa'ud of Najd and Ibn Rashid chief of the Jabal Shammar region of central Arabia. McKale, 1998, pp. 99-100.

[57] FO 882 Vol. 19, AB 16/10, Sherif of Mecca to the High Commissioner, 18 April 1916.

[58] Tauber, 1993, p. 78.

[59] SAD WP 136/5/65, Secret telegram no. 448 from Governor General, Erkowit, to Clayton, Cairo, 23 April 1916.

the direction of the Khalifate, must lie largely in his acquiring influence, both temporal and spiritual, in the northern districts of his embryonic kingdom.'[60] As will be seen later, the Sharif's confinement to what amounted to his own backyard would have serious consequences for his wider aspirations whether temporal or spiritual.

For Clayton the only compensating factor was that the threat of jihad would have been largely dispelled since once the Sharif had committed himself to fighting the Turks the British would have succeeded in 'draw[ing] the guardian of the Holy Places to the side of the Allies' and in damaging 'Turkish prestige in the Mohammedan world.'[61] The High Commissioner, on the other hand, was content to see the Sharif clear the Turks from the Hijaz and the Yemen.[62] In May Faysal's 'northern project' was formally vetoed and the Residency cautioned the Sharif to confine his operations to the Hijaz and Yemen. Husayn had little choice but to agree. Internally the doubts over Faysal's Syrian ambitions were rationalised in terms of 'French susceptibilities,'[63] however, these were somewhat superfluous in the light of the fact that it was already understood that a revolt in the north would depend on British intervention at Alexandretta. It is impossible to say with certainty whether the British would have supported the revolt in Syria regardless of French objections, had such an uprising been expected to succeed. Wingate, evidently sensing that his grander vision might never be realised, continued to petition, unsuccessfully, for a landing at Alexandretta,[64] however the Chief of Imperial General Staff (CIGS) deprecated all adventures outside the main theatre in France being a strong advocate of concentration on the Western Front.[65] Kitchener's death in early June made it unlikely that any person of lesser status with access to the Cabinet would champion the 'Alexandretta option' ever again.

---

[60] SAD WP 136/5/66-68, Private letter from Wingate, Erkowit, to Clayton, 24 April 1916.
[61] FO 882 Vol. 19, AB 16/18, Clayton to Director of Military Intelligence, War Office, London, 17 May 1916.
[62] FO 882 Vol. III, HRG 16/4, Telegram from Clayton, Cairo to Governor General, Erkowit, 22 April 1916.
[63] SAD WP 159/5/8-11, Private letter from Clayton, HQ Army of Occupation, Cairo, to Wingate, 1 May 1916; SAD WP 159/5/64-65, Private letter from Wingate to Wilson, 7 May 1916; SAD WP 136/6/46-51, Telegram no. 360 from Clayton, Cairo, to Hakimam, Khartoum, 10 May 1916; and, FO 882 Vol 19, AB 16/17, Reply from the High Commissioner to the Sharif of Mecca, 22 May 1916.
[64] SAD WP 200/4/7-10, Private letter from Wingate to Clayton, 22 May 1916; and, SAD WP 137/5/14-16, Letter from Wingate to General Robertson, CIGS, War Office, London, 22 June 1916.
[65] SAD WP 138/8/46, Letter from Sir William Robertson, War Office, to Wingate, 11 July 1916.

Towards the end of May 1916, Husayn recalled Faysal from Syria[66] in order to concentrate all efforts in the south and to prevent him being taken hostage by the Turks on their receiving news of a rebellion in the Hijaz. On 5 June the Sharif of Mecca informed Storrs that he was ready to start the revolt.[67] With the notable exception of Clayton, no Briton would ever speak again about Sharif Husayn's prospects of becoming caliph with anything approaching enthusiasm. The precise reasons for this will be examined in the remaining sections of his chapter.

7.43 'Sharif Husayn's Revolt' and the Question over Landing British Troops in the Hijaz

The Arab Revolt was begun at Medina by the Sharif's sons, Faysal and 'Ali, on 5 June 1916, and was soon followed by actions under the leadership of Husayn and 'Abdullah at Mecca, Ta'if and Jiddah.[68] The end of the Revolt is conventionally marked by the taking of Damascus at the beginning of October 1918. In fact, Damascus had already been occupied by an Australian cavalry brigade on 1 October, two days before Faysal's 'triumphal' entry into the city. This had been a mistake, a deviation from Clayton's and General Allenby's 'script.'[69] This final act of the Revolt, and the pretence which ensued, is indicative of its conduct almost from the outset. It may be argued that only the first six months of the insurrection - that is before the instigation of a British-led guerrilla war - may properly be called 'Sharif Husayn's Revolt,' though even this phase of the Revolt had been sustained by British assistance. It was the problems associated with the provision of *direct* British support which soon induced a revision of the Sharifian policy, and which are of particular interest here in so far as they affected British attitudes towards the future of the caliphate.

One way or another the Revolt had been in preparation since the arrival of Husayn's first letter at the Cairo Residency sometime in August 1915. It later became a matter of some urgency for Husayn when he was informed by Cemal Pasha that the Turks were about to send a force to

---

[66] SAD WP 136/6/126-131, Telegram no. 143 from Wilson, Port Sudan, to Hakimam, Khartoum, 26 May 1916.
[67] FO 882 Vol. 19, AB 16/20, 'Sherif of Mecca' to Storrs, 5 June 1916.
[68] Wilson, 1990, p. 287.
[69] Fromkin, 1990, pp. 336-37.

the Hijaz in order to crush him. Notwithstanding the assertions subsequently made by those who championed the Revolt, it may be said with some justification that, in terms of the claims originally made by its advocates, it was an almost complete failure. This is evident from the indicators summarised by David Fromkin:[70]

(a) The expected mass defection of Arab troops from the Ottoman army never took place - certainly not the 100,000 suggested by Husayn.
(b) There was no defection of important political or military figures.
(c) al-Faruqi's secret military organisation failed to appear.
(d) Husayn never formed a regular army. Only a few thousand subsidised tribesmen joined the Revolt, who, it may be added, turned out to be quite unreliable especially when the subsidies were delayed or not forthcoming.
(e) There was no visible support for the Revolt in any other part of the Arab world.

Nevertheless, it should be stated clearly at this point that, taken in its entirety, the Revolt did aid British ambitions considerably, albeit not in the terms in which it was originally conceived. There can be no question that the Revolt prevented the Turks from reinforcing their garrisons in the Hijaz to a critical degree, nor that by distracting, and absorbing the energies of, the Ottoman army east of the Jordan it enabled the British to prevail in Palestine. It may be argued that because of the Revolt many tribes, although not actually affiliating to the Sharifian movement, failed to fight for the Turks and so assisted the Allied cause. One may speculate that the predominantly 'Sharifian' nature of the Revolt lessened the likelihood of a potentially less compliant secular Arab movement from emerging at that time.

More importantly in relation to the reappraisal which would follow, the successes which could be claimed on behalf of the Revolt depended very much on British military, logistic and organisational support, even before the phase of guerrilla war under T. E. Lawrence's guidance and leadership during 1917-18. Almost immediately, the Sharif's forces proved inadequate against Ottoman artillery and were immediately repulsed at Ta'if, Mecca, Medina and Jiddah. Although Rabigh and Yanbu' were overrun with ease they were barely defended,

---

[70] Fromkin, 1990, Chapter 28.

and in any case the Red Sea coast was, by then, under the protection of the Royal Navy. Jiddah was only taken after a British air and sea bombardment, and Mecca and Ta'if with the help of Egyptian Muslim troops supplied by Britain. Most notably, Medina was never taken from the Turks during the war and was only given up *after* the Mudros armistice.[71] According to Clayton the Revolt had gone off at 'half cock.'[72] The fact that he expressed the view, as early as July 1916, that for the sake of British and Sharifian prestige it would preferable for the Turks to relieve the siege at Medina rather than it be taken by Husayn only for it to be lost shortly afterwards, is an indication of the rapid loss of confidence experienced by British enthusiasts for the Arab movement. Moreover, the lesson learnt was an expensive one - the final cost to Britain of this entire episode has been estimated at approximately £10 million, a huge sum at the time.[73]

Given the solemn pledge made by Britain to Muslims at large, to the effect that there would be no interference by Britain in matters of a religious nature, and more specifically that the independence and inviolability of the Holy Places would be respected under all circumstances, it is understandable that there was considerable unease felt by the British concerning anything amounting to more than symbolic support for the Hijaz revolt. One might also have expected that Cairo and India would have been in agreement over this issue at least. However, only ten days into the insurrection, the latter were moved to object to the naval bombardment of Jiddah. Significantly, the Arab Bureau director's defence of the action was couched in Islamic-religious terms. Hogarth argued that Jiddah was in no way considered to be a 'Holy City' and that the '"Haram" (holy precinct) of Mecca is fixed east of Haddah which is 28 miles inland from Jiddah.'[74] Nevertheless, one can imagine that the actual *landing* of Christian troops in the vicinity might have been regarded as something of a taboo by all concerned. The discussion turned very quickly to the provision of Muslim troops, though this was not without problems of its own also connected with religious sentiment. Wingate originally proposed sending

---

[71] This entire summary is gleaned from, Fromkin, 1989, Ch.28.
[72] FO 882 Vol. II, ARB 16/17, Clayton to French, 27 July 1916. Apart from Medina being better defended than other cities by the Turks it was inaccessible to the British for politico-religious, as well as geographical, reasons.
[73] Fromkin, 1990, p. 311. This sum may be estimated to be of the order of one percent of the entire cost of the war to Britain according to the statistics provided by Colin Nicolson. Nicolson, 2001, p. 249. However, the Revolt did provide 'legitimising cover' for the acquisition of new colonies.

Sudanese troops since he believed that Egyptians may well have been induced to conscientiously object on the grounds that they may not be forced to support a 'cause which mean[t] the ousting of the present Khalif of Islam and his substitution by a pretender.'[75]

Assessments of the Revolt's progress became ever more pessimistic with the very real prospect of the Turks recapturing Mecca. The main British concern was 'the grave damage ... to [British] prestige throughout the Moslem world.' The effect on a policy predicated on the usurpation of the caliphate by the Sharif of Mecca need hardly be stated. The author of an Arab Bureau report wrote:

> I fully appreciate the political and religious objections to landing British Government troops in the Hijaz and the capital which hostile propagandists will make of such action, especially in India, but it is a matter for H.M.G. to decide whether this would not be preferable to the very serious situation which might result from the total collapse of the Arab movement, which it must be remembered has the sympathy if not the actual support of the majority of Arab races.[76]

Such was the degree of sensitivity felt on the Sharif's side that, according to al-Faruqi, Husayn had even forbade British troops, engaged in unloading armaments, ammunition and other much-needed supplies, from coming ashore at Rabigh in order to stem rumours that he was 'in the hands of the British.' According to Wilson, the Sharif merely wished 'to show the people that [he] could give what orders he pleased to the representatives of the British Government.'[77] Hogarth, on the other hand, thought it unlikely that the Sharif would 'admit [British] armed co-operation to [the] interior of [the] Hejaz' because he did not want 'to be thought to wish to divide Islam, or oppose the Caliph, or, in any way, prejudice the stability of the Faith.'[78] Since Hogarth believed that tribal chauvinism and ignorance would become a critical factor even if the Sharif's permission were forthcoming,[79] he resolved to push for the *secret* appointment of Colonel C. E. Wilson as military liaison officer with the Sharif.[80]

---

[74] FO 141/710/3156, File headed 'Public assurances to the Arabs in regard to their independence, the inviolability of the Holy Places,' note from D. G. Hogarth, General Staff, Intelligence Section HQ, Savoy Hotel, Cairo, to McMahon, 15 June 1916.
[75] SAD CP 470/1/91-94, Very private letter from Wingate, Erkowit, to Clayton, 18 June 1916.
[76] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/30, Arab Bureau memorandum, July 1916, [probably authored by T. E. Lawrence or C. E. Wilson].
[77] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/31, Cornwallis to the Director of the Arab Bureau, 8 July 1916.
[78] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/32, 'Note on the situation in the Hejaz and the Arab Movement,' 30 July 1916.
[79] SAD WP 160/1/31-32, Letter from Hogarth, Arab Bureau, Savoy Hotel, Cairo, to Wingate, 13 July 1916.
[80] SAD WP 138/11/8-9, Copy of telegram No. 587, McMahon, Bacos, to Wingate, Erkowit, Sudan, 16 July 1916.

Faysal's attitude towards the matter betrayed a more secular pan-Arab approach than his father's. According to Wilson's account Faysal told him in September that a visible show of support by Britain was exactly what was required to 'buck up the Arabs and ... make "fence-sitters" get down on the Sherif's side.'[81] Conveniently for Faysal, who had his own ambitions in the north, the British presumed that the religious objections to a landing in the Hijaz would not apply to a British occupation of 'Aqaba.[82] Notwithstanding such exceptions, the upshot of these reports during the early weeks of the Revolt was that it soon became apparent that the perceived religious factor, that is, the Sharif's geographical position in the Hijaz combined with the prestige associated with his supposed pre-eminence in any future competition over the caliphate, had overwhelmingly negative effects on the ability of Britain to support the Revolt. Ironically, apart from the taboo against landing Christian troops in the vicinity of the Holy Places there was the increasingly evident fact that the quality and extent of the Sharif's following, such as it was, was in no way determined by ideological or religious factors. Rather, the rallying of the tribes to the Sharif's cause would depend largely on his ability to pay for their allegiance, and, to a lesser degree, on the morale and motivation contingent upon success in the field.[83] Such a view was bound to have an effect on the importance hitherto attached to the matter of the caliphate, and in particular, to Britain's effective endorsement of Sharif Husayn's claim.

In spite of the foregoing, and even as expectations concerning the future of the Revolt diminished, discussion of a landing in the Hijaz continued into 1917. In October 1916 the War Committee in London rejected such a request from Wingate and McMahon. They did so, not only because of the likely reaction of the Muslim world to a Christian incursion in the vicinity of the Haramain (Holy Places, specifically Mecca and Medina), but on the grounds that such an action would be a violation of Britain's pledge of non-interference in the area of the Islamic Holy Places.[84] Again in November, the War Committee considered the option of landing

---

[81] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/42, Wilson to McMahon, dispatch No. 5, concerning a meeting with Faysal at Yanbo, 1 September 1916.
[82] PRO Arab Bureau Papers, FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/43, 'Note on the occupation of Akaba by a British Force, as affecting the operations at present conducted by the Sherif of Mecca,' 2 September 1916.
[83] Ibid.
[84] McKale, 1998, p. 188.

troops at Rabigh. General Robertson's summing up, in which he placed much reliance on a report drafted in September by Sykes, was entirely negative. He described such an action as 'a leap in the dark' since, 'it is quite uncertain what the effect of such action upon the Arabs may be, and even if we receive satisfactory assurances from the Shereef, it must be remembered that his authority over the Arabs is of the slightest. It is, therefore, conceivable that the proposed expedition may defeat its own ends.' The Committee did, however, agree to an Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) occupation of al-'Arish and to the support of a Sharifian force at 'Aqaba, although, Sykes' rationalisation of the former as a means of saving the Arab movement in the Hijaz by 'menac[ing] Southern Palestine' belied Britain's independent agenda there.

Although Robertson's conclusions seemed absolute, it was perhaps natural that Lloyd-George's new Government[85] should review the option of a landing at Rabigh at their first War Committee on 9 December. Nevertheless, it seems more likely that it was the imminent collapse of the Sharif's revolt which induced them to reconsider. At this juncture the question of British military prestige and political standing in the Muslim world seems to have overtaken the issue of Islamic sensitivities over a Christian intrusion into the Hijaz in their deliberations. The meeting was in fact inconclusive: while the Indian Government were flatly against a landing, the Secretary of State for India thought it a lesser evil than allowing the Sharif to collapse.[86] This dichotomy, above all else, illustrates the very real contradiction at the heart of the Sharifian policy which had hitherto remained theoretical.

The views expressed within the Arab Bureau during the last quarter of 1916[87] were rather more diverse, which, given the usual concordance over British aims and means found within the institution, is an indication of the intractability of the issue. While George Lloyd MP was more concerned with the effect on Husayn's credibility among the tribes, Parker supported a British landing on the grounds that withdrawal would indicate a lack of interest in the Sharif's retaining the territory. Hogarth, on the other hand, was against intervention for fear of enemy propaganda concerning British territorial aspirations, whereas Fforde opposed it because he

---

[85] A new coalition government under Lloyd-George replaced the one under Asquith on 6 December 1916.
[86] CAB 23/1, Minute 11 of WC 1, 9 December 1916.
[87] Westrate, 1992, pp. 64-66.

thought it would *actually* lead to a permanent British occupation. Although Hogarth believed that 'the Hejaz must be signally infringed in order to purge Islam of its medievalism, and neutralise for ever its potentiality of being an armed conspiracy,' now was not the time to 'affront ... the Moslem world.'

There was, nevertheless, one member of the Arab Bureau who continued to view the caliphate issue as paramount. Wilson, who was positioned more closely to the Sharif than any of his colleagues, advised the Arab Bureau in January 1917 that,

> we run a dangerous risk of general Moslem trouble if we have not the Sherif's request for British troops ... and it is possible that the landing of troops in Hejaz would seriously prejudice the Sherif's claim to Caliphate which, in my opinion, is the greatest asset we would obtain from his revolt apart from getting the Arabs on our side during the war.[88]

Taken together, the views expressed here indicate that in certain quarters at least Islamophobia continued to be a significant feature of British deliberations about the future of the Middle East and even at this stage manifested itself in both its negative (antagonistic) and positive (collaborative) forms. As the quotation from Wilson shows, in spite of the experience of the Revolt, the 'Grand plan' inherited by the Arab Bureau was perhaps moribund, rather than dead, at the end of 1916.

Although Wingate was eventually given permission in December to land a brigade of British (Christian) troops in the Hijaz, in fact he had none to spare. At the same time it was hoped that news of the Sinai offensive might assist the Sharif's campaign. It was anticipated, wrongly in fact, that this would induce the tribes of Southern Palestine to join the Sharif's revolt and that the Turks would be isolated in Medina and starved of provisions. Consequently the Rabigh request was no longer considered an urgent matter.[89]

Finally, in mid-October 1916 a solution was proposed to the problems associated with direct and overt British engagement in the Arab Revolt which took account of the kind of human raw material upon which Sharif Husayn was forced to rely. During his brief tenure as Chief of

---

[88] FO 141/736, folio 231, telegram from Wilson, Jeddah, to Arbur, Cairo, 7 January 1917.

Staff of a section of the Sharif's forces, 'Ali al-Masri[90] suggested to both Storrs and Lawrence the idea of an Arab guerrilla campaign against the Turks. He did so in order to obviate the need for the direct support of either Allied Christian or Muslim troops for the reasons already discussed. Al-Masri's idea was subsequently taken up by Colonel Wilson[91] and adopted with even greater enthusiasm by Lawrence. Lawrence later recommended that he (Lawrence) join with Faysal in a clandestine guerrilla war in which he would engage in brief skirmishes with the Turks and sabotage the Hijaz Railway. In this manner it was hoped that Faysal's ambition of a movement towards the north could be combined with the exclusion of the French from military engagement in that area: a firmly held objective among Lawrence's colleagues in the Arab Bureau.

The story of Lawrence's part in the Arab Revolt in the northern Hijaz, Transjordan and central Syria - or at least legendary versions of it - are well known. Lawrence took up his new position in December 1916, his campaign being sustained with shipments of gold from Cairo. His endeavors received the wholehearted support of Wingate who replaced McMahon as High Commissioner in January 1917. It is sufficient, for the purposes of this thesis, to point out what is generally overlooked, which is that the part of Lawrence's career for which he later became famous evolved as a necessary consequence of the central contradiction in the British Sharifian caliphate policy. That the Sharif had been selected by Britain as a collaborative partner in her Middle Eastern scheme primarily because of his supposed spiritual-religious credentials, was the very factor that now prevented Britain from aiding him directly and openly. As has been reiterated throughout this thesis, for the first two years of the First World War this policy rested on the idea of the restoration of the Arab caliphate with Britain's support. However, the developments described above caused the British to revise their policy, particularly in relation to the more grandiose aspirations appertaining to the caliphate. It is the precise development of this reappraisal which is the subject of the following section.

---

[89] CAB 23/1, Minute 5 of WC 8, 15 December 1916; Minute 3 of WC 11, 19 December 1916; and, Minute 4 of WC 29, 8 January 1917.
[90] Fromkin, 1991, pp. 220 & 225-7.
[91] FO 882, Vol. VI, HRG 16/93, Wilson, Yanbo, to Wingate, 28 December 1916.

7.44 The Sharif's Revolt and the Reappraisal of Britain's Arab Policy

Within two weeks of the commencement of the Revolt, Mark Sykes distributed a report headed 'The Problem Of The Near East.' He did so however not directly in connection with the early fortunes of the Sharif's rebellion but in response to a report emanating from the Political Department of the India Office. There was little remarkable about Hirtzel's memorandum except that it opened with a quotation from an academic source. A German author had written earlier that year: 'If the alliance between Central Europe and the East can be broken up English world-power is saved. If not, even tolerably favourable terms of peace elsewhere will hardly compensate.' The report went on in the familiar alarmist tones about 'Germany's Mittel-Europa scheme' and the fact that 'The pan-Islamic danger [was] a real and permanent one.'[92] Unusually, however, the report acknowledged the part played by the Government of India, in particular the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909,[93] in making Muslim opinion a corporate political force. The implications for Britain's Sharifian policy were obvious: support for the Sharif must not result in a strong Arab or Muslim political identity which might later prove troublesome.

While agreeing with Hirtzel's premises Sykes did not concur entirely with his conclusions. In response Sykes spelled out the dangers of a caliphate, which, like the current one, retained control over Islam. Such an institution, in his view, might remain 'an international pawn in Palestine which gives her a hold at once over the Zionists, the papacy and the Orthodox, a strangle hold on Russia in the Bosphorus, and a monopoly of certain oilfields essential to maritime, aerial, and industrial power.'[94] Although Sykes advocated support for the Sharif's

---

[92] FO 371/2778 130553, Memorandum by Political Department, India Office, 25 May 1916. The quotation is taken from a Dr. Rohrbach in a paper entitled "Deutsche Politik", p. 292, published on 11 February 1916. Anxiety over 'Mittel-Europa' (see Chapter 2, Note 121) may have been felt more acutely in India, since the scheme was an imperial one designed to sever communications between the colony and the metropolis. A detailed map outlining the scheme was filed at the India Office in September, 1916. L/P&S/10/586, File 705/1916 pts 1,2. Arab Revolt : Sir Mark Sykes' report etc. 1916-17, includes a map headed 'Berlin – Baghdad or "Mittel Europa".'

[93] These were the reforms instigated by John Morley, Liberal Secretary of State for India, and Minto, the Viceroy which introduced representation along confessional lines in an attempt to weaken the force of class politics, especially that of the lower classes.

[94] Sledmere Papers, DDSY(2)/11 13, 'The problem Of The Near East' – Secret, 20 June 1916.

revolt in terms which were entirely anti-Turk there was no hint of any desire to enhance the Sharif's standing or secure his future as an independent secular or spiritual ruler.

In a later memorandum Hirtzel was subtly contradicted by his under-secretary, Holderness, who wrote, 'there is reason to conclude, both from the past history of Muhammedanism and from the events of the present war, that pan Islamism as a motive force can easily be over-rated.' He went on to describe 'want of cohesion' and 'sectarian divisions and animosities' and added, presciently, that, 'it may be said that in the regions where Muhammedanism has been dominant nationality has been stronger than community of creed.' With regard to the threat of German pan-Islam he declared:

> It would be strange if, on his attempting to direct the movement and asserting himself for this purpose, he did not find himself in collision with it. ... For any European Power to fan the flame of pan-Islamism, while itself aiming at the supreme control over a Muhammadan State, would in all probability prove in the long run a dangerous game.[95]

Hirtzel would later come to the same view. In October he submitted a paper to the War Cabinet in which he quoted another German author at great length, again undermining the fear of political pan-Islam which had inspired much of Britain's policy towards Arabia during the war. Pertinent among the ten pages of quotations is a passage which read:

> The pre-supposition for an immediate general rising of Islam would have been the recognition of the Turkish khalifate by all orthodox Mohammedans and complete unity of Islam. But these are unattainable, if only because of the diversity of economic interests, which in many places are so closely bound up with those of the English, French, &c.[96]

This too would prove prophetic, anticipating the situation which eventuated after the war. However, for the time being, the effect of such an assessment was that it took the wind out of the sails of a policy driven, to a considerable extent, by Islamophobia. The irony was that this tentative re-examination was generated not by information supplied by the British intelligence services but by views originating within the German academe.

---

[95] FO 371/2778 130553, note by the Under Secretary of State, India Office, T. W. Holderness, 13 June 1916.
[96] CAB 42/23/6, Paper, dated 31 October 1916, submitted by Sir A. Hirtzel for circulation at the War Committee summarising a book by Dr. Franz Stuhlmann entitled, *The Fight for Arabia between Turkey and England.*

During the first months of the Revolt a more fundamental, though equally unsystematic, reappraisal of the Sharifian policy also took place in Cairo, the War Office and Foreign Office which resulted directly from the early failures of the revolt in the Hijaz. In late June an Arab Bureau memorandum warned of the possible consequences for Britain of a total collapse in the Sharif's movement. In particular the report was concerned that, 'Accusations would be made that we had callously exploited Islam for our own purposes: we should be looked upon as a faithless friend and a feeble enemy. Our position in the Mohammedan world would deteriorate greatly and other most unfortunate results might follow.'[97] The only optimism which the Arab Bureau could generate at this time was of a somewhat spurious nature. It was probably no coincidence that al-Faruqi, no doubt wishing to maintain British enthusiasm for the Sharif, reported that both al-Idrisi and the Imam of Yemen had already accepted Husayn's suzerainty, and, moreover, that the Sharif was hopeful of forming a *regular* army of 30,000 men with a view to invading Syria.[98]

As for the War Office, a report signed by the General Staff surmised that although,

> he has always represented himself, in his correspondence with the High Commissioner, as being the spokesman of the Arab nation, ... so far as is known, he is not supported by any organization of Arabs nearly general enough to secure, even throughout the larger part of the Arab area, the automatic acceptance of the terms agreed to by him. *It would, therefore, be futile to treat with him alone and to assume that through him all Arabs could be influenced and bound.* [emphasis added][99]

It is clear from the report that it was intended to re-examine the promises made to Husayn in order to reduce their effect to a minimum should this prove necessary. Furthermore, doubts were expressed over the 'religious' import of the uprising and it was thought unlikely that the Revolt would have much effect on the Turkish army by inducing major desertions and defections. More importantly, at the meeting of the War Committee of 6 July those present were reminded by Sykes that Britain had never agreed to 'do more than approve an Arab Khalifate, if set up by the Arabs themselves.'[100] Such a reiteration of policy at this juncture

---

[97] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/20, Arab Bureau memorandum, 25 June 1916.
[98] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/27, Cablegram Arbur to Dirmilint, London, 3 July 1916.
[99] Sledmere Papers, DDSY(2)/11 14, 'The Sherif Of Mecca And The Arab Movement' – Secret, signed – General Staff, War Office, 1 July 1916.
[100] CAB 42/16/-, Appendix 'A' of papers circulated at the War Committee of 6 July 1916, headed: 'Points relating to the Agreement between the Shereef and Great Britain.'

was most pertinent given that this must have looked an unlikely prospect at that time. Given that the Sharif was clearly in need of British support, by implication the ability of the Arabs to establish a caliphate 'by themselves' would in fact depend on Britain. Sykes' presentation to the War Committee was in all likelihood based on a report prepared by Hogarth which had used identical language. However, Hogarth, conceded that, in the negotiations between McMahon and Husayn, although 'nothing was stipulated about either the union of the independent Arabs under the Sherif or any other single chief ... some spiritual union may be implied in the provision about an Arab Khalifate.'[101]

Even Wingate, the most consistent Sharifian stalwart, was forced to revise his assessment of Husayn's prospects within days of the opening of the Revolt. He told General Murray, Commander of the EEF, that the Hijaz revolt had barely impacted upon Turkish pan-Islamic propaganda in India, though he argued that Husayn should therefore be supported all the more wholeheartedly.[102] Clayton was in agreement with this conclusion, and in late July while still in London wrote to Wingate to say that both the Foreign Office and India Office had lost enthusiasm for the Revolt largely due to negative reactions in India.[103] Wingate was both puzzled and disappointed by such news. While he insisted that as a device for dividing Islam, the Sharif's revolt was still the 'best card in the pack,' he confessed despairingly: 'I fear we don't know how to play it.'[104] While the implications of the foregoing for Sharif Husseins' caliphate ambitions are obvious, the issue was little discussed during the early months of the Revolt. It would appear that the subject had become something of an embarrassment which merely served to highlight the shortcomings of British policy and, more to the point, of British policy makers, advisers and intelligence operatives.

The War Office, although still enthusiastic about the meagre successes of the Revolt, now feared 'that [the Sharif's] triumphs might have made him a little "previous" with regard to the

---

[101] FO 882 Vol II, AP 16/2, Report by Hogarth, [undated but probably completed sometime between late March and the outbreak of the Revolt].
[102] SAD WP 138/3/31-32, Letter from Wingate, Erkowit, to Murray, 4 July 1916.
[103] SAD WP 160/1/68-9, 'Very Private' Letter from Clayton, General Staff HQ, Savoy Hotel, Cairo, to Wingate, 20 July 1916.
[104] SAD WP 201/3/106-109, Letter from Wingate to Clayton, Cairo, 30 July 1916.

Khalifate.'[105] They remained hopeful that the Sharif would have the sense to bide his time. In certain quarters, then, there was still a desire to see the Sharif attain the caliphate *eventually*, however, whereas before, their tendency might have been to act to hasten such an outcome, now they were more inclined to intervene in order to postpone the very same.

Just as in the past, the enthusiasts of the 'Cairo scheme' had always resorted to defending their policy by resort to the 'Islamic bogey' when hard pressed, so they would again when it appeared to fail in practice. By the end of September, even Clayton, one of the foremost advocates of the Sharifian policy, was reduced to upholding the Revolt in the most defensive and negative terms. In a secret note he wrote that,

> the main factor that recommended the Sherif's revolt was that, whether it succeeded or failed, our military commitment would be small and we should be able to counteract, *by diplomacy alone*, the evil effects in eastern eyes upon British prestige caused by the evacuation of Sinai, the retreat from Ctesiphon, the retirement from Lahej and the evacuation of Gallipoli.
>
> The Sherif's revolt has shattered the solidarity of Islam in that Moslem is against Moslem. It has emphasised the failure of the Jehad and endangered the Khalifat of the Sultan. [emphasis added][106]

Although there is an important truth in Clayton's passing allusion to the economy of such a policy it cannot have been anticipated that direct intervention would be ruled out completely should practical implementation be stalled in the way that it eventually was. Clayton's defence constitutes further evidence that he, among others, had really hoped for something more grand, specifically, an Arab Middle East subject to effective British control and under the nominal unity of a purely spiritual caliphate in Mecca.

7.45 Tribalism: The Critical Factor

Although the Arab Bureau did not undertake anything like a systematic investigation into the obvious failings of the policy they had previously endorsed, there followed a rather haphazard

---

[105] SAD WP 139/2/34-35, Letter from General Callwell, War Office, to Wingate, 7 August 1916.
[106] SAD WP 140/8/51-2, Secret note by General Clayton on the effect of the collapse of the Sharif, 28 September [1916].

analysis of events in which certain explanations were forthcoming. Though this analysis was not rigorous by the standards of modern-day social science, it did produce, in an *ad hoc* fashion, certain consistent conclusions which rested on an appreciation of the Sharif's capacities in the context of the social and cultural milieu in which he operated. Some of the views expressed at this time reflected a tacit acknowledgment by British officials in Cairo that their attempts to re-organise Arabia on behalf of their imperial superiors had ultimately come up against certain inherent limits.[107] These were, specifically, the social forces they had set out to manipulate, and the structurally intrinsic (in)aptitude of the élites with whom they had chosen to collaborate.

Within two months of the outbreak of the Revolt it was reported that the Syrians would be unable to join the Revolt due to their lack of organisation and general condition of privation.[108] The Arab Bureau then received a report from one of their informants, one Dimitri Bey, who had visited the Hijaz in early August, which told them that neither Ibn Sa'ud, Ibn Rashid nor Imam Yahya were showing much inclination to join forces with, or under, Sharif Husayn.[109] An even more pessimistic assessment was provided in late August by an unnamed Arab Bureau informant[110] who had interviewed Rashid Rida. He wrote that, even if the Sharif became independent of the Turks and was supported by the rulers of Najd and 'Asir, there was no capacity for effective government in the Hijaz on which the Caliphate could depend, since,

> the Sherif cannot be the real independent king whom the Arabs demand, neither will he be the renewer of the Khilafat of Islam which all the Moslems guard as independent; because to be independent in temporal government [the] Khilafat involves the possession of wealth and strength.

---

[107] As will emerge in the Conclusion, this is not to argue that such limits are absolute since the structures which determine them are, under certain circumstances, capable of being transformed.
[108] CAB 37/153/26, Papers submitted for the use of the Cabinet, August, 1916, including a note by Sykes, 8 August 1916.
[109] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/38, Statement by Dimitri Bey on his visit to Jeddah and Yanbo between 30 July and 17 August 1916. Dimitri Bey had worked as a translator for Clayton from early 1915, having been recommended by Wingate; in particular he had gained the trust of Rashid Ridha and translated his letters and expositions for the Residency.
[110] This may well have been Ibrahim Dimitri who had recently been in the Hijaz. See Note 109, above.

The writer then asked, rhetorically: 'Are these two factors found in the Hejaz?'[111] While the British authorities in Cairo may not have regarded Rashid Rida as a suitable partner in their schemes on account of his forthright manner and independent attitude, for the very same reasons they respected the veracity of his views. In fact the Shaykh's assessment would prove more accurate than anything so far produced by the hive of 'experts' residing in the Savoy Hotel, Cairo.

The monetary expense of the Sharifian revolt has already been emphasised. However, it was not until September 1916 that it was fully appreciated at the Arab Bureau that the disproportionate cost was an inescapable consequence of the nature of the social structures within which the Sharif operated.[112] The fact that Sharif Husayn was entirely dependent upon the loyalty of the tribes of western Arabia was significant in two ways. It was soon realised that his supposed spiritual standing counted for little in its own right, neither did it serve to enhance his prestige as a secular political leader. The other side of the coin, however, was that with unlimited financial backing, the Sharif might purchase the allegiance, or neutrality, of almost any tribal chieftain less endowed than himself.[113]

From this point on, most intelligence reports on the progress of the Revolt concentrated on tribal affairs with detailed accounts of which tribes and chieftains had joined the Sharif, those that were actively opposing him, those that remained neutral, those that were estimated unlikely to support him in the future, and those who might be persuaded to switch allegiance and under what circumstances. A memorandum entitled 'Summary of the Arab situation' drafted by Sykes in late August was one such report. In it he contrasted the 'progressive educated Arabs of Syria' who were the originators of the Arab movement, and 'the courageous and disorderly elements of Arabia.'[114] The success of the Revolt from a British point of view was now quantified in terms of how much Turkish military manpower it

---

[111] FO 882 Vol. II, AP 16/5, 'The Opinion of the Elect on the Arab Question,' by Sheikh Seyyid Rashid Ridha, August 29, 1916.
[112] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/43, Young, British Consulate, Jeddah, to the Director of the Arab Bureau, 21 September 1916.
[113] One should be wary of applying the term 'backward' to the purchasing of the allegiance of one sovereign unit by another since this is precisely what occurs routinely, for example, between the powerful and less powerful member states of the United Nations in the run-up to voting on important resolutions.

absorbed rather than in relation to the grand vision upon which British support had once rested. Another such report, probably by Lawrence, which analysed the disposition of the tribes in the utmost detail was almost iconoclastic in its conclusions. The report stated:

> the idea of an Arab nation or Arab state is foreign to the Arab mind. They are in a pre-nationalist sate of political existence, their religion and past history has familiarised them with the ideas of an Arab aristocracy of ancient lineage, and of a Theocratic Empire, but the idea of a State with fixed laws and boundaries is unknown to them. The bonds of unity among Arabs are language, literature, and pride of blood. The causes of dis-union are jealousy, fickleness, and suspicion.

The report finished: 'the Arab movement would contribute to improve a good situation, but would not help a bad one.'[115]

In October Lawrence submitted another report to the Arab Bureau which gave a detailed assessment of Sharifian politics and further emphasised how the loyalty of the tribes was maintained purely by the payment of cash or gold which took up the greater part of Husayn's budget. As if to emphasise the utter dependence of the Sharif's campaign on Britain, he also pointed out that over ninety percent of Husayn's income was derived from the British subvention. Significantly, the report contained a thoroughgoing account of the Sharif's 'backwardness,' the very factor, it has been argued here, which had once seemed attractive insofar as it would ensure his dependence on Britain and, hopefully, stem the emergence of mass political mobilisation in Arabia. Importantly, Lawrence was unable to identify the slightest capacity for government nor locate the kernel of any future administration, even within the Hijaz. He described Husayn's rule as 'patriarchal' and related how the operative legal system had 'regressed' from the Ottoman civil code to the shari'a and tribal law. Although the Sharif had enhanced the authority of the tribal shaykhs as intermediaries this was accompanied by the adverse consequence that 'within the tribe ... their nominal autocracy, [was] so hedged about by tribal opinion and custom as to be little more than general assent in practice.' Moreover, this was all within the context of a general 'opposition between town and country.'[116]

---

[114] Sledmere Papers, DDSY(2)/11 20, 'Summary of the Arab Situation' by Sykes, 30 August 1916. See also, Ch.6, n.63.
[115] Sledmere Papers, DDSY(2)/4 112, 'A Paper on the Arab Situation,' author not given, 11 September 1916.
[116] FO 882 Vol. V, HRG 16/57, Report by T. E. Lawrence, 27 October 1916.

A subsequent report by Lawrence was even starker in its implications. He surmised that the real objection to a landing of Allied troops in the Hijaz was not religious. According to Lawrence the tribes were intensely suspicious of foreign interference and 'the landing of a considerable foreign force ... would undoubtedly alarm them and might well result in the return of many tribesmen to their tents, in which case we shall have contributed to the very result which we wish to avoid.' The report also pointed out what had not been understood before: specifically that the towns of the Hijaz did not support the Sharif since, whereas they consisted of 'agglomerations of foreign settlers,' his movement was purely Arab. The report ended with: 'I do not think that anyone who has examined the Hejaz lately will contest that the Sherif's strengths lies only amongst the tribes: and it follows that when the tribes go over to the Turks there is no more "Sherif's movement".'[117]

Very quickly such notions became common currency amongst the British Middle Eastern political intelligence community. Towards the end of 1916, George Lloyd MP, on service with the Arab Bureau, reported that 'the Hejaz revolt is essentially a tribal movement and the Shereef a tribal chief who has thrown in his lot quite definitively with the tribesmen. With them he stands or falls.' Consequently, Lloyd was against direct military intervention unless it was judged likely to produce a decisively positive effect on tribal morale. He drew the unfortunate conclusion that 'this leaves us very powerless to take any very satisfactory part in the fortunes of the campaign and leaves us in a situation in which as spectators of many a lost opportunity, many a strategical mistake and many a tactical timidity, we may feel irritation and impatience considering all the material help which we are rendering to the Arab cause.'[118]

Perhaps the most telling episode of the Revolt, in which the lack of co-ordination between India and Cairo resulted in the embarrassment of all parties concerned, was the 'Qunfidhah incident.' The coastal town of Qunfidhah lay at the southernmost limit of the territory within which the inhabitants' allegiance was claimed by the Sharif, while at the same time the town bore a similar relationship to al-Idrisi of 'Asir. It also happened that 'Asir, along with Yemen

---

[117] FO 882 Vol. V, HRG 16/66, Precis of a report by T. E. Lawrence on the Arab Revolt, 17 November 1916.
[118] FO 882 Vol. VI, HRG 18/85, Report by George Lloyd MP on 'Questions concerning the Hedjaz Revolt,' 22 December 1916.

had remained the responsibility of the Government of India, much as liaison with the Sharif was undertaken from Cairo. In late June, the Red Sea patrol operated by India decided to bombard Qunfidhah in order to help remove the Turks. Unfortunately for the Sharif, the patrol then facilitated al-Idrisi's capture of the town by landing his tribesmen there, where, much to the consternation of both the Sharif and the Arab Bureau, 'British officers accompanied them, presiding over the raising of the 'Asiri banner over the Turkish fort.' To make matters worse, when Husayn looked like mounting an attack, the British naval force 'threatened to intervene on the Idrisi's behalf.' The issue was only resolved (after a fashion) on 7 August when al-Idrisi was given three days to evacuate in favour of the Sharif's occupation.[119]

Apart from reflecting the obvious lack of coordination between India, London and the Arab Bureau, which had evidently not been resolved by the formation of the latter, this incident (according to them) had permanently soured the relations between the Sharif and al-Idrisi.[120] In more general terms, however, the fiasco at Qunfidhah illustrated the Sharif's marked incapacity for extending allegiances within the Arabian peninsular. In the words of Bruce Westrate, 'dangerous foundations had been laid in this reckless emphasis on marshaling as much tribal force as possible for use against the Turks, without regard to the compatibility of Britain's Arabian allies.'[121] In particular Husayn never managed to gain the support of Ibn Sa'ud and the tribes under him. No doubt this was not helped by India's aid to the latter. This, it may be pointed out, need not have happened at all, had the British in Cairo been able to support the Sharif more directly. Consequently, it is argued once again, in accordance with one of the main tenets of this thesis, that the *immediate* cause of the failure of Britain's Sharifian scheme was its central and abiding contradiction. Specifically, that the principle reason for Britain's not being able to bolster Husayn against his Arabian opponents had been the very reason for their supporting him in the first place. However, as the Arab Bureau belatedly discovered, the Sharif's supposed standing throughout Islam counted for little within the tribal milieu which proved to be the only real source of his power available to him.

---

[119] Westrate, 1992, pp. 96-7.
[120] PRO Arab Bureau Papers, FO 882 HRG 16/65, 'Summary of Historical Documents from outbreak of War between Great Britain and Turkey 1914 to the outbreak of the revolt of the Sherif of Mecca in June 1916,' Arab Bureau, Cairo, 29 November 1916.

7.5 The Turning Point: Husayn's Proclamation of Kingship

It has already been stated that although, according to 'official' British policy, the future of the caliphate was a matter for Muslims alone to decide, those in Cairo and Khartoum most closely associated with its implementation were rather less disinterested than this would suggest. They considered Sharif Husayn's claim merely to have been deferred, it was hoped, only until he was better placed to exercise his eligibility. However, notwithstanding the early failings of the Revolt, or, conceivably, because of them, in late October 1916 Husayn decided to declare himself 'King of the Arabs.' It was this occasion, more than the early setbacks experienced by the Sharif's rebellion, which, due to the immediate international ramifications, induced an even more acute re-examination of British attitudes towards Husayn's claim to the caliphate. Furthermore, since this scrutiny of policy now involved the formal recognition of a new sovereign leader, it took place, not only within the community of local enthusiasts but at the highest levels of government and, therefore, came to be of greater consequence for Middle Eastern policy as a whole.

The first indication that Husayn still intended to proclaim himself king in anticipation of his assumption of the caliphate came within a month of the opening of the Revolt[122] though, significantly, this would only happen after he had secured a suitable foundation from which to make such a leap. There were even rumours reported to the Foreign Office emanating from Egyptian and Turkish exiles in Berne that the Sharif was about to proclaim himself caliph at the forthcoming Bairam festival though these were not treated seriously.[123] Either eventuality would have tested the sincerity of Britain's official 'hands-off' policy. However, an Arab Bureau report drafted in mid-September concluded that the Sharif was disinclined to change his title to 'King of the Arabs.' According to the report the fact that he continued to treat Ibn Rashid as an independent chief showed that he realised the futility of such a scheme at

---

[121] Westrate, 1992, p. 95.
[122] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/31, Cornwallis to the Director of the Arab Bureau, 8 July 1916.
[123] FO 371/2778 Political Tukey (War) files 91530-151566 1916 147987, Secret Report from Berne, 24 July 1916, B. 00812.

present.[124] Certainly, there had been no suggestion that such a move on Husayn's part was imminent.

One of Husayn's earliest proclamations in which he defended his rebellion was addressed to 'all our brother Moslems' and was, as might have been expected, couched in religious terminology. This document was judiciously ambiguous since it legitimised the Revolt in terms of the need to save the caliphate from the ruinous influence of the CUP. The ambiguity lay in the concern expressed over the CUP's curtailment of the Sultan's powers in so far as this 'prevented him from looking after the interests of Islam' and signified 'the destruction of the Khalifate conditions which all Muslims demand.' This could have signaled either that the Sharif wished to restore the institution of the caliphate proper to the Sultan, or that he intended to remove it from him personally. This indeterminacy was sustained throughout the proclamation which declared: 'The only aim intended is to cause victory for the religion of Islam and to exalt the Moslem's state based on the principles of the Mohammedan law to which we shall now return.' The only hint of impending kingship which might have been implied by, and reasonably inferred from, the proclamation, came in the statement that, 'The Country [Hijaz] is actually independent and is entirely separated from the country which is still under the suzerainty of the enemy (The Union and Progress Committee) it is an absolute independence and nothing cannot be interfered with by any foreign country or power.'[125] However, since the proclamation combined Islamic and Arab-nationalist language and used the former to justify Husayn's assertion of independence[126] it might also have been read as a challenge to the Ottoman caliphate itself rather than simply as an appeal for reform.

News that both the public and 'ulama of the Hijaz had declared Husayn 'the king of the Arab nation' was received with dismay in Cairo and London. The message, which had been sent by the Sharif's son, 'Abdullah, in his capacity as 'Minister of Foreign Affairs,' announced that Husayn 'will be recognised as the religious head until the Moslems are of one opinion concerning the Islamic Caliphate.' While passing on the news from Jiddah, Wilson asked

---

[124] FO 882 Vol. 8, IS 16/7, Arbur, The Residency, 11 September 1916.
[125] FO 882 Vol. IV, HRG 16/30, Appendix III, Translation of a document headed 'This is a Copy of Our Proclamation to all our Brother Moslems,' signed by the Sharif of Mecca, '25 Shabaan 1334' [26 June 1916].
[126] Tauber, 1993, p. 82.

Wingate to establish whether 'H.M.Govt. [would] recognise this somewhat premature regal dignity.'[127] McMahon, who received the message simultaneously, immediately informed India and the Foreign Office.[128]

During the days which followed, Cairo would receive several explanations from 'Abdullah for the apparent suddenness of the Sharif's action. In the first, a 'telephone message' delivered to Wilson in Jiddah on 1 November, 'Abdullah argued that his father's declaration was necessary in order to display to the Muslim world the independence of the Hijaz, not only from Turkey but above all from Britain. The first reason given by 'Abdullah was that because Britain feared Muslims would suspect her of occupying the Holy Places, she had felt unable to aid the Arab cause by military means thus implying that once the Hijaz had declared its independence without first consulting Britain such aid might now be forthcoming. Another reason given was that, 'because the pulpits of Mecca and Hejaz have the supremacy over all pulpits of the world, i.e. when they mention anyone as the Caliph all the people must recognise him.'[129] Again, the argument was not explicit, though there was the clear implication that Husayn's kingship was a precursor to him being proclaimed caliph. It may deduced from what followed that the Sharif felt confident in this regard, since his agent in Cairo reported that 'Abdullah had already informed 'all Foreign Ministers of Allies & neutral Powers' of Husayn's declaration of independence, and had told them that, 'as to the Caliphate, there will follow whatever decision Moslems agree upon.'[130]

---

[127] SAD WP 141/2/180, Telegram no. 436 from Wilson, Jeddah, to the Sirdar, 29 October 1916, attaching a telegram from Abdullah. Husayn's declaration of kingship did not occur on either of the *Bairam* festivals as might have been expected (see Note 123, above, with reference to the rumoured proclamation of a new caliphate) but on 1 *Muharram*, new years day AH 1335. It may have been significant that this was the least 'spiritual' of the important dates in the Islamic calendar, being *Hijra*, the day which commemorates the Prophet's departure from Mecca for Medina. Alternatively, it may simply have been the next important date to follow *'Id-al-Adha*, AH 1334.

[128] SAD WP 143/1/23, Telegram no. 953 from McMahon, Cairo to the Sirdar, Khartoum, 1 November 1916; and, FO 141 587 545/15, p. 122, Extract from telegram No. 743 from the High Commissioner to the Foreign Office, forwarding telegram sent by Abdullah to the Sharif's agent in Cairo with regard to his proclamation of kingship, 1 November 1916.

[129] FO 882 Vol. V, HRG 16/59, Telephone message from Emir Abdullah relayed to Cairo by Wilson, Jeddah, 1 November 1916; and copied to Wingate. SAD WP 143/1/36, Copy of telegram W465, Wilson, Jeddah to Sirdar, Khartoum, 1 November 1916.

[130] SAD WP 143/1/23, Copy of telegram No 953, from McMahon, Cairo, to Sirdar, Khartoum, 1 November 1916. The gist of the latter was confirmed by receipt of a translation of a copy of Abdullah's message to Colo. Bremond, head of the French mission in the Hijaz. SAD WP 143/1/62, Copy of telegram no. 960, McMahon, Cairo to Sirdar, Khartoum, 2 November 1916, including a translation of telegram received by Bremond, dated '2nd *Moharram*' [AH 1335] [30 October, 1916].

In a further message relayed to Cairo by Wilson, on 3 November, 'Abdullah offered additional explanations for his father's actions. There was, however, a degree of ambiguity (no doubt intended) regarding the caliphate. Apparently, while the 'ulama of Mecca had already 'decided not to accept the Turkish Caliphate,' the Sharif was only 'King of the Arabs and a religious leader until the Islam will be of one opinion as to the caliphate.'[131] Furthermore, 'Abdullah claimed that the local independence of Ibn Sa'ud, al-Idrisi and the tribes of Arabia was compatible with Husayn's newfound status and that a majority of the shaykhs of these tribes had been present at the declaration itself. To 'Abdullah's justifications were added the 'unofficial reasons' of his deputy, Fu'ad al-Khitab. Though more subtle, these have the appearance of *ad hominem* post-rationalisations intended to appeal to the British. These included the technicality that Husayn's previous title of Amir denoted personal subservience to the Ottoman Sultan. In the same way, allegiance to the Sultan had been implied by the assumption of loyalty to the Sharif *as Amir* on the part of the 'ulama and ashraf.[132]

In a message from the Sharif himself, however, he insisted that 'he had denied the caliphate entirely' and indicated his willingness to publish a book by a well-known Wahhabi proving that there was no caliphate. Perhaps by design, the Sharif's professed attitude mirrored Britain's *formal* disinterest in the future of he caliphate. He maintained that he was '*officially* leaving it to the opinion of those who know all about its regulations until all Moslems choose one to be their Calipha.' [emphasis added] At the same time Husayn was evidently desperate to obtain British approval of his kingship since he wished the High Commissioner to know that he would 'resign from this business'[133] if any misunderstanding with Britain were sustained.

While consulting with the Allies over recognition, the Foreign Office decided immediately to congratulate the Sharif on behalf of His Majesty's Government for which he duly returned his thanks. However, in doing so Husayn took the opportunity to refer to H.M.G. as having 'once

---

[131] FO 882 Vol. V, HRG 16/59, Further message from Abdullah in which he replied to certain question posed by an unnamed correspondent, 3 November 1916.
[132] FO 882 Vol V, HRG 16/63, Document headed 'Reasons for assuming the title,' undated.
[133] Ibid. Transcript of a telephone message from the Sharif, 3 November 1916.

addressed him as Caliph' which the Foreign Office quickly denied, though without taking the matter up with the new king. A week later McMahon telegraphed the Foreign Office, India and the Sudan confirming that there was no record of the Sharif have ever having been addressed as caliph by H.M.G. or anyone else.[134]

Although Cairo and the Foreign Office expressed surprise at Husayn's declaration of kingship, it transpired that an account of a meeting between Storrs and 'Abdullah which had taken place on 17 October, only twelve days before the Sharif's assumption of kingship, had, in fact, indicated that some formal enhancement of the Sharif's status was imminent. The report recorded that 'Abdullah had suggested that his father might declare himself Amir al-Mu'minin (commander of the faithful), and that this be publicly recognised by Britain. Storrs took this as a veiled attempt to ascertain Britain's current attitude to Husayn's assumption of the caliphate. He responded by disabusing 'Abdullah of any notion that H.M.G. could conceivably 'proclaim as Khalif our ally the Sherif before he had been accepted as such by any section of Islam – before even, so far as we had heard, by the people of his own Hejaz.' In particular, Storrs anticipated hostility from Ibn Sa'ud, al-Idrisi and the Imam. From this report the Foreign Office drew the conclusion that the Sharif had inferred from the fact that 'Abdullah had 'been furnished with funds to win over Arab notables to the Sherif's cause ... that H.M.G.'s repeated *public* announcements regarding the Caliphate were not to be taken too seriously.' [emphasis added][135] It has been concluded in earlier chapters of this thesis that Britain's 'official' policy was simply that. Storrs' indignation, therefore, was as inexcusable as the Sharif's cynicism was justified. Nevertheless, Storrs' attitude, which was typical of his contemporaries, is indicative of a fundamental change of approach towards the caliphate – an actualisation of the 'official' policy – consequential to the early failings of the Arab Revolt.

During the six weeks following the proclamation a series of lengthy and involved discussions took place among British officials and statesmen about the precise nature and extent of the recognition which should be accorded Husayn's kingship. Although Clayton was of the view that the coronation was 'a great nuisance' he was the most sympathetic insofar as he purported

---

[134] SAD WP 143/2/27, Copy of telegram no. 984 from McMahon, Cairo, to Sirdar, Foreign Office, and India, 8 November 1916.
[135] Ibid. FO no. 880, 3 November 1916.

to mind not for 'our sake' but because it was likely to injure the Sharif's cause beyond the Hijaz. All that remained to be done, Clayton wrote, was 'to try to check him from any stupid nonsense in regard to the Khalifate.'[136] The general concern as expressed by Hogarth in the Arab Bulletin was not with Husayn's kingship *per se* but with the fact that he was 'very far from being in a position to substantiate his pretension.'[137] It was such views which informed the ensuing deliberations concerning the caliphate.

7.6 The Caliphate Idea Brought under Further Scrutiny

Although the *underlying* concern was with a premature bid on the part of the Sharif of Mecca for what was assumed to be the most revered office within Islam, the discussions over Husayn's kingship did not for the most part refer explicitly to the matter of the caliphate. However, there was concern over the implications for the caliphate to the extent that these were believed to impinge on British interests in the region and throughout the Muslim world. Significantly for this thesis these discussions illustrate the true nature of British intentions and lay open their hopes of creating an essentially insubstantial or 'spiritual' caliphate which would not encroach upon the local sovereign claims of other Arabian chiefs nor impair British external control over this area. The option of multilateral, or more accurately multi-bilateral, collaboration must have seemed ever more attractive in the light of the failure of the Arab Revolt.

Initially, in proposing the form of a Foreign Office reply to Wilson, who had requested advice on responding to Husayn's proclamation, the Egyptian High Commissioner suggested that publication of his kingship should be restricted to the Hijaz. Specifically, McMahon wished to restrict recognition of Husayn to his capacity as 'ruler of the Hejaz and champion of the Arab people against Turkish oppression.' It is worthy of note that while the first half of this

[136] SAD CP 693/10/75-6, Letter from Clayton to Wilson, 9 November 1916.

designation is restrictive in relation to territory, the second is limited in relation to time and function, since the revolt against the Turks would, presumably, be finite in duration. The reason given by McMahon for such a circumscription was that publication of Husayn's kingship outside the Hijaz might 'render [even] the assistance now given to the Sherif for the purpose of securing Arab independence open to the charge of violation of their guarantee not to interfere with Moslem religious affairs.'[138] Nevertheless, although McMahon felt that since Husayn had not consulted Britain before declaring himself king they would be justified in withholding recognition, it was considered already too late to check publication of his proclamation.[139] Wingate agreed, as he was keen not to withhold formal recognition of a *fait accompli* but preferred the title 'King of Arabs in Hejaz' on the grounds that 'King of the Arab Nation' would violate the independence of other chiefs.[140] The Sirdar's preference was in turn rejected by McMahon for fear that it would be shortened to 'King of Arabs.'[141]

Any satisfaction which might have been felt within the British camp that the affair had been successfully managed was abruptly halted by the alarming news that the French foreign ministry had advocated the appellation 'King of the Holy Places.' They had done so, apparently, for the agreeable reason that such a designation 'while likely to satisfy Sherif and increase his prestige, [would] not open up future claims to extended territorial or national sovereignty, and [would] not offend other chiefs of Arabian Peninsula.'[142] The Arab Bureau's reply to the Foreign Office concerning this suggestion is an illustration of the differential thresholds of discomfiture affecting Britain and France, respectively. Given the relative lack of interest shown in the caliphate by the Muslim inhabitants of France's colonies she was correspondingly less concerned by the religious implications of any of Husayn's possible titles. While concurring with French reasoning the Bureau deprecated their suggestion since 'the Title may nevertheless be open to objection on the ground that a religious as distinct from

---

[137] Fromkin, 1991, p. 222, quoting from Arab Bulletin, issue No. 29, 8 November 1916.
[138] FO 882, Vol. V, HRG 16/64, Document headed 'Attitude of Great Britain and France to the Sherif's proclamation of the assumption of the title "Malik el Bilad el Arabia",' covering a series of telegrams dated 31 October to 13 December 1916, and, Telegram No. 947, from High Commissioner to Foreign Office and Sirdar, 31 October 1916.
[139] Ibid. Telegram No. 961, from High Commissioner to Sirdar, 2 November 1916.
[140] Ibid. Telegram No. 629, from Sirdar to High Commissioner, 2 November 1916.
[141] Ibid. Telegram No. 963, from High Commissioner to Foreign Office and Sirdar, 3 November 1916.
[142] Ibid. Telegram No. 108, from Sirdar to Arbur, 2 December 1916, with reference to (French) despatch no. 240161, M. Paul Cambon to Lord Grey of Falloden, 27 November 1916.

a territorial significance could be given to it' and thought 'King of Arabs in Hejaz' much 'safer.'[143] On being told of such reservations concerning his assumption of the title 'King of the Arabs,' Husayn declared to al-Faruqi, now his agent in Cairo, somewhat prophetically, that the attitude of his imperial allies would result in the ultimate failure of his and their combined efforts.[144]

The Indian Government, as might be expected, also found fault with the French preference but were more explicit in their reasoning 'strongly deprecat[ing] the French proposal of "Malek el Haramein" as connoting a definite claim to the caliphate.' India made their own suggestion of 'King of the Arabs in the Hejaz and its dependencies.' This was supported by the argument that, by avoiding 'specific territorial assurances,'[145] it did not preclude future territorial aggrandisement on the part of the Sharif.

Eventually, High Commissioner McMahon prevailed with his 'King of Hejaz' and the Foreign Office quickly secured the agreement of France and Russia on this basis. On 10 December 1916 both Britain and France formally recognised Sharif Husayn as 'King of Hejaz.' It had been decided to inform him also of their view that the title he had already assumed was 'not territorial but national' and would be a contradiction of his previous undertaking to acknowledge the rule of Ibn Sa'ud and al-Idrisi in their respective countries. Though the despatch communicating the recognition emphasised that the Allies regarded Husayn as 'titular head of the Arab peoples in their revolt against Turkish misrule' the Allies could not accept 'any sovereign title which might provoke disunion among the Arabs at the present moment.' Though the wording was subtle, the occasion of this formal recognition was taken as an opportunity to urge a definite deferral of any claim to the caliphate which Husayn might make. The High Commissioner wrote on behalf of His Majesty's Government:

> [His Majesty's Government] note[s] that Your Highness has made no claim to the Khalifate and that it is to be kept absolutely for the Mohammedan world to decide at a later date who is to fill this exalted position.

---

[143] Ibid. Draft of Arab Bureau reply to Foreign Office via the High Commissioner concerning Telegram No. 108 (Note 142, above).
[144] Ibid. Extract of cipher message no. 57 from Fuad el Khatib to Faruki, conveying the Sharif's views regarding the attitude of the British and French, 22 November 1916.
[145] Ibid. Telegram No. 9825 from Foreign Office, Delhi to Secretary of State for India, 8 December 1916.

> HMG entirely agree with the wisdom of this course, as it is undoubtedly in Your Highness' own interests that this important question should be left open till the end of the war.[146]

In this way Britain's official policy was for the first time explicitly reiterated *and*, in essence, violated in the same sentence. The hypocrisy and self-contradiction on Britain's part lies in the foisting of her policy towards Islam upon a Muslim, it being a rank absurdity for a Christian power to insist that a Muslim pretender to the caliphate leave the matter to Muslims alone! This proclamation, then, marks a decisive point in the history of the relationship between Britain and the restoration of an Arab caliphate and constitutes a fulmination of the central contradiction of Britain's Sharifian policy and the 'Cairo scheme.' This aporia,[147] besides precluding Britain from providing substantial and effective military backing for their ally, would, ironically, contribute towards *preventing* the Sharif from securing the caliphate, his outstanding eligibility for which was the very reason for their supporting him in the first instance. Any advantage that Sharif Husayn might have gleaned from his collaboration with a Christian imperial power, was, *ipso facto*, nullified. The final irony of this entire episode was that on receiving the qualified, and somewhat circumscribed, recognition of his new title, the result of lengthy deliberation across three continents, Husayn declared to the British and French missions in the Hijaz that 'he attached no importance to titles.'[148]

---

[146] Ibid. Remainder of Arab Bureau document reproducing the above correspondence. Note that reference to the caliphate was included after it had been suggested by Wilson who feared that Abdullah 'may, in an evil moment persuade the Sherif to declare himself Caliph of Islam.' FO 371/2490 242002, Covering letter no. 328 from McMahon, The Residency, Cairo to Grey, 21 November 1916, enclosing dispatch no. 14 from Wilson, Jeddah to Lord Chelmsford [Viceroy of India from April 1916], 5 November 1916.

[147] A critical term from deconstructive literary theory denoting 'a final impasse or paradox: a point at which a text's self-contradictory meanings can no longer be resolved, or at which the text undermines its own most fundamental presuppositions.' Baldick, 1990, pp. 14-15.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with what, in retrospect, may be seen as the most crucial period in British engagement with the idea of a revived Arab caliphate. This originally nebulous notion which by the end of 1915 had coalesced into Britain's Sharifian policy continued to depend on the caliphate idea for its internal coherence. Nineteen-sixteen was the year when theory was put into practice. This was made all the more urgent by the abandonment of the 'forward option.' After Gallipoli and Kut, the Easter Rising in Ireland and a standstill on the Western Front, there was, undoubtedly, a loss of confidence at the highest reaches of the imperial government. Regardless of the precise reasons for the 'final' rejection of a landing at Alexandretta the need for a way forward in the Middle East, which was vicarious in execution, and whose underpinning was 'ideological' rather than military, became ever more acute.

There were, however, certain preliminaries. One of these was a degree of institutional and departmental co-ordination on the British side which would both reflect the quality of unity sought in Arabia, and engender the harmony of purpose, and direction of collaborative endeavour, required to achieve that end. The creation of the Arab Bureau may well have had the effect of prolonging the autonomy of the caliphate idea in British thinking to the extent that its currency *as an idea* outlived any serious possibility of its being realised. Certainly, the success of the 'Cairo scheme' (in its more grandiose versions) became the *raison d'être* of the Bureau according to which its performance tended to be measured. However, as the main part of the conclusion to this chapter indicates, this effect should not be overstated.

It had long been understood in Cairo and London that another prerequisite for the commencement of the Sharif's revolt as the practical kernel of the scheme as it had evolved in theory, was an understanding with Britain's main wartime and imperial ally, France. Notwithstanding the eventual disposition of the Middle East after the 1914-18 war, it has been shown conclusively that for those directly engaged in its negotiation on the British side, the Sykes-Picot agreement was ancillary to the understanding reached between McMahon and

---

[148] FO 882, Vol. V, HRG 16/64. See Note 138, above.

Husayn during 1915. Alternatively, the Sharifian policy was the cornerstone of an overall policy in relation to which Sykes-Picot was an embellishment. The latter did not, as is frequently supposed, emerge as a counter-proposal.

The remainder of this chapter was concerned with the preparation for, and conduct of, the Arab Revolt in its early stages, and the effect this had on Britain's attitude to the issue of the caliphate. In assessing the reappraisal which took place (with greater purpose following the proclamation of Sharif Husayn as 'King of the Arabs') it is necessary to return to what have been described here as the positive and negative sources of Britain's engagement with the idea of a revived Arab caliphate. These were, respectively, the idea of Britain's ruling over a nominally united and independent Arabia under an Arab caliph, and the fear of political pan-Islam and the prospect of an anti-British jihad inspired by an opposing imperial power. In brief, the early failure of the Arab Revolt disclosed the fact that *in practice* the second of these rendered the first impossible. In other words, Britain's trepidation concerning the imagined sanctions of political pan-Islam made it impossible to aid the Sharif in a manner likely to enhance his prestige and, consequently, his claim to the caliphate. Moreover, the fine balance between dependence and capacity required of a collaborative partner was absent in this particular relationship with the consequence that interest in the Revolt was rapidly reduced to the issue of *British* standing among Arabs and *British* prestige in the Muslim world.

Furthermore, the negative motivation for Britain's accord with Sharif Husayn, in respect of which his capacity as the Sharif of Mecca had been the critical factor, was almost completely negated in the early stages of the Revolt. Simply stated, there had been neither a German-Turkish inspired jihad against the Sharif's rebellion nor a spontaneous uprising in support of it, it being pertinent that the proclamation issued by Husayn at the inception of the Revolt declared it to be for the good of Islam. With respect to a question raised earlier,[149] the absence of a jihad was less to do with the failure of the Turks to retain the Holy Places than with its being a concomitant of Arabian tribal socio-economics. Neither can it be supposed that the Sharif's caution in not explicitly rejecting the Ottoman caliphate was the determining factor in this. In this regard, Bruce Westrate concludes:

---

[149] See Notes 10, 61 & 106, above.

> The mere fact of the revolt itself did much to discredit the notion that the influence of the present caliph was as ubiquitous and commanding as heretofore assumed. Not only had his call to jihad been for the most part ignored by substantial segments of the Arab community, but now the most sacred region of Islam was in open rebellion. Even though London had always taken the line that the caliphate was a matter for Muslims to settle, *subsequent* events rendered the question academic.[150]

In other words, through the experience of the Revolt, political pan-Islam was shown to be rather less of a 'bogey' than had once been supposed. It will be recalled that before and during the early months of the war, British imperialists had viewed Islam as a potential material force capable of threatening the integrity of the Empire. Although they had set out, with a good measure of misdirected finesse, to nullify or subvert this force, the experience of the Arab rebellion would make Britain less timid in her dealings with Islam thereafter. Nevertheless, the reappraisal was tentative and Britain was not sufficiently emboldened to disregard the Islamic factor altogether, since the sanctity of the Holy Places continued to be of *genuine* religious and political concern throughout the more socially developed parts of the Muslim world.

Finally, reports concerning the conduct of the Revolt in its early stages revealed the underlying reason for the disappointing response of the people of the Hijaz and elsewhere to the Sharif's proclamation of a revolt. The factor which emerged as the determinant one in securing the active allegiance of local tribes in the rebellion against the Turks was a straightforwardly material one: that of cash! The *modus operandi* of tribal Arabia undermined both the positive and negative reasons for Britain's collaboration with Sharif Husayn. Ironically, Britain had, in part, been attracted to the more 'backward' sections of the Arab polity due to the absence of mass politics. However, it was the lack of politics, as such, which helped ensure the early frustration of the Revolt. It soon became evident that the tribes of the Hijaz were no more stirred by the idea of an anti-imperial jihad than they were compelled to rally in support of Husayn's bid to rule Arabia on account of his supposed standing within Islam.

---

[150] Westrate, 1992, p. 145.

CHAPTER 8: The End of the War, the Peace Process, and the Abolition of the Caliphate

8.0 Introduction

It has been established in Chapter 7 that by the end of 1916 the precise conduct of the Arab Revolt, the inherent limits of its social-structural context, and the internal contradictions of the British conception of Arabia nominally unified under an Arab caliph, had set in motion a comprehensive reappraisal of British, Middle Eastern political strategy. This reappraisal continued throughout the remaining two years of the war and thereafter. Within six years of the final armistice the Ottoman Caliphate, along with the Ottoman Empire, was finally abolished - and is yet to replaced by anything comparable within the 'Muslim world.' However, at no precise point did the British make a clear or absolutely irrevocable decision not to endorse, openly or clandestinely, an alternative Arab caliphate. Although the central arguments of this thesis have already been made, and the necessary explanations provided in the terms set out in the Introduction, Britain's attitude towards King Husayn's belated pretensions to the caliphate confirm the conclusions of the preceding chapter regarding the underlying reasons for Britain's abandonment of him. Of greater significance however, is Britain's conduct towards Turkey in the diplomatic field during the post-war peace process in which it is revealed that the *sine qua non* of Britain's policy towards Islam (the subject of Chapter 4) was still operative.

That the final historiographical chapter of this thesis should begin at the end of 1916 is in no way a matter of calendrical convenience since December 1916 saw both a reversal (in military terms at least) of British misfortune in the Middle East,[1] and a change of government at home.

---

[1] For example, General Maude began the Tigris offensive in December, 1916, Kut was retaken in February, 1918 to be followed by Baghdad in March. Similarly the Palestine campaign was begun in December 1916. Although Beersheba, Gaza, Jaffa and Jerusalem were not taken until the final quarter of 1917, and the remainder of

Conventionally, it has frequently been argued that the latter resulted in a *fundamental* transformation from a 'pro-Arab' to a 'pro-Jewish' disposition towards the region on account of the personal proclivities of the incumbents of the new administration. The presumption of these mutually exclusive categories is not conducive to answering the questions set out in the Introduction, since they are properly the *explanandum* rather than the *explanans* of the investigation at hand. Rather, it will be maintained here that the change of government was the occasion for an intensification of the reappraisal which was already under way, now pursued by imperial servants with less of a personal investment in the original vision. In any case, where there was a good deal of continuity, as in the case of Sir Mark Sykes, it has already been emphasised that his attitude to all potential subjects of empire, including Arabs and Jews, was governed by the consistent, necessary and enduring logic of imperial collaboration.[2] On the other hand, a previously steadfast Sharifian visionary such as Wingate, now operating much closer to the centre of responsibility, simply chose to toe the 'new line.'

8.1 The Last Two Years of the War

8.11 The Caliphate Issue: Towards a New Consensus

Lloyd George who became Prime Minister on 7 December 1916 created a new War Cabinet in which he relied heavily on the services and imperialist vision of Viscount Milner, minister without portfolio. Milner in turn relied on three men in whom he had particular confidence, two of these, his parliamentary secretary, William Ormsby-Gore, and Sir Mark Sykes, each with special responsibilities for the Middle East, he had had placed within the cabinet secretariat under Maurice Hankey. Although Ormsby-Gore's imperial background had been in India he was appointed to work closely with the Arab Bureau.[3] One of his earliest

---

Palestine and the Syria hinterland were not occupied until late 1918, there were no major setbacks in the Middle East for Britain after December, 1916.

[2] This is not at odds with the fact that the War Cabinet was 'converted' to Zionism in the spring of 1917.

[3] Fromkin, 1991, pp, 234-5.

contributions was a lengthy report on the caliphate in which the author set out to correct certain 'errors' of thought.

Though not the first to do so, Ormsby-Gore's 'note on the Khalifate' identified the origin of the current European view of the Islamic caliphate. The defining passage read as follows:

> It is was not until the last century that the Khalifate assumed the political significance which it is now necessary to discuss; As the political power of Abdul Hamid declined in the face of external pressure from foreign countries and internal pressure from those clamouring for reform, he sought to restore his prestige and authority by the astute use of the doctrine of the Khalifate. He sought to make the Khalifate the basis of a religious and political claim to the spiritual and political allegiance of, not only his own subjects, but all Moslems. This claim; neither historical nor orthodox was based upon a Christian analogy. *He encouraged the idea that he represented for Moslems what the Pope represents to Roman Catholics of Ultramarine views, viz; that he was possessed of a spiritual sovereignty over and above political sovereignty.* [emphasis added]

The report went on to say that 'the Khalifate has meant different things at different times,[4] and that its origin is not religious, i.e., 'due to the Prophet or the Koran' and that it was 'not an essential part of the Islamic faith.' However, the closing remark would prove the most prophetic, the import of which would determine the ultimate demise of the institution itself: 'That its revival in a new form is the creation of "interested parties" whose aims are political rather than religious.'[5] In spite of its perspicacity, what gives the report an air of naïve *arrivisme* is that it omits to point out what would have turned it into a devastating auto-critique: this being that it was precisely the facility of 'a spiritual sovereignty over and above political sovereignty' which was the foundation of Britain's original Arab caliphate and Sharifian policies. This irony, however, was not noted.

Given that the former British policy on the caliphate had been based not so much on a misconception but on a conscious innovation regarding the institution, the significance of Ormsby-Gore's 'revelation' is that it signaled a rejection of the former policy. As the absence of irony suggests, this process in itself involved a certain amount of self-deception. The

---

[4] This is precisely the point made in the introduction to this thesis, i.e. that any proposition concerning the essential 'nature' of the caliphate would be an entirely contingent one, and, that no Islamic doctrine of the caliphate will suffice for historical purposes. See Section 1.04.

[5] FO 882, Vol III, HM/16/2, 'Note on the Khalifate', by Capt. Gore. [The report is undated though an archivist or clerk has written "? Dec '16 ?" in the margin.]

relevant correspondence reveals a collective amnesia regarding former attitudes. Although it is not certain who read the report nor what *direct* influence it had, there can be no doubt that its import corresponded closely with the apparently more objective and distanced perspective which prevailed from 1917 onwards. This development was, however, far from even.

It is not uncommon for officers of imperialism routinely engaged in liaison activities to inflate the prestige and standing of their opposite number in aid of their own promotion and self-advancement. Colonel C. E. Wilson, British Agent in Jiddah and British Representative to the Sharifian Government, proved to be no exception. Increasingly, at a time when other erstwhile enthusiasts were becoming less ebullient about King Husayn's caliphate ambitions, Wilson took up the cause with greater purpose. In this sense he replaced Wingate who, now in the position of High Commissioner in Egypt, had, to all appearances, become a confirmed sceptic. In anticipation of a post-war peace settlement Wilson hoped for Husayn's involvement in the disposition of Syria since,

> The settlement of the Arab territories is of first importance to the British Empire for many reasons and by no means the least is that the future position of the Sherif is intimately bound up in any settlement made. The spiritual power of the Sherif, which now is great, will undoubtedly become greater still and it is by no means impossible that he will realize what I think is his chief ambition, viz the establishment of an Arab Caliphat.[6]

In the context of the framework of analysis adopted here, his concern would seem to be an inverted form of everyone else's. Whereas, most British orientalists had hoped to promote Husayn's supposed spiritual powers in order to minimise his real political sovereignty, Wilson was now advocating an extension of his temporal domain in order to underpin his spiritual ascendancy. Others, like Clayton, were in broad agreement over the future of Syria but preferred that it be taken by one of the King's sons on the grounds that Husayn's government would be too 'reactionary and non-progressive'[7] for Syrian political tastes.

Perhaps because of his enthusiasm Wilson had overlooked the limits set by the social and political milieu which conditioned Husayn's outlook as well as his immediate and long term prospects. However, he had certainly been aware of these, it was simply that he had not

---

[6] FO 882 Vol. 12, KH 17/8,Wilson to Clayton, 21 March 1917.

grasped their implications for his own vision of a Sharifian caliphate. For example he simultaneously requested, via the Arab Bureau, an eighty percent increase in the Sharif's subsidy, which he believed was necessary to enable Husayn and his sons to 'bribe' and pay subsidies to the shaykhs and tribes who were joining or might join the Sharif's army.[8] What he did not appreciate was the disparity between Husayns' supposed suitability as political leader of the Arabs and the facts which he now cited. Specifically, that without such subsidies the King of the Hijaz attracted no popular support or charismatic allegiance based on the supposed spiritual powers of which Wilson had spoken to Clayton only ten days before. Lawrence, on the other hand, linked Sharifian ambitions with the need to incorporate settled territory in Arabia. A settled peasantry, Lawrence understood, had been the basis of recent Wahhabite expansion and, historically, of the spread of Islam itself.[9] Lawrence's diagnosis would prove to be the correct one.

Days later Wilson wrote to Wingate enclosing a lengthy note by a political officer with the Indian Army which advocated a wholehearted support for both King Husayn and his son Faysal whose command of allegiance in Arabia and Syria he exaggerated out of all proportion. The author, a Captain Bray of the Bengal Lancers, now assisting Wilson in gathering intelligence in Arabia,[10] feared, above all, an Islamic resurgence in Afghanistan. He argued: 'It is ... essential that the country to whom Mohammedans look should not be Afghanistan. We should therefore create a State more convenient for ourselves, to whom the attention of Islam should be turned. We have an opportunity in Arabia.' He also saw in present circumstances an opportunity to divide Islam. Undoubtedly what had inspired both Wilson's and Bray's sudden enthusiasm was the recent reversal of British misfortune in the region[11] and the mounting expectation that Turkey and its caliphate would fall. Assuming that, like the papacy, the institution of the caliphate must continue, it was now thought inevitable that the Muslim world would quickly find a replacement. However, what motivated Bray was a fear that only Afghanistan and Arabia could realistically produce a caliph, the former being obviously unacceptable to British India. Whereas Afghanistan was a fully constituted state and virtually

---

[7] FO 882 Vol. 12, KH 17/12, Clayton to Wilson, 18 April 1917.
[8] FO 882 Vol. 12, KH 17/9, Wilson to the Director of the Arab Bureau, Cairo, 29 March 1917.
[9] FO 882, Vol. VII, HRG 17/29, Report by T. E. Lawrence, 16 April 1917.
[10] Westrate, 1992, p. 69.

independent, Arabia was weak and not even nominally united: hence the pressing need to promote Husayn as suzerain of, an as-yet-to-be-united, Arabia.[12]

A further reappraisal took place, this time in the form of a re-examination of the undertakings in relation to the caliphate that had been communicated to Husayn by McMahon on 30 August 1915. An article penned by Hogarth entitled, 'The Next Caliphate' published in issue No. 49 of the Arab Bulletin, now under the editorship of Major Cornwallis, referred to the High Commissioner's letter as 'a message sent through the Emir of Mecca to the Arab people.' This, Hogarth maintained, had 'committed' Britain to '"approve" an Arab Caliphate, whenever established by Arabs in common.'

Apart from the obvious recasting of the message in nationalist terms as one addressed indirectly to the *Arab* people without any reference whatsoever to the approval of Muslims in general, the report represented a new departure in self-criticism. The report noted that when the original 'message was framed, it was, perhaps, not realized that diplomatic, or any official, "approval" of a Caliph as such by a Christian Power would be a novelty.' The turn of events in Arabia brought the end of the war into view, and a new focus on the future of the caliphate along with it. As Hogarth saw it the problem in India would be that of having to approve a new caliphate while continuing to allow Indian Muslims to pray for the Ottoman one. Conversely, the current situation according to which the Indian Government did not interfere with religious practice, had only been tolerable on the basis of 'our official pretence that the Caliphate is only a spiritual headship, no longer implying temporal dominion over Moslems in general.' Later Hogarth declared succinctly: 'A pretence indeed it is – a sturdy, conscious fiction. It does not alter facts, but only our imperial relation to them.' It was precisely this 'official pretence' which, according to Hogarth, lay behind Kitchener's letters of 1914 and those of McMahon which followed in 1915. He concluded that any Western state which admitted the authority of a caliph over its Muslim subjects was 'in simple ignorance ... feeding political programmes.'[13] In future, therefore, Britain should ensure that any caliph had

---

[11] See Note 1, above.
[12] FO 882, Vol. 15, PNI 17/2, Wilson to Wingate, 29 March 1917, enclosing 'a note on the Mohammedan question' by Capt. Bray 18th KGO Lancers, Indian Army, under a covering note to Wilson dated, 27 March 1917.
[13] FO 882, Vol. 25, Arab Bulletin, 49, 30 April 1917, pp. 191-3, section headed, 'Arabia.'

only spiritual influence, in the narrowest sense, beyond his own realm. In fact, as has been adumbrated in earlier chapters, this problem had already been apprehended in broad outline. What Hogarth seemed to be saying was that political efficacy should not be obtained by a future caliph under the guise of the inviolability of 'religious' practice.

It is of further significance that Hogarth refers to a 'sturdy *conscious* fiction,' [emphasis added]. Although Elie Kedourie acknowledges this point elsewhere, with regard to a memorandum sent by Husayn to Wingate on 10 April 1917, he insists that,

> the Arab caliphate of which the British were said to have "repeatedly and plainly" desired the restoration was, in Husayn's view, no mere "spiritual" caliphate, but a political power which would replace that exercised by the Ottomans. And *for the first time* in these Sharifian negotiations, someone in Cairo realized that Husayn meant one thing by the caliphate, while the British who had so insouciantly dangled it before his eyes meant quite another. [emphasis added][14]

This is plainly absurd in the light of Hogarth's reference to a *conscious* fiction as the basis of Britain's negotiating position since the earliest days of the war. Furthermore, it would make nonsense of the idea which has been substantiated throughout this thesis: that Britain sought to introduce Husayn into the post-war arrangements as part of a façade in which nominal 'spiritual' suzerainty would displace effective temporal sovereignty and independence. Britain had understood for a long time that historically the caliphate had encompassed both religious and temporal powers and had long believed that even an effective 'spiritual' caliphate must rest on a sound temporal base – even, it was supposed, one provided by an external imperial power!

In retrospect a contemporaneous memorandum by Cornwallis, acting director of the Bureau following Hogarth's absence in late 1916, may be regarded, in certain respects, as representing an end-point in the development of Britain's attitude which endured until the abolition and ultimate demise of the caliphate between 1922 and 1926. In this document Cornwallis, possibly influenced by Hogarth's article which he would have been responsible for editing, expressed the hope of multiple caliphs once the Sultan had fallen. Regarding the institution in

---

[14] Kedourie, 1976, p. 149. Hogarth's 'sturdy conscious fiction' is referred to in an altogether different context in: Kedourie, 1956, p. 53.

general he opined that 'our obvious line is to steer clear of it and to let the thing develop by itself, merely watching the situation closely, and *putting in our influence when and wherever we find it advantageous to the Empire to do so*.' [emphasis added][15]

The import of Hogarth's apparently clarifying statement is not self-evident. Some would insist, no doubt, that since the Arab Bulletin was, in practice, far from confidential it is unlikely that the admission of such an error would be made there. Nevertheless the documentary record is unambiguous[16] and one can only assume that it was now judged politic to declare an end to the pretence and to be more straightforward about the kind of caliphate that Britain could contemplate. For example, it was known that copies of the Arab Bulletin had been regularly obtained by French diplomats. This could, however, be construed as advantageous. Although it cannot be firmly substantiated, the 'leaking' of such material might have been expected to lessen French suspicion of Britain's involvement with Husayn while simultaneously leaking Britain's firm intentions to the world at large. Furthermore, the interpretation of the documentary record supported here must lead one to conclude that the suggestion of belated realisation on the part of Cornwallis in his note to Symes (which forms the basis of Kedourie's view) must be judged insincere. Cornwallis wrote:

> In the subsequent negotiations with the Sherif, H.M.G. merely agreed to approve[17] of an Arab Caliphate vice the Ottoman Caliphate, should the Arabs succeed in establishing one satisfactorily. But it should be noted that to the Sherif, both temporal and spiritual power are included in the word "Caliphate" and a much wider meaning has therefore has been given by him to the extracts quoted above than was intended by H.M.G.

---

[15] FO 882, Vol. 12, KH 17/16, Cornwallis to Symes, 28 April 1917.

[16] One need go no further back than 24 April 1916 for an explicit indication that Wingate understood that Husayn's caliphate ambitions were both spiritual and temporal. See Chapter 7, Note 60; though there is an equally explicit indication from Clayton on 24 July 1915. See Chapter 6, Note 25. However, numerous other references may be taken to imply that it was generally understood that Husayn's ambitions in that area were *ultimately* temporal. See Chapter 4, Notes 16 and 18; Chapter 5, Note 27; Section 5.6. Also, SAD WP 136/1/35-7, Clayton to Wingate, 6 January 1916. Chapter 4, Note 16, refers to the influential and foresightful 'Symes Report' of 15 February 1915.

[17] On reading Arab Bulletin No. 49, Hirtzel recorded a minute in which he objected to the idea that Britain had 'approved' a caliphate of any sort but blamed McMahon for using the term in his letter of 30 August 1915. Hirtzel insisted that Kitchener had been far less precise. L/P&S/11/119, P. 782, 1917 Register No. 1951, Minute by Hirtzel, 31 May 1917.

Rather, this paragraph is an indication that another 'conscious fiction' was in the making – specifically, that there had been no original intention to mislead Husayn and the Arabs over the nature of the caliphate then envisaged.

8.12 The Persistence of the Caliphate Issue

References to tribal politics in the intelligence reports emanating from Arabia continued unabated throughout the war; their effect has been established and need not be re-emphasised here. Suffice it to say that during the remainder of the war relations between King Husayn and Ibn Sa'ud gradually worsened to the extent that speculation that Ibn Sa'ud might submit to Sharifian suzerainty was discontinued – in Cairo at least.[18] It is an indication of how far Sharifian-Sa'udi relations had deteriorated that 'Abdullah felt sufficiently aggrieved that in December 1917 he should refer to Ibn Sa'ud as 'a son of a dog.'[19] Issues such as these formed the background and not the substance of British policy discussions concerning the future of the caliphate. During the ensuing eighteen months, that is between May 1917 and October 1918, more enduring themes dominated the debate. One was the desire to downplay, even to deny, Britain's original offer to endorse an Arab caliphate; another was the need for Britain to find some alternative façade from behind which to rule Arabia.

In conjunction these themes continued to exhibit two of the underlying contradictions at the heart of British policy. Firstly, there was the imperial imperative of controlling Arabia (loosely defined) to the effective exclusion of other powers, while allowing a semblance of independence and unity. Secondly, was the need to satisfy the supposed Muslim desire for a strong caliphate while simultaneously avoiding any accusations of interference in Islamic affairs, or of taking action detrimental to Islam. It may be pointed out that in the long run the first contradiction was irresolvable in as much as imperialism is invariably resisted at the point

---

[18] Although Sir Percy Cox became increasingly bold in supporting Ibn Sa'ud against Husayn, he later maintained that Husayn's caliphate would be acceptable to Ibn Sa'ud and the 'Mesopotamians' once the Turks were eliminated. FO 882, Vol III, AP 18/1, 'Very Secret,' Arab Bureau Supplementary Papers, 1 April, 1918, No. 3 - *The Future of Arabia*, Report of meeting held at the Residency, Cairo, 23 March 1918. See Note 32, below.

[19] FO 882, Vol. 8, IS 17/25, Memo by Cornwallis regarding a meeting with Emir Abdullah on the subject of Ibn Saud, 9 December 1917.

of contact. The second problem would turn out to be illusory since, ultimately, secular nationalism both precluded the possibility of, and obviated the need for, a pre-eminent ruler in Islam. In the meantime, however, in spite of British functionaries taking refuge in the sanctuary of official indifference, the caliphate issue would not go away.

The two predominant themes noted above were the subject of a report submitted by Wingate to the Foreign Secretary in June 1917. In the course of outlining the aims of Britain's Arabian policy as he saw it, Wingate appeared to concur with the necessity of 'stand[ing] apart' on the issue of the caliphate, but warned against 'underrating its final bearing on all future political arrangements.' Although he did not explicitly connect an Arab caliphate with the notion of a façade, he did explain the need 'to create and preserve ... the façade of an independent Arab Empire and [to] grant its titular ruler the appanage of an Imperial state' in terms of the need to 'assuage Moslem pride'[20] after the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, with reference to the 1916 agreement with France, though without mentioning the caliphate, Sykes recommended 'that both Great Britain and France should encourage all Arab parties in areas A and B to look to [Sharif Husayn] and his successors resident at Mecca as titular suzerains.'[21] The idea of a temporally circumscribed caliphate with extensive 'spiritual' reach had been displaced by the concept of nominal, or in this instance 'titular,' suzerainty, pure and simple. In spite of the increasing anticipation of a post-war peace conference the discussions in this regard were as abstract as they ever had been – however there were the first signs of a purely 'Sharifian policy,' that is, without a caliphate, according to which Husayn's sons would be 'hereditary Prince[s]' in each of the 'independent' states within the French and British spheres of influence.

Elsewhere the issue of the caliphate was still current. In consequence of the discussion in the cabinet surrounding Wingate's memorandum, Sykes, who always strove to synthesise contradictory points of view, informed Lord Curzon that 'temporal power [was] not a necessary appanage of the Caliphate,' since the Abbasids had been confined to Baghdad or

---

[20] FO 882, Vol. III, AP 17/11, Letter from Sir R. Wingate, The Residency, Ramleh, to A. J. Balfour, 11 June 1917, presented at Cabinet. CAB 27/22, MAC 3 July, 1917, under Item 3 – Policy In Arabia.
[21] Sledmere Papers, DDSY (2)/4 143, 'Observations on Arabian Policy as a result of visit to Red Sea ports, Jeddah, Yembo, Kamaran, and Aden' by Mark Sykes, 17 May 1917.

Cairo for 250 years when 'their political authority [had] barely extended over their palaces.'[22] The upshot being that the secular authority of the Sharif's caliphate could easily be confined to the Hijaz without risking offence to Islam. Concern was later expressed by the Director of Military Intelligence that if Mecca should prove unsuitable as the seat of the caliphate, as Wingate had suggested, then Baghdad should be selected against Damascus. The former was preferred because the decision had already been taken 'to give Baghdad an Arab façade.' In the face of Britain's official "hands-off" policy, Wingate reiterated what had, in fact, been the basis of British policy since the beginning of the war. He stated simply that, 'in considering this question the desirability of retaining the Caliphate under British auspices should be a sine quâ non.'[23]

In view of the ongoing discussions to which Sharif Husayn had not been party, it seems extraordinarily coincidental that he should suddenly declare, quite emphatically and at some length, that he was in no way interested in the caliphate. It may have been simply that he had arrived at the (correct) conclusion that the caliphate as understood by the British had become an encumbrance to his secular ambitions. According to a report submitted by Wilson to the Arab Bureau at the end of July 1917, Husayn was now opposed to the caliphate on principle, preferring to become Amir al-Mu'minin,[24] in part because 'it will apparently be acceptable to the Sheikhs of urban Syria.' Furthermore, according to T. E. Lawrence, Husayn had recently declared that the caliphate had been the source of many problems for Turkey, and that in any case 'in view of his own policy of friendship with Great Britain, he could neither acknowledge another's Khalifate, assume one himself, or admit the existence of a theory.' Certainly, these observations suggest that Husayn had been advised by an informant who had already assimilated the gist of Hogarth's contribution to Arab Bulletin No. 49 and wished to appear in step with his imperial sponsors. In this context Husayn's reference to the notion that 'the idea

---

[22] Sledmere Papers, DDSY /(2) 4 148, Note from Mark Sykes at the Offices of the War Cabinet, Whitehall, to Lord Curzon, 2 July 1917.
[23] CAB 27/22, MAC July 1917, Arabian Policy – 'Observations by Director of Military Intelligence on Sir R Wingate's despatch No. 127 of June 11th,' War Office, 6 July 1917.
[24] Usually translated as 'Commander of the Faithful.'

of a Muslim Khalifate was suggested to Abdul Hamid by the British, and exploited by him as a stick to beat [them] with'[25] seems particularly remarkable.

These pronouncements, it may be supposed, should have signified an end to the issue of the caliphate in connection with the Sharif of Mecca's secular ambitions. And so it did until six months later when 'Abdullah announced to Cornwallis that he wished to meet Wingate in order 'to discuss the question of proclaiming King Hussein as Caliph.' He argued on the basis of nationalist priorities by reiterating the necessary connection between the return of the caliphate to Mecca and the independence of the Arabs. It should be pointed out that the distinction between caliph and Amir al-Mu'minin, which had comforted Wilson and Lawrence, was wasted on Wingate. For example, Husayn's disavowal had in no way precluded Wingate from standing in the way of the Sharif's being represented when it came to disposing of the holy sites of Jerusalem on the occasion of Allenby's formal entry into the 'Old City' on 11 December 1917. Ironically, Wingate now felt it necessary to exclude an agent of Husayn from being granted custody of the Haram area on the grounds that 'representation of the King might be construed as British recognition of his title to the Caliphate.'[26]

Cornwallis's reply to 'Abdullah is instructive in that it refers to Britain's 'traditional policy' of non-interference in religious matters while in the same sentence declaring that 'HMG could not remain unconcerned and hoped he would take no action without HMG's approval.' The hypocrisy here was twofold: besides the blatant contradiction between non-interference and an insistence on such approval, was the talk of 'approval' *after* Hogarth's complete denigration of the idea in Arab Bulletin no. 49. Cornwallis went on to discourage in the strongest terms any such bid for the caliphate pointing out, without acknowledging the irony of his argument, that

---

[25] FO 882, Vol. 12, KH 17/18, Wilson to Cornwallis, 31 July 1917, attaching a report by T. E. Lawrence on a meeting between Hussein, and Wilson and Lawrence on 28 July 1917. Wingate sent copies of Lawrence's report to Balfour and the Viceroy. FO 141/825 1198/820, Wingate, The Residency, Ramleh, to Balfour, despatch no. 179, 16 August 1917; and, Covering letter by Wingate to Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India, Simla, despatch no. 199M, enclosing a copy of the latter, 16 August 1917. Lawrence's report was reproduced in Arab Bulletin No. 59, issued on 12 August 1917.

[26] Tibawi, 1978, pp. 193-4.

'a caliph who would be ... entirely dependent on a Christian power for support, would find little sympathy with Moslems generally.'[27]

Moreover, Wingate later told Balfour that he favoured the meeting proposed by 'Abdullah 'in order to have the opportunity ... of checking premature or ill-considered action by him.'[28] The view was later expressed in the Arab Bulletin that it was only 'Abdullah who wanted his father to become caliph.[29] However, 'Abdullah's nationalist reasoning was echoed by the Sharif himself. In a letter to Bassett, Wilson's assistant in Jiddah, Husayn politely reminded his correspondents that the Arab movement had been founded on Britain's expression of support for the re-establishment of the Arab caliphate. Husayn went on to say that, although this had not been in the name of the Sharif or his sons, Great Britain had 'thought it better that [he] should be the preliminary means of starting this blessed revolt.' It therefore, 'became incumbent upon [him] to serve her [Great Britain's] good aspirations and the welfare of the Arabs religiously as well as nationally.'[30] In the event, such was British confidence at this stage that they were satisfied by 'Abdullah's assurances that little could be done without a clear expression of sympathy by Britain. 'Abdullah spoke of waiting two or three pilgrimages before acting.[31] This episode above all others marks the point in time by which the original 'Grand plan' which had rested upon Husayn's eventual attainment of the caliphate had been stood on its head: from now on support for the Sharif would depended on him *not* being declared caliph.

---

[27] FO 882, Vol. 13, KH 18/2, Cornwallis to Wingate, 3 January 1918, enclosing a translation of a letter from Abdullah which ended, rather desperately, with a passing reference to gold deposits in the Hijaz.
[28] CAB 27/23, p. 127-8, Secret MEC 78. War Cabinet, Item: 'The Proclamation of King Hussein as Caliph,' including discussion of despatch No. 2 from Sir R. Wingate, The Residency, Cairo, to Balfour, 6 January 1918, enclosing Cornwallis to Wingate, 3 January 1918.
[29] FO 882, Vol. 25, Arab Bulletin No. 76, 13 January 1918.
[30] FO 882, Vol. 13, KH 18/5, Bassett to Cornwallis, 24 January 1918, enclosing a translation of a letter from Hussein to Bassett.
[31] L/P&S/10/1111, P. 1510 1924, [E2298 / 1752 / 44], 'Memorandum on British Commitments to King Hussein,' 12 March 1924.

8.13 The Derogation of King Husayn: A Sharifian Policy without a Caliphate

The remainder of 1918 saw further moves towards a purely 'Sharifian' policy, i.e. one divested of its Islamic underpinning according to which the Sharif's sons would be made titular monarchs in the various Arab countries to be ruled by Britain. In spite of this process, which resulted in the complete extirpation of the former caliphate policy, the requirement that no future caliphate should be in a position to threaten Britain was maintained. Nevertheless, 'Abdullah's attempt to broach the subject of his father's candidature for the caliphate was something of a watershed. Thereafter the caliphate became quite incidental, almost a minor irritation in the context of British dealings with Sharif Husayn - though not, as will be seen later, in relation to the negotiation of peace with Turkey. The demise of the caliphate which followed, and which was hastened by the very terms of this peace, will be examined only to the extent that it related to British interest in the matter.

In March 1918 an important meeting took place at the Cairo residency which included Wingate, Cox, Hogarth, Cornwallis, Clayton, and Wilson. They met in order to discuss 'Future Policy in Arabia,' their deliberations and conclusions being submitted for further discussion at a cabinet meeting in April. This meeting delivered a consensus over the future of Sharif Husayn according to which his chances of succeeding in the field of secular politics were utterly discounted. For example it was understood that while his success would depend on his being well received in Syria, the Syrians did not desire his involvement. Cox insisted that the principle of '*primus inter pares*' be allowed for religious supremacy only and later argued against the political involvement of the Sharif, either as the nominal head of an Arab confederacy or of Mesopotamia. Cox believed that Husayn could never crush Ibn Sa'ud though he thought that both the latter and the people of Mesopotamia might, under certain circumstances, accept Husayn as caliph. It was agreed that if such an eventuality were presented to the British as a *fait accompli* then Britain should adopt 'a non-committal attitude.'[32] The implication being that it was now understood that this was an outcome which should be avoided if at all possible.

---

[32] L/P&S/11/135, P 2142, account of a meeting held at the Residency, Cairo, 23 March 1918, and submitted to War Cabinet, Eastern Committee, EC 180.

A subsequent War Cabinet meeting dealt summarily with the potentially delicate issue of President Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' which, among other things, provided for the self-determination of all nationalities presently within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was feared that the universal application of the underlying principle might form the basis of similar claims elsewhere, for example in the areas 'liberated' from Turkey. However, Balfour announced that,

> President Wilson did not seriously mean to apply his formula outside Europe. He meant that no "civilised" communities should remain under the heel of other "civilised" communities; as to politically inarticulate peoples, he would probably not say more than that their true interests should prevail as against exploitation by conquerors. If so, an Arab State under British protection would satisfy him, ... if it were shown the Arabs could not stand alone.[33]

In other words, as John Fisher points out, there was thought to be no inconsistency between President Wilson's declaration of January 1918 and the idea of an Arab façade.[34] Remarkably, Clayton would later use 'the principles of freedom and self-determination of peoples,' which was expected to govern the post-war peace conference, *against* Husayn. It was on this basis that in September 1918 he insisted that the King must 'follow the advice of H.M.G. on all matters of external policy and in dealing with other independent Arab rulers and States.'[35]

It would appear that in the confident atmosphere engendered by recent military advances in the Middle East, many British imperialists, 'in the field' so to speak, had overlooked, or simply forgotten about, the previously assumed dangers of pan-Islam.[36] This was certainly

---

[33] CAB 27/24, EC 5th Meeting, Minutes of War Cabinet, Eastern Committee, 24 April 1918, 'Future of Mesopotamia.' It may be remarked that Balfour's conclusion, and indeed Wilson's intention, were quite consistent with the principles of liberty as espoused by John Stuart Mill, since according to the latter: 'The early difficulties in the way of spontaneous progress are so great, and there is seldom any choice of means for overcoming them; and a ruler full of the spirit of improvement is warranted in the use of expedients that will attain an end, perhaps otherwise unattainable. Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end.' Mill, in, Robson (ed.), 1966, p. 14.

[34] Fisher, 1999, p. 130.

[35] FO 882, Vol. III, AP 18/5, Memo by Clayton to The Residency, Ramleh, 8 September 1918.

[36] This was evidently not the case in the Sudan where a policy was still in force, that had been introduced by Wingate, of maintaining an 'Islam-free' buffer in the southern portion of the country which abutted East Africa ('a non-Mohamedan belt along the southern frontier'). For example Sudanese Muslim officials were not employed in the area while Christian missionaries were permitted free access. FO 882, Vol 15, PNI 18/6, Despatch from Governor General's Office, Khartoum, Sudan to High Commissioner Wingate, Egypt, 7 February 1918.

Captain Wilson's view. In a despatch to Wingate in May he tried to persuade his superior that the 'non-caliphate' policy now being pursued may be construed as an attempt by Britain to effect the 'disintegration of Islam.' He continued to see Husayn's spiritual and temporal ambitions as intimately connected and still thought it unwise to disregard either.[37] Notwithstanding Wilson's entreaties, the general tendency was now strongly in the opposite direction. In June 1918 Wingate wrote a letter to Husayn which in practical effect, though not in words, amounted to a retraction of support for the King's ambitions, *political and religious*, beyond the Hijaz. The key passage read:

> Your Highness cannot fail to realise how sincerely His Majesty's Government will welcome any practical evidences of Arab Unity, which it is in their policy to promote. At the same time they believe that such unity to be real and permanent in its effect can best be achieved by the common consent of the Arabs and should not be imposed upon them.[38]

At the same time Wingate's assistant, Symes, still appeared to support the Sharif as caliph. He drafted a policy proposal which attempted to square three ostensibly disparate policies - 'Zionist, Syrian and Sherifial' - on the assumption that the Sykes-Picot agreement was 'virtually defunct.' Remarkably the Zionist and Sharifian policies were easily reconciled. In fact they were construed as mutually reinforcing since the Zionists, it was envisaged, would compensate the Sharif financially thereby obviating the need for Christian support. Furthermore, this 'might also provide the means by which King Husayn could establish his position as primus inter pares, or his complete ascendancy, over the other Chiefs of the Arabian Peninsula, thus creating a better territorial background for his claims to the Caliphate of the Moslems.'[39] The well-established Syrian objections to Husayn's involvement could just as easily be dealt with by offering the Syrian emirate to Faysal. Apart from its exhibiting the kernel of the Sharifian policy which ultimately came about, Symes' note represents something of a return to the abstract verbal conjuring of earlier days; as such it bore little fruit. Apart from Wilson and Symes, only the somewhat marginal figure of Gertrude Bell continued to

---

[37] FO 882, Vol. III, AP 18/2, secret note from Wilson to Wingate, 1 May 1918. The view expressed here was reiterated a month later. FO 882, Vol. 13, KH 18/9, Wilson to High Commissioner, 5 June 1918, regarding an interview of King Hussein undertaken by Mark Sykes.

[38] FO 882, Vol. VII, AB 18/5, 'High Commissioner to King of Hejaz,' June 1918. This gist of this message was repeated by Wilson in a meeting with Husayn on 18 July. FO 882, Vol. 13, KH 18/6, Wilson to Wingate, 23 July 1918.

[39] SAD WP 148/10/37-46, Secret note by G. S. Symes, 13 June 1918.

advocate the suzerainty of the Sharif as caliph with his political sovereignty restricted to the Hijaz.[40]

It is important to point out at this stage, in further substantiation of the arguments presented in earlier chapters, that whereas Zionist aspirations are here imagined to be compatible with a Sharifian policy based on Husayn's caliphate,[41] albeit deferred, agreement with the French is now considered to be at odds with a version of the Sharifian policy according to which the secular rule of Faysal replaces Husayn's nominal suzerainty based on his supposed religious credentials. Conversely, it may be argued that the private rejection of Sykes-Picot by Lloyd George's government[42] made the former caliphate policy dispensable, paving the way for a more directly political façade – specifically a secular Sharifian policy in the context of a fragmented Arabia. Although his description of this policy is indistinguishable from the Cairo caliphate policy as developed during 1915, even to the point of describing Husayn's future empire as a 'façade,' Symes now treats it as something quite alien. Likewise, in an almost identical account written for Balfour, Wingate describes the very same policy as 'the King's programme.'[43] However, within days of Symes' report being issued an unsigned Arab Bureau memorandum asserted that, 'as for the Arab Kingship there is probably non-one who sees through the "façade" so clearly as Husayn himself though I don't suppose he realises the depths of perfidy to which British Policy can sink!'[44]

---

[40] CAB 27/3, Papers submitted for EC 1217. A paper by Gertrude Bell written for the Arab Bureau (information only) submitted to Cabinet under a covering letter to Lord Hardinge, 25 May 1918. Bell had earlier expressed the view that the Sharif's religious position was an asset as it could not 'be converted into political supremacy.' FO 882, Vol. III, AP 17/14, Memo by Miss Bell, June 1917. Evidently her views had changed little and continued to accord with the original 'Grand Plan.'

[41] It is relevant to this argument that the incompatibility between Zionism and the Arab policy only came about when (a) the latter had become the *secular* Sharifian policy, and (b) the true extent and nature of Zionist aspirations had been appreciated. William Ormsby-Gore, an ardent Zionist himself, was one of the first to do so. In August 1918 he declared: 'I can't agree that we should, or can, shape, our private policy (whatever we say in public) on an assumption that "Zionists seek no political domination etc.," What Sokolov says, what Weizmann if pressed admits (he has so admitted to me not a month ago), and the logic of facts all forbid! There will be no effective force behind Zionism unless the Jewish Home in Palestine means Palestine for the Jews as a Nation politically dominant there under whatever protection be eventually imposed. This will & can only come about by pressure on the existing population, not by its free, or even peaceable, consent.' PRO FO 371 146256, Memorandum by William Ormsby Gore, 20 August 1918.

[42] Hughes, 1999, p. 108.

[43] FO 371/3381, Political Turkey, 123868, Secret No. 129, Wingate, the Residency, Ramleh, to Balfour, 25 June 1918. However, on the same day Wingate wired an outline policy to Sykes which included 'the assumption of the caliphate by Hussein,' [though he did so on the mistaken assumption that this was the Arab Bureau's position]. Westrate, 1992, p. 165.

[44] FO 882, Vol. 8, IR 18/9, unsigned handwritten note dated, 11 July 1918.

It would seem that by the second half of 1918 practically the entire British establishment having any connection with Middle Eastern policy had managed to disassociate themselves from the former 'Grand plan.' In this field of human endeavor it is perhaps unremarkable that they did so without acknowledging the fact. That Balfour was probably not fully cognisant of the earlier caliphate policy, though undoubtedly familiar with the 'official' version, can only have aided the process. However, such was the extent of the transformation that certain agents of the Indian Government now thought that things had gone too far. The comparatively vague concept of 'suzerainty' which had been preferred to the more definite 'sovereignty' was, according to the Resident and Assistant Resident at Aden, now thought to be too 'elastic.'[45] On the basis of the experience of India, direct control or complete non-involvement was preferred for fear that Arabia might descend into chaos and anarchy under an arrangement which would preclude their effective intervention.

By July 1918 even Wilson had been reduced to expressing a preference for a 'Suzerain' policy without referring directly to the caliphate.[46] Wingate, however, in September 1918 appears to have become convinced once again, this time by Husayn himself, by the idea of an eventual 'smooth transition of Sunnite opinion from a temporal to a spiritual [elsewhere termed 'Pontific'] conception of the Caliphate.'[47] On the other hand comfort was taken, as it had been before, by the fact that Husayn was 'doubtful of his capacity unaided to realize his aims.' Within a month Wingate felt able to draft a comprehensive set of recommendations entitled, 'Note On Arab Policy – Arab Aggregation On A Racial Basis,' in which he omitted to refer to

---

[45] FO 371/3381, Political Turkey, 149524, Covering letter No. 177 from Wingate, the Residency, Ramleh, to Balfour, 13 August 1918, enclosing 'Note by Major B. R. Reilly (Assistant Resident Aden)' on a Memorandum by Wilson, 1 May 1918, and 'Comment on Major Reilly's Note made by Major-General J. M. Stewart C.B., Resident at Aden.' These notes were later presented to the War Cabinet. CAB 27/32, War Cabinet – Eastern Committee – Memoranda EC 1401 – EC 1600, Volume VIII, pp. 118-122. For EC 1479, September 1918.

[46] FO 882, Vol. 13, KH 18/6, Secret, Wilson, Red Sea, 23 July 1918. It should be born in mind, however, that this document, among others, was selected for presentation at discussions convened in preparation for a post-war joint Anglo-French declaration 'defining the attitude of Britain and France " towards the Arab territories liberated from Turkish rule."' Fisher, 1999, p. 230. It is perhaps natural that the British would wish to play-down the matter of the caliphate at this juncture.

[47] FO 371/3384, Political Turkey, 171983, Secret No. 129, Wingate, The Residency, Ramleh, to Balfour, 21 September 1918. Wingate had been temporarily convinced by Husayn's reference to the fact that the latter's declared purpose in commencing his revolt had been 'to preserve the political state of Islam.'

the caliphate even once, merely suggesting recognition of the King's religious significance throughout the region with the preservation of the Hijaz 'as an archaic enclave.'[48]

It was of perhaps greater moment that Sykes, who had direct and frequent access to the cabinet, completely distanced himself from the idea of an Arabian caliphate during the later months of 1918. He now objected to Faysal's becoming an Amir in Syria as this would imply that he was the Amir 'of a caliph ... deriving authority from a religious source,' and went even further in suggesting that some title be found for Husayn 'which did not carry with it any claim to *temporal or spiritual* authority.' [emphasis added][49]

Notwithstanding the almost complete abandonment of the Sharifian caliphate policy within the British establishment, the French were justified in being suspicious when General Allenby visited Damascus on 3 October shortly after it had been taken by the British.[50] Commandant Larcher remarked, 'Il lui restait [Allenby] à installer l'émir Faisal à Damas ... il commencait d'autre part à poursuivre l'exécution du plan impérialiste anglais conçu: la reconstitution du kalifat des Abbasides.'[51] The same events induced Sykes to remark: 'I believe that King Hussein will go to Damascus and be declared Commander of the Faithful and appoint Abdullah Sherif of Mecca. If he does it will not matter. I am sure that the Khalifate is no concern of ours. We ought to tell him we back his movement as a national one.'[52]

---

[48] SAD WP 150/3/84, Private and Secret Note by Wingate, The Residency, Ramleh, 21 October 1918.
[49] FO 371/3381, Political Turkey, 123868, Various memoranda by Sykes, probably June and July 1918.
[50] Strictly speaking Damascus was all but taken by the Australian cavalry and entered triumphantly by Faysal and Lawrence the following day. Fromkin, 1991, p. 336.
[51] Hughes, 1999, p. 106.
[52] FO 371/3384, Political Turkey, 171983, Minute by Sykes, 14 October 1918.

8.2 The Post-War Settlement and the Issue of the Caliphate

8.21 Further Moves Towards the Irrevocable Exclusion of the Sharif of Mecca

With the final occupation of Greater Syria by British and Arab forces,[53] and of Mesopotamia by Britain alone, between September and November 1918,[54] the war in the Middle East officially ended. No doubt the impending peace conference concentrated the minds of the proposers and arbiters of British Middle Eastern policy and in November and December 1918 a number of definitive documents and decisions were produced. On the same day that the armistice was signed in the Forest of Compiègne, Hogarth issued a memorandum, which, although not the sole determinant of policy, adumbrated with unusual clarity what was to become the final version of the British caliphate policy. Hogarth's opening remarks suggested nothing new. He recommended that, 'The King of Hedjaz ought never to be allowed more than most nominal suzerainty over any other Arab area, since his rule must necessarily be theocratic,' adding that Britain might well recognise 'a vague general title such as "Malik el-Arban" or "Malik el-Hashimi" ... and we might well encourage, by every discreet and unobvious means in our power, the practice of praying for him in the Khutba as "Emir em-Muminin" not only in the general Arab area but also in India.'

The essentials of what Hogarth was to outline next presaged both Britain's conduct in the negotiations relating to the final disposition of the Middle East, and what ultimately befell the caliphate, these two factors being closely connected. The origins and reworking of the crucial notion at the heart of Hogarth's message will be outlined in the following section. In asserting that, 'in the full recognition of him [Husayn] or anyone else as Caliph we ought to take no hand whatever,' Hogarth was merely repeating the mantra of 'official' policy. However, this was now underwritten by new facts, or at least old facts re-discovered, whose import was now deemed relevant to the British imperial cause. The memo continued:

---

[53] This was essentially true in the first instance since even Beirut was only properly annexed by France after it had been handed over by Britain once they had taken down the Arab flag. Fromkin, 1991, p. 340.
[54] Mosul was not taken until 4 days *after* the Mudros Armistice. This was done to keep it from the French as much as it was to remove it from the Turks. Venn, 1986, pp. 39-43.

> since that title necessarily implies sovereignty over our own subjects, ... we ought in no way to follow the bad Italian precedent in Tripolitania, where rights of religio-political interference were conceded to the Ottoman Caliph. We should never, as I think, in any diplomatic document or in any other way, acknowledge the existence of a Caliph, and no hope of conciliating Indian Moslems ought to modify this rule. The more Caliphs there are actually recognised by the Moslem world at one time, the better for us.[55]

More importantly, within days of the end of the war, the cabinet rushed to formulate Britain's definitive position on the Middle East with which to 'arm' herself at the forthcoming peace conference. At a meeting of the Eastern Committee, the Chairman, Lord Curzon, reminded those attending that there had already been 'a definite decision ... in the early part of the summer of 1918' to establish an 'Arab façade' in Mesopotamia. Curzon's interjection was in response to the Foreign Office who, now feeling somewhat bereft of diplomatic cover in the absence of the former caliphate policy, had hastily proposed extending Husayn's title to 'King of the Arabs.'[56] The India Office were still concerned that even though a 'self-sterilized' caliph may emerge in the Hijaz this would not, of itself, preclude the interference of other powers. Taken to its logical conclusion, the potential effects of this could only be eluded by keeping the British sphere from the influence of Husayn himself.[57] This was the first indication of the secular Sharifian policy minus Husayn, which did ultimately prevail.

At a meeting in mid-December, Curzon reiterated what had, by this time, become both the 'official' and 'actual' policy:

> One thing we must not do, and this is a commonplace of our policy, we must not touch with the end of a barge-pole the question of the Khalifate. That is a matter exclusively for the Moslem world; whether they choose to elect King Hussein or anybody else does not seem to me to concern us. Of course it would concern us in this sense, that it is a very material thing in India and the countries we influence to know to whom they look as Khalif, and it might be in our interest, if King Hussein succeeds in establishing his power, that he should be Khalif. All I mean is, that at the moment we should take no active steps to influence the decision. We should accept it whatever form it takes, hoping, now that the Sultan of Turkey has disappeared from the stage, that it may take the form of being offered to the Sherif of Mecca.[58]

---

[55] SAD WP 150/6/53-56, Memorandum by Hogarth, 11 November 1918. Copied to Clayton, Cornwallis and The Residency. This memorandum was reprinted and submitted for discussion at a cabinet meeting. CAB 27/36, p. 142, for EC 2302, 'Memorandum on Certain Conditions of Settlement of Western Asia,' signed by D. G. Hogarth, General Staff, War Office, 15 November 1915.
[56] L/P&S/10/807, War Cabinet, Eastern Committee, Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday, 21 November 1918.
[57] CAB 27/37, War Cabinet, Eastern Committee, Memoranda for EC 2584, November or December 1918.
[58] CAB 27/24, Minutes – War Cabinet, Eastern Committee, 16 December 1918.

Reference to the idea that the Sultanate would soon be dissolved, and that his caliphate would thereby be rendered harmless, here serves as a reminder to the historian that a Sharifian caliphate was, for the British, never an end in itself. It should be emphasised, however, that the declaration of utter disinterest in the matter of the caliphate can only *now* be taken as sincere in the context of that contingency, i.e. in anticipation of the dissolution of the Turkish caliphate. Nevertheless, on the basis of this assumption a subsequent meeting agreed a ten-point resolution which included, as well as a repetition of the official caliphate policy, the stipulation that regardless of any title Husayn might adopt in the future, his suzerainty should on no account be recognised outside the Hijaz.[59] For the reasons noted above, British 'disinterest' in the caliphate was itself a thoroughly contingent affair.

Husayn and any influence he might have had was now the least of Britain's worries. There could only have been comfort gained from the view, expressed by Wilson in Jeddah, that the king would now accept more or less anything offered him.[60] However, there was still dissent within the Government on certain matters. The Foreign Office, apparently still operating according to some of the old assumptions, was still concerned with avoiding any offence to Islam and therefore continued to see value in doing what was possible to enhance Husayn's standing in the Muslim world. Although no longer advocating a Sharifian caliphate, they wished to see created 'a spiritual centre for the Moslem world which may satisfy Moslem aspirations without fostering chauvinism or encouraging the disastrous ideal of a political pan-Islamic movement.'[61]

Furthermore, when Curzon argued for the expulsion of Turkey from Europe, i.e. Constantinople, in order to settle, once and for all, the question of the caliphate, Montagu objected on behalf of the India Office. To his own rhetorical question: 'How has the Ottoman Sultan been able through all these centuries to hold the position of Khalif,' Curzon answered that 'if he [the Sultan] loses Constantinople I imagine that there can be very little doubt that the Mahommedan world will not accept as a Khalif a sovereign who has been dispossessed of

---

[59] CAB 27/24, EC 44th Minutes, War Cabinet, Eastern Committee, 18 December 1918.
[60] FO 882, Vol. 13, KH 18/48, Wilson to Wingate, 23 December 1918.

Constantinople, Mecca, and Medina, and who has been driven back into the highlands of Asia.'[62] In response to which, Montagu insisted on adherence to the official abstention policy *to the letter*! With one or two exceptional and trivial episodes, from this point on Britain's main concern over the caliphate was in connection with the Sultanate rather than the future of King Husayn. In this regard India's interest in the issue would be sustained more zealously than that of the metropolis.

8.22 The Resort to Academic Sources: Assimilating the 'Italian Lesson'

A move towards a more critical-historical view of the caliphate on the part of the British authorities has already been alluded to in the context of William Ormsby-Gore's memorandum of December 1916.[63] In this he identified a conscious policy on the part of the Turks to subvert the encroaching European empires through the extra-territorial religious influence of the Sultan as caliph. In April 1917 Hogarth had contributed an article for Arab Bulletin No. 49, which acknowledged the work of a Dutch academic by the name of Snouck Hurgronje. In this it was argued that if the caliph of Islam was afforded even the slightest *spiritual* authority there would be a distinct danger of this being used to feed the political programmes of pan-Islam. Hurgronje's influence is discernable in Hogarth's memorandum of 11 November 1918. It is conceivable that Ormsby-Gore's memorandum, tentatively dated December 1916, was also based on the work of the Dutch orientalist.[64] It was not however, until the middle of 1918 when another foreign academic source was introduced to the Middle Eastern political intelligence community that the precise significance of Hurgronje's critical history, for the impending peace conference was realised. What follows is a brief account of the publications and derivative memoranda produced from mid-1918 onwards and their impact on Britain's attitude towards the caliphate after the war.

---

[61] FO 371/3385 Political -Turkey File 747 (P.P. 184895-201091) 1918, 191229, 'Confidential [printed document] memorandum on French and Arab Claims in the Middle East in relation to British Interests.' FO 19 December 1918.
[62] CAB 27/24, EC 46th Minutes, War Cabinet, Eastern Committee, 23 December 1918.
[63] See Note 5, above.

In July 1918, the British Embassy in Rome despatched to the Residency in Cairo several copies of a translation of a booklet written by a C. A. Nallino, Professor of History and Islamic Institutions at the University of Rome. The booklet had been published sometime in 1917, before being discovered by the embassy and translated by Lieutenant F. R. Rodd of General Staff, Intelligence.[65] On receipt of a copy, Hogarth, perhaps a little irritated that he had yet again, and at such a late stage, been furnished with superior material not from his own provenance, declared, correctly in relation to Nallino's use of Hergronje, that 'its main contribution [was] not new.' He conceded, however, that Nallino's 'criticism of the Treaty of Lausanne is new and very interesting in this office.'[66] Rodd's translation was reproduced in its entirety in four issues of the Arab Bulletin during August and September 1918.[67]

The point which had so interested Hogarth was that Italy's 1912 treaty with Turkey had established, among other things, that the Ottoman caliph's name was to be used in the Friday khutba throughout Libya, and that the caliph would be entitled to appoint and dismiss the qadis of that country in spite of its not otherwise being considered Ottoman territory.[68] This, according to Nallino, made Italy at best a kind of vice-Sultanate in Libya, and at worst an illegal occupier. The implications of this for the negotiation of a post-war peace with Turkey were clear: if the extra-territorial authority of the caliphate was not to be exploited with the cooperation of the Sharif of Mecca, then its effects must be canceled in the case of the Sultan of Turkey. Consequently these 'new' facts, considered from a purely British perspective, became the lynchpin of a series of preparatory and advisory reference documents produced to

---

[64] See Notes, 5, 13 & 55, above. Hurgronje, 1917. This book consists of articles published in the second half of 1916.

[65] Francis Rennell Rodd was the son of the British Ambassador to Rome, the Rodds being long-term friends of Ronald Storrs. Storrs, 1943, pp. 15 & 282-3.

[66] FO 141/587/545/33 & 33, Covering slip from Cornwallis, Director, Arab Bureau, The Residency, Ramleh, 13 August 1918, attached to a covering note from the British Embassy, Rome, 4 July 1918; and a handwritten note by Hogarth, dated, 21 July 1918 [This date looks like 1917 but cannot be since the note refers to Rodd's translation of Nallino]; as well as an original copy of Nallino's booklet entitled, *Appunti sulla Natura del "Califato" in Genere el sul Presento "Califato Ottomano"*.

[67] FO 882, Vol. 27, Arab Bulletin, No.'s 101-104, 27 August, and 3, 10 & 24, September 1918.

[68] According to the penultimate page of Rodd's translation, Nallino wrote: 'As Snouck Hergronje has repeatedly written, the Sultan receives recognition of his aspirations through the ignorance of European Powers, in a manner different from that which they intended, yet more consonant with the historical and legal principles of the Mohammedan religion.' Interestingly, Nallino makes the point that it was only the unilateral Italian agreements, and neither the bilateral agreements, nor the Turkish unilateral agreements which referred to the Sultan of Turkey as caliph, adding that, 'in a solemn treaty the Turks could not make statements which were absurd from the Moslem point of view.'

support and guide those negotiating a settlement with the former Ottoman Empire. The first of these was a note by Dr. T. W. Arnold entitled, *The Supposed Spiritual Authority of the Caliph*, which freely acknowledged the authority of both Snouck Hurgronje and Nallino. A note by Hirtzel was appended which drew attention to the 'mistakes made by the Austrians, Italians, Bulgarians and Greeks, as described by Dr. Arnold.' Hirtzel emphatically suggested that the Sultan renounce all rights as 'Sheikh ul-Islam' over any and all territories ceded, and that the words '"religious"' and '"spiritual"' be avoided in any treaty concluded.[69]

There followed a series of Foreign Office handbooks, published in January 1919 in preparation for the Paris Peace Conference. This included one on, *The Pan-Islamic Movement*, and another entitled, *The Rise of Islam and The Caliphate.*[70] Although the series was published anonymously the latter was almost certainly the work of Arnold.[71] The caliphate booklet also relied heavily on Nallino and Hurgronje and reproduced the points made in Arnold's note, referred to above. Of greater significance, is the fact that Dr. Arnold was a key adviser at the Peace Conference and continued in that capacity up to the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. There is an obvious irony in the fact that the 'errors' committed at Lausanne in 1912 were finally expunged there eleven years later. Ultimately it was the Indian Office and the Government of India who would put Nallino's advice into service, though events would render their rather arcane confabulations superfluous.

Although the British negotiating team may have been fully apprised of the new 'truth' concerning the caliphate, one commentator at least was aware that knowledge of the 'facts' does not automatically translate into a universal dissolution of the former state of 'ignorance.'

---

[69] FO 608/96/660, 'The Supposed Spiritual Authority of the Caliph,' December, 1918. This was reproduced as Appendix B to Arnold's book, *The Caliphate*, which he had published in 1924 once his undertaking to the Government was complete.

[70] FO 373/5 5/6, Handbooks prepared under the direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office, no. 96a & b. 'The Pan-Islamic Movement' and 'The Rise of Islam and The Caliphate,' January 1919.

[71] There exists a handwritten list by Elie Kedourie who was able to establish the authorship of the entire series which the archival record does not reveal. A Mr. David Chilton of *Taikoo Books*, Bootham, York, dealer in, and collector of, Middle Eastern historical material has in his possession a photocopy of Kedourie's list which, unfortunately, he was unable to locate at the time of writing. Mr. Chilton is unaware of the whereabouts of either the original, or of other copies of Kedourie's list but does recall from memory that the handbook on the caliphate was the work of Dr. Arnold.

Mr. Ryan of the British High Commission in Constantinople, apparently unaware of both Dr. Arnold's note and the FO handbook, later wrote with reference to Nallino's booklet:

> It is none the less true that, however unsound the theory, and whatever the means used to promote it, a new conception of the Caliphate has come into existence for better or worse. This has been grafted on the old conception with sufficient success and has found sufficient acceptance to make the new caliphate a not less real factor than the old.

More pertinently in relation to the future relations between an imperial power and Islam, Ryan added: 'The root idea of this conception is that Islam, divided up politically, is or should be an undivided whole religiously, and that the Caliph has a real though undefined position as religious head.'[72] Though his point was a valid one, due to tendencies which might not have been readily anticipated, Ryan's warnings were eventually proved redundant.

Though the lesson provided by Nallino and later disseminated by Arnold and the Foreign Office undoubtedly aided British negotiators after the war, it should not be supposed that they were, *in themselves*, a crucial determinant of the British policy towards he caliphate. Rather it was the lessons learned in Arabia during the course of the Arab Revolt which had set them on their present course. As ever, the newly discovered authorities on Islam, were selected retrospectively, precisely because they supported the pre-adopted position. The British might just as easily have turned the 'caliphate error' to their advantage, or simply disregarded Nallino and Hurgronje entirely, and though Arnold may have been commissioned by the Foreign Office he would have found himself writing an entirely different note on the caliphate. As it was, Sharif Husayn was barely mentioned, never mind advocated as a future caliph, by either Nallino or Arnold. This must be taken as an indication that his candidacy, as far as the British were concerned, was by now a dead letter. This was, in fact, the view expressed in the Foreign Office handbook. The final paragraph read: 'It may become clear that the caliphate as an institution is really as dead as the Holy Roman Empire—*vox et praeterea nihil.*'[73]

---

[72] FO 608/117/17229, Memorandum by Mr. Ryan, British High Commission, Constantinople, 19 July 1919.
[73] FO 373/5 5/6, 'The Rise of Islam and The Caliphate,' January, 1919, p. 46.

8.23 'A Voice and Nothing More' : The Development of a Secular Sharifian Policy, *Sans Sharif!*

Between March and May 1919, any discussions regarding the future of Arabia (this term, though still ambiguous, came increasingly to apply to the peninsula only) in which King Husayn figured at all, were purely in respect of his nominal or 'titular' suzerainty.[74] Over this there was general agreement, there being hardly any mention of the caliphate in this connection. Only Lt. Col. Jacob, the Government of India representative at the Arab Bureau, raised the faintest demurral, considering it wise 'to recognise the Caliphate of a moribund Turkey.'[75]

However, there remained a fundamental practical contradiction at the heart of the 'nominal suzerainty' policy, not so different from that at the heart of Britain's Sharifian caliphate policy, specifically that it required a single dominant prince. Unfortunately for Husayn, Britain had effectively confined his sovereignty to the Hijaz, in addition to which, due to reasons already discussed at length, they were unable to support, or even publicly endorse, the extension of his power. These and other points were made with some cogency in a memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Wilson which he sent to the new Acting High Commissioner in Egypt. Wilson quoted the British orientalist G. Wyman Bury in a manner suggestive of a rudimentary theory of structural capacity and of the collaborative mode of imperialism: 'One of the first principles of state craft in dealing with Orientals is never to back one ruler in preference to others unless he is by personal qualities, position and resources, fitted to wield permanent power.' The implications for Britain's relationship with King Husayn are further clarified by Wilson's comparison of the most prominent Arabian chieftains:

> He [King Husayn] has to subsidise the tribes and these tribes have to be subsidised until they can be induced to form permanent settlement and give up their nomad life. Nomad Arabs pay no taxes and have to be bribed. They have nothing in the way of tillages and cultivation to lose.

---

[74] FO 882/20 Vol I, AP 19/1, Foreign Office Telegram No. 338, to High Commissioner, 14 March 1919; AP 19/2; AP 19/3; AP 19/4; AP 19/5; AP 19/6; AP 19/8, & AP 19/10.
[75] FO 882/20 Vol I, AP 19/1, Memorandum by Lt. Col. Jacob, 19 May 1919.

> Sedentary Arabs have and can be forced to pay taxes and obey laws. This is where Ibn Rashid has been successful viz in settling his people and to some extent Ibn Saud.[76]

In some ways Wilson was out of step with his colleagues in Cairo who, by September 1919, had completely discounted King Husayn's chances of becoming *the* caliph of Islam.[77] At the same time that he emphasised Husayn's incapacity, Wilson concluded that, as with the caliphate, Husayn would have to show that he could gain the support of the various states over which he was to become suzerain. Increasingly, the view in the Arab Bureau was that, whether or not Husayn aspired to the caliphate, and whether or not he could gain some support in Arabia, it seemed likely that several caliphs might reign concurrently - any one of them as ineffectually as any other as far as Britain was concerned.

It has already been pointed out that by the autumn of 1919 any notion of Britain's actively supporting an Arab candidate for the caliphate, even clandestinely, had been *replaced* by a policy based upon the appointment of members of the Sharifian family to positions of secular office in the territories to be ruled by Britain. One may say 'replaced' since, although the solution had changed, the underlying motivation and function of the policy remained the same. The two policies were in essence analogous since Britain still intended to govern these territories 'behind a veil,' that is through 'placemen' who would be sufficiently dependent upon Britain for subsidies etc. though at the same time appropriately located within their social milieu to ensure their effectiveness. As this development did not, by and large, involve the issue of the caliphate it need only be described, for the sake of completeness, in the most cursory way.

A 'Shereefian system'[78] was explicitly referred to by Churchill, as Colonial Secretary, at the so-called Cairo Conference, its chief merit, from his point of view, being its relatively low cost in terms of administrative and defence expenditure. The Middle East Conference which had been convened in Cairo and Jerusalem during March, 1921 decided, among other things that: (a) King Husayn's son 'Abdullah should become the ruler of Transjordan, i.e. that portion of

---

[76] FO 882/20 Vol I, HM 19/1, 'Memorandum appreciating the situation in the Hedjaz,' by Lieutenant Colonel Wilson, British Agent, Jeddah, to Sir Milne Cheetham, Acting High Commissioner, Ramleh, 30 September 1919.
[77] FO 141 587 545 (2) 545/46 p. 216, Letter from Garland, the Arab Bureau, to the Residency, Ramleh, 7 September 1919.

the 'Palestine Mandate' from which Britain wished to exclude Zionist settlement, (b) Faysal should be similarly appointed in Mesopotamia, and (c) Ibn Sa'ud and King Hussein should be treated on an equal footing.[79] In fact, to a considerable extent, things had already been moving in this direction for a least two years.

Faysal had been installed in Syria by the British in September 1918, though his position would become precarious once it was decided to hand it over to the French a year later.[80] Although he had been declared king in tandem with a French High Commissioner in March 1920, the new ruling power deposed and expelled him four months later, thereby releasing him for alternative imperial service in Mesopotamia where he was made king in July-August 1921. Similarly, in the November of that year, 'Abdullah was appointed Amir of Transjordan where he ruled in accordance with the Anglo-Transjordanian agreement from 1923 onwards.

In the meantime, the Arab Bureau, once the institutional champion of the Anglo-Sharifian cause, had already by March 1919 been 'shorn of most of its illustrious members'[81] and was finally disbanded in July 1920. Significantly, according to Bruce Westrate, it was largely due to the pressure of the Indian Government and the India Office that the Bureau was closed. After the War Indian officials, now preoccupied with the militancy of the 'Khilafat' movement[82] which held Britain responsible for the demise of the Turkish caliphate, 'shrank from aggrandizing an Arab Bureau that preferred to deal with Islamic peoples as an aggregate community rather than as a "discordant mosaic".'[83] It is perhaps an indication of a changing

---

[78] CAB 23/38, p. 268, Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers, 11 April 1921.
[79] FO 371/6343, Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem, March 12-30, 1921. Report printed for Colonial Office, June 1921.
[80] The British took the decision to withdraw on the 5-6 September 1919 as a result of pressure from the French who were by then in a position to assert their imperial will in the Middle East once the Treaty of Versailles had been signed at the end of June. Furthermore, once President Wilson had become seriously ill in September 1919 it became apparent that the United States was not about to share the 'imperial, burden.' Hughes, 1999, pp. 150-1. This outcome should not be taken as evidence of the triumph of Sykes-Picot over Husayn-McMahon, since both had been superseded by this time, albeit informally.
[81] Westrate, 1992, p. 192.
[82] An Indian Muslim anti-imperialist movement which emerged in response to the treatment of the Ottoman sultanate-caliphate after the war. The movement remained active until the abolition of the caliphate in 1924.
[83] Westrate, 1992, p. 200. It should be pointed out, however, that British policy had been moving towards a more fragmentary approach for some time.

atmosphere within British circles appertaining to the Middle East that *The Times* saw fit to declare the Arab Bureau's outlook obsolete on more than one occasion.[84]

Moreover, King Husayn had become quite superfluous to this system of colonial rule. Whereas the British had restrained Ibn Sa'ud's incursions into Sharifian territory at Turabah in May 1919, they did not oppose his annexation of 'Asir in August 1921. However it was not until August 1924 that Ibn Sa'ud felt confident enough to invade the Hijaz. As a result of Ibn Sa'ud's success, in October that year the notables of Mecca persuaded Husayn to abdicate in favour of his son, 'Ali, only to see Mecca taken within ten days. 'Ali, in turn, was forced to surrender to Ibn Sa'ud after the fall of Jiddah at the end of 1925. Finally, in January 1926 'Abd al-'Aziz II (Ibn Sa'ud) was proclaimed 'King of Hijaz.'

8.24 The Caliphate Issue at Sèvres[85] and Lausanne

The issue of the caliphate, Arab or otherwise, did not figure in Faysal's representations at Paris on behalf of the Hijaz delegation which had been cast in an overtly secular nationalist idiom.[86] When it came to the treaties concerning Turkey, and the Middle East in general, it was Britain who would ensure that the disposition of the caliphate be dealt with once and for all. Although the idea of a specifically *Arab* caliphate was defunct by the autumn of 1919, in spite of the official attitude of disinterest, it did not follow that Britain was entirely unconcerned with the issue of the caliphate itself. The uncharacteristically definitive advice, considering the subject matter, which the Foreign Office now dispensed is evidence that they had assimilated the lessons derived from the Italian experience:

> The question of the Caliphate should not be touched upon in any treaty made (1) with Turkey (2) with any of the nations which previously belonged to the Turkish Empire and which will now be placed under a Mandatory power. In this way the High Contracting Powers would not render themselves open to the charge of meddling in matters which are solely a concern of the

---

[84] The Arab Bureau was criticised specifically for its former caliphate policy - on 20 September 1920, Fromkin, 1991, p. 426; and on 27 December 1921, Westrate, 1992, pp. 143-4.
[85] Whereas the Treaty of Lausanne was negotiated at Lausanne, the Treaty of Sèvres was, in fact, negotiated in London and San Remo. Anderson, 1966, p. 367.
[86] Hurewitz, 1956, Vol. II, pp. 38-9, Amir Faysal's Memorandum to the Supreme Council at the Paris Peace Conference, 1 January 1919; and, Antonius, 1938, pp. 286-7.

> Mohammedan religion and which should therefore be decided by the Moslem world. In their recognition of the King of the Hedjaz the High Contracting Powers should emphasize his responsibilities and privileges as keeper of the Holy Cities but should ignore any claims which he may wish to make to the Caliphate.[87]

It was, however, the India Office and the Government of India who would ensure that the lessons of Nallino were positively implemented.[88] Their motivation was undoubtedly engendered by the creation of the 'All-India Khilafat Committee' and compounded by their own response at the infamous massacre at Amritsar in November 1919.[89] The delay and ultimate failure of the Treaty of Sèvres[90] and the five months spent negotiating the Treaty of Lausanne gave them ample opportunity to indulge their obsessive desire to eliminate any residual extra-territorial 'spiritual' powers which the Turkish caliphate might seek to retain after the war. In fact the discussions with India barely touched on anything else. The details are of only slight interest here: that is in so far as the rather esoteric and involuted deliberations reflect the same fears that comprised the *negative*[91] component of the motivation underpinning the original caliphate policy. What follows gives only a flavour of the discussions which took place.

Except to reach a basic understanding over the question of the caliphate the Foreign Office barely consulted India in preparation for the Treaty of Sèvres. As Curzon and Montagu saw it, the problem was that Islam required that the caliph be an independent temporal sovereign. However, according to the proposed treaty, Turkey was to be placed under a mandate and lose its sovereignty, whereas, the same treaty was about to recognise the sovereignty of the King of the Hijaz. It would appear to Muslims therefore that Britain was exercising a preference over the future of the caliphate in contradiction of her publicly stated policy. There followed brief discussions over whether the extra-territorial authority of the Shaykh al-Islam should be

---

[87] FO 141 587 545 (2) 545/45, Foreign Office despatch no. 8120 in response to queries from the High Commissioner, Constantinople, 1 September 1919.
[88] The centrality Dr. Arnold's advice was acknowledged from the outset. L/P&S/10/851 P 4320/19, Montagu to Hirtzel, 19 August 1919.
[89] Hardy, 1972, p. 189.
[90] Busch, 1976, p. 247.
[91] As distinct from the positive component, that is, the use of an Arab caliphate as the principal of unity and organisation of a future British Arabia.

explicitly abrogated, nullified indirectly via some euphemism, or simply ignored altogether.[92] The final draft of the treaty was evidently unsatisfactory from an Islamic point of view since it attempted, rather crudely, to sever the connection between Turkey and Muslims elsewhere.[93] Consequently, during the period leading up to its drafting, and in the year or so after its conclusive non-ratification in August 1920, the Prime Minister received numerous representations and deputations from Muslims who objected to Britain's derogation of the caliph of Islam.[94] In response the orientally ingenuous Lloyd George issued an impromptu pledge which the Indian Government would later regret.[95]

In March 1922 the Foreign Office instigated a process of consultation in which the views of the Government of India were sought with specific reference to the insertion of an article into the revised Treaty of Sèvres. The object of this article was to nullify the authority of the Turkish Sultan-caliph in all of the ceded territories without attracting the hostility of Islam as Article 139 of the original treaty had done. There was however the additional obstacle of the 'Prime Minister's pledge' not to interfere in the spiritual authority of the caliph which, according to Hirtzel, ran counter to the advice of Dr. Arnold. Ironically, the delegation of Indian Muslims which had visited the Prime Minister the previous March had cited the 1912 treaty between Italy and Turkey in order to illustrate the caliphal privileges which they now insisted be maintained.[96]

The discussions between the Government of India and the India Office over the wording of what was to become the Treaty of Lausanne continued for another twelve months. In no way did these deliberations contemplate the creation of an alternative caliphate, let alone an Arab

---

[92] L/P&S/10/851 P. 5273/1919, Secret letter from J. A. C. Tilley, Acting Under Secretary, Foreign Office, No. 119147/G.44. to Under Secretary of State, India Office, 30 August 1919; Extracts from Minutes of War Cabinet, 619, 20 August 1919; and, Private letter from Montagu, India Office, to Curzon, 28 August 1919. L/P&S/10/576 P.4744 Pt.2 1919 5011, draft of letter by Holderness to the Foreign Office, 14 October 1919.

[93] Hurewitz, 1956, Vol II, p. 81, 'Political Clauses of the Treaty of Sèvres 10 August 1920.'

[94] L/P&S/10/797 P. 1972 1920, covering representations and memorials for 1919 and 1920; and, L/P&S/10/853, 'Deputation to the Prime Minister, at the House of Commons. On Thursday, 24th March, 1921.'

[95] L/P&S/10/853 P. 3090, 'The Prime Minister's "pledge"' addressed to the Indian Moslem Delegation, 24 March 1921; and, L/P&S/10/853 P. 1696 1922, Letter from Hirtzel to Dr. Arnold, 27 April 1922.

[96] L/P&S/10/853, P. 4995 79, Department minute signed by the secretaries of the Government of India Department and the C & R Department, 31 March 1922, and, handwritten minutes initialed AH [Arthur Hirtzel], 7 April 1922. The Prime Minister received further objections to Article 139 from the Indian Khilafat Committee. P. 1419 1922, Chotani, President, Khilafat, Bombay, to the Rt. Hon. Lloyd George, 31 March 1922.

one; rather the main object was to confine the authority of the Turkish caliph, temporal, spiritual, religious or secular to Turkey itself – in a sense to 'nationalise' or 'domesticate' the caliphate. However, there were considerable differences of opinion. The Viceroy began by suggesting the formal recognition of the Sultan-caliph's religious suzerainty over the Holy Places – the very opposite of the original caliphate policy. He was also sensitive to the use of the word 'temporal' in the treaty, which in his view amounted to 'the recognition of the non-removal of a spiritual authority' which could only be cancelled by a consensus of Muslims themselves.[97] Hirtzel, on the other hand, was against using either of the words 'spiritual' or 'temporal' since it was necessary to assume that Turkey would have no rights which were *not* temporal. He later told the Government of India that 'there is a fundamental objection to attempt to distinguish between temporal & spiritual functions, since such distinction does not really exist & attempt to foster belief in it was and is one of main planks in pan Islamic platform.' He went on to say, three months later, that the distinction had been the invention of 'Abdulhamid and was a trap best avoided, and that it was at variance with what '"competent European scholars"' had told them was 'the very essence of the caliphate.'[98] Hirtzel even objected to referring to the Sultan as caliph since this constituted 'a pronouncement on the caliphate by non-Muslims.'[99]

In an almost comic understatement, Wakely, the Secretary of the Political Department of the India Office, described the discussions over the treaty as having become 'rather involved.' When he asked, rhetorically, how the treaty might be amended to give effect to the PM's pledge regarding the caliphate he implied, unhelpfully, that it had already been 'agreed that no positive or detailed provisions on the subject can be included in the Treaty.'[100] This apparent impasse led to an argument over euphemisms. The phrase 'any spiritual privileges assigned to the caliph by tenets of the Moslem religion' was bandied about, though Arnold thought this unacceptable since the caliph had never exercised such authority. A jihad, for example, was a political, not a spiritual, act. However, the Viceroy deprecated the term 'spiritual privileges' as

---

[97] L/P&S/10/853 P. 1696 1922, Telegram 498.S from Viceroy, Foreign and Political Department, Simla, to Secretary of State for India, 22 April 1922.
[98] L/P&S/10/853 P. 2390, Minute by Hirtzel, 6 July 1922.
[99] L/P&S/10/853 P. 1696 1922, Hirtzel to Dr. Arnold, 27 April 1922, and Hirtzel to Government of India, Foreign Department.

the PM had undertaken not to interfere with them; and 'tenets' he thought inadequate as it did not cover practices which were a matter of custom and tradition.[101]

Finally, a compromise was reached which in effect accorded with Dr. Arnold's preferred solution. All conceivable extra-territorial powers of the caliph were *definitively* and *comprehensively* canceled while at the same time giving the *general* appearance of standing by the *particulars* of the Prime Minister's pledge. The relevant articles of the Treaty of Lausanne read as follows:

> Art. 22. Without prejudice to the general stipulations of Article 27, Turkey hereby recognises the definite abolition of all rights and privileges whatsoever which she enjoyed in Libya under the Treaty of Lausanne of the 18th October, 1912, and the instruments connected therewith.
>
> Art. 27. ... It is understood that the spiritual attributions of the Moslem religious authorities are in no way infringed.[102]

Although the resolution of the caliphate issue in the treaty appears adroit, it must remain a matter of speculation how these contradictory clauses might have fared had there been both the capacity and the will among Muslims to perpetuate the institution of the Islamic caliphate in a militantly anti-imperialist, or merely chauvinistically anti-European, way. In the event, within nine months of the treaty being signed the Turkish caliphate was abolished.

8.3 The Demise of the Caliphate

8.31 The Abolition of the Turkish Caliphate

The actions of Britain and her Allies in Turkey after the War provide an outstanding historical example of 'La Fontaine's Fable,'[103] since, with regard to the matter of the caliphate, their

---

[100] L/P&S/10/853 P. 1953, Letter from L. D. Wakely, Secretary, Political Department, India Office, to the Secretary of State, India Office, 17 May 1922.
[101] L/P&S/10/853 P. 2390, Minute by Hirtzel, 6 July 1922, and, P. 3090, Telegram 967-S, Viceroy, Foreign & Political Department to Secretary of State for India, 24 July 1922.

actions produced for them a satisfactory outcome in a way totally opposite to the one intended. The extremity of the Allies designs, later reflected in the diplomatic assault at Sèvres, merely strengthened Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish Nationalists who were forced to regroup in Ankara where they could remain unmolested by the British and French navies. The attitude of the Allies even induced the parliament at Constantinople to join the Kemalists in signing the 'National Pact' in January 1920. In a vain attempt to regain the upper hand the Allies then occupied Constantinople and in April forced the Shaykh al-Islam to publicly denounce Kemal.[104] This in turn threw the Ankara Grand National Assembly even more strongly behind Kemal and against the collaborator government which reported to a British High Commissioner. The Allies' actions ultimately ensured the failure of Sèvres.[105]

The Kemalists agenda was one of secular, national, reform and political and economic reconstruction. Their strictly *national* programme meant that they had no imperialist pretensions and therefore eschewed all supra-national religious responsibilities. As such they posed no long-term threat to Britain. However, Kemal's first public denunciation of pan-Islam was not until late 1921[106] and there was no clear indication that he might move against the Sultan–caliph until September 1922. British commentators had hitherto assumed that the Kemalists would abide by the fourth article of the National Pact which had declared in favour of retaining the caliphate.[107] In fact it was the Sultanate which was abolished on 1 November; the caliphate was to remain with the House of Osman but under the authority of the National Assembly.[108] As A. L. Macfie explains:

> The actual occasion, selected (according to his own account) by Mustafa Kemal, for the abolition of the sultanate ... was the receipt in October 1922 of an invitation from the Allies to

---

[102] Hurewitz, Volume II, 1956, p. 121. The treaty was signed on 24 July 1923.
[103] According to this fable a peasant labourer induced his sons to toil furiously by telling them that there was treasure buried in their fields. They did not discover any treasure but their digging so enriched the soil that they did indeed become wealthy. Elster, 1985, pp. 22-3.
[104] Note that the British had absolutely no qualms about interfering in 'spiritual' matters or opposing established religious authorities within a *national*, as opposed to *global*, context.
[105] Anderson, 1966, pp. 366-7.
[106] Landau, 1990, p. 180; and, FO 371/6537 13622/143/44, Despatch No. 1112, Sir H. Rumbold, British High Commission, Constantinople, to the Marquess Curzon of Keddleston, 6 December 1921.
[107] L/P&S/10/895, P 3909 1922, Secret Report – 'The Kemalists and the Caliphate,' 21 September 1922.
[108] L/P&S/10/895, P 4448 1922, Telegram No. 644 from Sir H. Rumbold, Constantinople, 3 November 1922.

> both the Istanbul and Ankara governments to send delegations to the peace conference shortly to be convened in Lausanne.[109]

Once again the actions of the allies both enabled and forced Kemal to strengthen his position *vis-à-vis* the old government. Jacob Landau adds that the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne enabled the Kemalists to disregard the support of Muslims outside Turkey.[110] It thus becomes apparent that from the Turkish republican point of view, the Treaty of Lausanne was not so much an imposition, but an advancement of their agenda.

On 24 November a new Turkish caliph was invested while the ex-Sultan, soon to be become ex-Caliph had already been removed to exile in Malta, courtesy of the British navy.[111] With the exception of Transjordan and the Hijaz the new caliph received general, though frequently unenthusiastic, recognition throughout the Muslim world.[112] Ironically, although the Government of India 'endorsed' the change, Indian Muslims were reported to be 'unconcerned.'[113] Interestingly, in a manner which Mr. Wyman Bury[114] might have appreciated, Ronald Storrs observed that attachment to the caliphate was strongest in Muslim countries which had lost their independence, adding that this 'varie[d] in inverse proportion with the good relations between protector and protected.'[115]

The electoral victory of Kemal's People's Party[116] and the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in October 1923 were quickly followed by rumours of the imminent abolition of the caliphate,[117] only to be succeeded by the abolition itself on 3 March 1924.[118] When news of

---

[109] Macfie, 1998, p. 197.
[110] Landau, 1990, p. 181.
[111] L/P&S/10/895, Printed Document E 13645/12891/44, including Henderson to Curzon, 28 November 1922; and, Busch, 1976, p. 363. The British Consul in Damascus opined that a new caliph could not be nominated as long as the old one was still alive and had not abdicated. L/P&S/10/895, P 89 1923, C. E. S. Palmer, British Consul, Damascus, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 4 December 1922.
[112] L/P&S/10/895, P 3459, P3468, & P 3762, relating to July-August 1923.
[113] L/P&S/10/895, P 3408, Humphrys to Curzon, 14 August 1923.
[114] See the quotation from this rather perceptive imperialist at the front of this thesis.
[115] L/P&S/10/895, P 3762 1923, Paraphrase of telegram No. 288 of 28 August 1923, from the Officer administrating the Government of Palestine, to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, incorporating a memorandum by Mr. Storrs, District Governor of the Jerusalem-Jaffa District, 27 August 1923.
[116] Macfie, 1998, p. 207.
[117] L/P&S/10/895, P 4448 1923, Henderson, British High Commission, Constantinople, to Curzon, 4 November 1923; P 4496 1923, Henderson to Curzon, 13 November 1923; P 4567 1923, Henderson No. 523, 23 November 1923; P 4766 1923, Henderson, No. 775, 27 November 1923; L/P&S/10/1111, P 1015 1924, Mr. Lindsay, HM Representative, Constantinople, No. 33, 25 February 1924.

the abolition was received in the British parliament Ormsby-Gore asked the first Labour Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, J. Ramsay MacDonald, whether the Treaty of Lausanne, in any way, 'implie[d] recognition of the existing [sic] Turkish Caliphate by powers other than Turkey.'[119] The inconsequentiality of this query is best illustrated by the *Daily Mail*'s report of the ultimate fate of the caliph of Islam. The headline ran: 'Ex-Caliph Almost Penniless - Unable to Afford Servant - Timid Wives in One Room.' As if further evidence of the caliph's almost tragicomic demise were needed, the report went on to say that, now in exile in Switzerland, for reasons of economy and timidity the ex-Imperial wives all slept in one 'dormitory.'[120]

8.32 The Caliphate of Husayn, King of the Hijaz

For once Kedourie may be quoted with unqualified approval:

> The Caliphate question became acute in 1924. In March, the Turks abolished the Ottoman Caliphate and sent the last Caliph into exile. Thereupon, the king of the Hijaz hastened to have himself proclaimed Caliph, basing himself—so he claimed—on the suffrages of the faithful in Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Transjordan. But Husain's presumed election settled nothing; it was patently farcical, and had no relation to the realities of the Islamic world.[121]

The acuteness of the issue was, in the first instance, a predominantly Muslim affair. Husayn's bid neither shocked, gratified, nor dismayed the British authorities. There had been rumours of such a proclamation on at least three occasions during the five years since the War. In January 1919 news had been received that King Husayn had been proclaimed caliph at a ceremony at the Mosque of 'Umar in Jerusalem. This turned out to have been a mere propaganda ploy, the response to which had not been encouraging for Husayn.[122] After the abolition of the Turkish sultanate in November 1922, the possibility of a declaration by Husayn was mooted by the British but discounted as unlikely by the Foreign Office on the grounds that he was so

---

[118] L/P&S/10/1111, P 1135 1924, Mr. Lindsay, telegrams 4 & 5 March 1924.
[119] L/P&S/10/1111, P 1148 1924, 'House of Commons - Parliamentary Notice - Question by Mr. Ormsby-Gore, Weds 5th March, 1924.'
[120] L/P&S/10/1111, P 2456 1924, Press cuttings - *Daily Mail*, April 19, 1924.
[121] Kedourie, 1963, p. 214.
[122] FO 882 Vol. 25, Arab Bulletin, No. 108, January 1919; and, Arab Bulletin No. 109, 6 February 1919.

obviously under British influence.[123] However, a message sent by the *Daily Mail*'s Jerusalem correspondent in January 1923 which indicated the likelihood of a Sharifian caliphate, induced the Indian Viceroy to declare nonchalantly: 'This fulfils the original British scheme for the removal of the Khalifat to Mecca.'[124] Although the matter was discussed only briefly at Lausanne, the delegation seemed to gain comfort from the view that a Sharifian caliphate at the present juncture would simply split the Muslim world in two.[125] There was, however, some consternation in India when it was suggested that the allegiance of the Muslim world might be divided amongst three caliphs – the third being the Amir of Afghanistan.[126] In the summer of 1923 further rumours arrived in London from Mecca, in turn via the Grand Qadi there, the 'ulama of Java, the Dutch Consul in Jiddah, and, finally, through the offices of his British counterpart, Bullard.[127] The assessment of an Indian Nawab on this occasion proved most accurate and is worth quoting at length:

> The Sharif cannot control the situation without outside help, there is no doubt about it. In the first place he has not got enough funds with which to maintain the dignity of the Holy Places and in the second place he must find something for the poor turbulent Beduins to live upon. The country being totally unproductive these Beduins must live on the poor Hajis, if they are not to be subsidised by outsiders. The case becomes worse when the British help is stopped and the Egyptian allowances are withdrawn. Somebody must come to the Sharif's assistance and save the situation and if British help is likely to prove more injurious than beneficial to the Sharif, the only alternative left is either to revert to the old status of Turkish sovereignty over the Hedjaz or to place the country under the control and management of the United States of Islam. The latter will be impossible under the present disunited condition of the Muslim brotherhood all over the world.[128]

The only indications of European imperial interest in the issue after the abolition concerned rumours that King Fu'ad of Egypt was being promoted as a possible candidate. The issue was compounded by the French who, apparently, considered offering asylum to 'Abdulmecid (the last caliph) and vesting the caliphate in the Sultanate of Morocco. To this eventuality was

---

[123] L/P&S/10/895, P 4749 1922, Hardinge to Curzon, no. 2732, 22 November 1922.
[124] L/P&S/10/895, P 299 1923, Telegram 73 S from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, 18 January 1923.
[125] L/P&S/10/895, Graffety-Smith Esq., Foreign Office, No. 23 to Acting British Agent, Jeddah, 8 February 1923.
[126] L/P&S/10/895, Viceroy, telegram No. 207 S, to Secretary of State for India, 23 February 1923.
[127] FO 141 587 545 (2) 545/101, Report from Consul Bullard, Jeddah, to Curzon, Foreign Office, 14 August 1923.
[128] L/P&S/10/895, P 4013 1923, from the Chief Commissioner of the North West Frontier province to the Secretary of the Government of India Foreign and Political department, 26 September 1923, enclosing a report

counterposed the idea of the British giving asylum to the ex-Sultan-caliph, Mehmet V, in Egypt, and encouraging him to re-establish the caliphate there.[129] There is, however, no indication that such ideas were pursued with any constancy or seriousness. It will be shown later how the intimately related factors referred to above, namely political fragmentation in the Muslim world, and imperial rivalry among the occupying powers (Britain, France, Italy, and, to a lesser extent, Holland), ensured that the caliphate would not be revived.

On 7 March 1924 Herbert Samuel, High Commissioner for Palestine, informed the Secretary of State for the Colonies that he had been told by Amir 'Abdullah of Transjordan that his father had been widely hailed as caliph and had therefore accepted the office.[130] The British Representative in Constantinople immediately alerted his superiors in London to the likelihood that Husayn's candidature would be exploited against Britain.[131] This proved to be the case – the Viceroy reported on the same day that the Indian Khilafat Committee had already warned Indian Muslims of British intrigue. In support of their argument the Committee identified Mr. Ryan in Constantinople along with 'Abdullah in Trans-Jordania, Samuel in Palestine, Feisal in Baghdad and the Sherif himself in holy Mecca'[132] as the agents of the British conspiracy against Islam.

Throughout the remaining seven months of Husayn's kingship in Mecca a range of responses to his caliphate were reported by British agents in the region. Opinion in Palestine, Iraq and Transjordan was reputedly favourable, while India, Afghanistan, Egypt and Libya responded negatively. Ibn Sa'ud declared his solidarity with the Indian Khilafat Committee. Turkey and the Dutch East Indies appeared indifferent and the 'ulama of the Sudan were divided.[133] These responses were to a large degree predictable. The most interesting reaction of all, however, was in the French mandated territories of Lebanon and Syria. It has already been stated that

---

dated 8 September 1923 by the 'Nawab Sir Abdul Qayyum' based on an interview with the 'King of Hijaz,' conducted eighteen months previously.

[129] FO 141 587 545 (3) 545/127a, Note on the Caliphate, author not stated, 7 March 1924.

[130] L/P&S/10/1111, P 1193 1924, Telegram from the High Commissioner, Palestine to the Sec. of State for the Colonies, 7 March 1924. Bullard in Jeddah had anticipated Husayn's acceptance four days earlier. P 1511 1924, Despatch No. 22, Bullard, British Agent and Consul, Jeddah, 3 March 1924.

[131] L/P&S/10/1111, P 1208 1924, Telegram No. 49 from Lindsay, Constantinople, 8 March 1924.

[132] L/P&S/10/1111, Telegram No. 517 S from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India, 8 March 1924.

[133] The archival references are too numerous to list. The relevant material may be found at: L/P&S/10/1111, for March, April, June and August 1924; and, FO 141 587 545 (4) & (5), for March 1924.

the French feared, with some justification, that Britain might attempt to subvert their occupation of Syria by superimposing (according to the metaphors previously employed here) the spiritual or religious suzerainty of a Sharifian caliphate over their rule. Evidently Husayn's declaration rekindled their suspicions.

The initial responses to Husayn's caliphate were reputedly positive in the cities of Beirut, Damascus and Aleppo, though it was also said that they had been muted in anticipation of the French response. During the second half of March 1924, the French authorities adopted a threefold strategy of pressure, propaganda and repression against anyone who overtly supported Hussein as caliph. In the three cities mentioned the district governors were required to order their respective local mufti's and 'ulama to curtail, at once, all declarations for Husayn in the mosques within their jurisdiction. Secondly, the French colonial administration forced the local press to insert articles stating, either directly as 'fact,' or in the guise of a rumour, that Husayn's election to the caliphate and the subsequent support for him in Syria and Lebanon had been induced by British funding. Finally, reports were received by British representatives in Beirut that a number of recalcitrant supporters of the Sharifian caliphate had been arrested and deported.[134] In May there were further rumours in a Cairo newspaper that the French were about to entice the ex-caliph, 'Abdulmecid, to Damascus and promote him as a rival to Husayn.[135] It was even reported in October that year, after King Husayn had abdicated but before his son 'Ali had been displaced by Ibn Sa'ud as King of Hijaz, that the French might encourage the latter to make a bid for the caliphate.[136]

In the end Husayn's caliphate failed, not as a result of specifically religious factors but because of his incapacity in respect of the social and economic resources at his disposal *vis-à-vis* his main rival, Ibn Sa'ud. It is one of the main tenets of this thesis that the internal contradictions of the earlier British, Sharifian caliphate policy were largely a consequence of this more fundamental incapacity. In other words Husayn's failure was a foregone conclusion, the outcome having been determined by the same factors which limited the progress of

---

[134] Again, numerous archival references are to be found at: L/P&S/10/1111, for March 1924.
[135] L/P&S/10/1111, P 2462 1924, Despatch No. 87 from W. A. Smart, British Consulate, Damascus, Syria, to the Principle Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 17 May 1924.

Husayn's Arab Revolt. In the context of the Kemalist's abolition of the caliphate, and the later collapse of the Cairo Caliphate Conference without reaching a consensus, Husayn's fugacious tenure looks like an inconsequential aberration.

8.33 The Caliphate Conferences of 1926

There had been proposals for an Islamic conference to determine the future of the caliphate as early as 1921. Such initiatives proliferated after the abolition of the Turkish caliphate in March 1924. The first to occur had been that convened by King Husayn in Mecca in the July of that year in the hope of garnering a more comprehensive endorsement for his pretensions. He failed, but the so-called 'Pilgrimage Congress' was to meet annually thereafter - only the advance of Ibn Sa'ud's Ikhwan prevented this from ever happening.[137] The main impetus for a conference, however, came from Egypt,[138] which was arguably the strongest contender being formally independent,[139] populous and predominantly Muslim. Afghanistan, being equally Muslim, perhaps more independent, though rather less populous, framed a counter proposal.[140] The Amir argued that the conference should be held in a 'purely Islamic country which is free from both external intrigues and from foreign influences.' His assessment of the situation would prove more accurate than that of any imperialist. According to the British representative in Kabul the Amir had said that,

> the spirit of nationalism, had taken a strong grip on all the countries of the world, and national "churches" of Islam would probably be the result of the action of the Turks in abolishing the Caliph's office.[141]

---

[136] L/P&S/10/1111, P 4270 1924, Telegram No. 9 from the Acting British Consul, Damascus, to the Foreign Office, 21 October 1924.

[137] Kramer, 1986, p. 80. After he abdicated in October 1924, Husayn fled to 'Aqaba where he lived for ten months until Ibn Sa'ud threatened to attack him there too. He was quickly removed to Cyprus by the British, remaining there until he became seriously ill in 1930. He was then allowed to go to Amman where he died six months later on 4 June 1931 at the age of 78. Wilson, 1990, pp. 87-9.

[138] FO 141 587 545 (3) 545/127, Handwritten minute, unsigned but stamped by the HC, Egypt, 8 March, 1924; FO 141 587 545 (5) 545/201a, 'Memorandum on the Khalifate Committees,' unsigned but stamped by the High Commissioner, 3 June 1924, and, 55/203, Memorandum initialed D.G.E.D., stamped by the High Commissioner, Egypt, 18 June 1924.

[139] Since February 1922.

[140] FO 141 587 545 (5) 545/202, Memorandum, 3 November 1924.

After two years of planning and organisation the 'General Islamic Congress for the Caliphate' was eventually convened in May 1926[142] to be adjourned indefinitely on 19 May after only four sessions.[143] According to Albert Hourani's account,

> the congress reaffirmed the traditional view of the caliphate: it was legitimate, indeed it was necessary, since many legal obligations depended on it. But to be real it must have both spiritual and temporal power. When such power did not exist the caliphate could not really exist, and this was the situation at the present time.[144]

The following month a counter-conference, 'The Congress of the Islamic World,' was instigated by Ibn Sa'ud in Mecca. According to Martin Kramer this also ended in a shambles with many delegates being unprepared and representing no one.[145] The details of these conferences need not be gone into here; suffice it to say that their collapse was due to the factors already referred to: national rivalry and suspicion of, and between, the various imperial interests. From the Eastern Crisis of 1878-80, if not at the drafting of the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci in 1774, the fate of the Caliphate of Islam had been intimately connected with the effects of imperial domination. Although by 1926 the imperial powers had already ceased to be preoccupied by the institution of the caliphate itself, Islamist political resistance to imperialist penetration and influence would continue for many years to come, as would imperialist attempts to subvert, redirect or extinguish such threats. The relationship between Britain and the caliphate in the era of the Great War represents only the first instance of such a development.

---

[141] L/P&S/10/1111, Despatch No. 54, from F. H. Humphrys, Kabul, to RH J. Ramsay MacDonald, 21 April 1924.
[142] Kramer, 1986, p. 86.
[143] FO 141 587 545 (5) 545/248, Letter from Lloyd, High Commissioner, Egypt to The Governor, Straits Settlement, Government House, Singapore, 28 May 1926.
[144] Hourani, 1983, p. 184.
[145] Kramer, 1986, pp. 106 & 109-12.

8.4 Historical Footnote

In a certain sense the story of Britain's interest in the caliphate of Islam begins and ends, courtesy of the 'Italian Lesson,' with the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci, although it took nearly a century and half for Britain's 'oriental experts' to attempt a reversal of its effects. The issue of the Islamic Caliphate has been of little, other than purely academic, interest among non-Muslims throughout the intervening three-quarters of a century. However, in relation to the latest manifestation of reaction against Western domination articulated through the ideology and language of Islam,[146] *The Guardian* reported in the autumn of 2001 that,

> in his 1996 fatwa, Bin Laden declared: "There is no more important duty than pushing the American enemy out of the holy land." This was not a goal in itself, but a necessary step towards overthrowing corrupt regimes in the Islamic world and replacing them with a new *caliphate* that would unite all Muslims. [emphasis added][147]

The significance of the events of September 11, 2001 were that, for the first time on a momentous scale, resistance to Western imperialism articulated through the language of Islam was conducted at the heart of the metropolis. While it remains to be seen whether trans-national Islamic insurgency will succeed in undermining US imperialism in the Middle East, it seems unlikely that the world's remaining superpower will resort to promoting, even clandestinely, the restoration of an alternative caliphate sympathetic to western interests. It may safely be assumed, however, that should Ibn Ladin's purported aim of restoring the caliphate be advanced in the slightest, the western powers would quickly conspire to efface such a development.

---

[146] This may be characterised in a number of ways depending on whether one wishes to take Islamic rhetoric at face value or explain the underlying grievances in more secular, universalist terms. The incident referred to being the attack on the World Trade Center, New York on 11 September 2001 which is presumed to have been perpetrated by members of the 'al-Qa'ida Network' under the direction of Usama bin Ladin, a former citizen of Sa'udi Arabia.

[147] Whitaker, 2001. The 'holy land' to which Ibn Ladin is referring is, of course, the very same kingdom which had absorbed King Husayn's Hijaz three-quarters of a century earlier.

CHAPTER 9: Conclusion

Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed.[1]

Francis Bacon's maxim[2] contains an important truth if one accepts that, in an alienated world, i.e. one divided by nationality, race and, most importantly, by class, certain categories of other people may present themselves as external facts to be contended with, just as 'nature' appears to 'man' in Bacon's aphorism. The relevance of Bacon's insight is that if there were a single lesson to be drawn from this thesis it would be this: that for the imperialist, as for the would-be collaborator, the success of any collaborative endeavour will depend upon the *nature* of the contending social structures obtaining under the circumstances. Such a conclusion has the benefit of responding to the second and third objectives of this thesis regarding the bilateral nature of the enterprise undertaken, and the failure of Britain's Arab caliphate project as a result of the inherent structural incapacity of the collaborating party. Importantly, these conclusions emerge from an application of the theoretical framework set out in Chapter 1 to the 'raw' material selected from official archival sources. This framework consisted of a theory of imperial collaboration enhanced by a theory of structural capacities set within a certain understanding of the context of imperialism. The first objective of the thesis, i.e. to establish the centrality of the caliphate issue in British Middle Eastern policy during the first half of Great War, has been met, firstly, by showing how the removal of the caliphate from enemy hands became the *sine qua non* of 'British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia,' and secondly, by indicating how this fact explains the presumption of compatibility between the accords reached with Sharif Husayn and France, respectively. Such was the strength of this presumption amongst British policy makers that the issue was the subject of relatively little discussion between McMahon's first letter to Husayn of August 1915, and the onset of the Arab Revolt in June 1916, after which the caliphate 'plan' began to unravel.

---

[1] Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 1620, quoted in, Tripp, 1976, p. 616.
[2] The dialectical force of Bacon's aphorism is expressed in Lucio Colletti's gloss: 'to make the object conform to us, it is indispensable that we conform ourselves to it.' Colletti, 1974, p. 68.

9. 01 The Background to British Involvement in the Matter of the Caliphate

Chapter 2 did not only provide the historical background to Britain's eventual engagement with questions concerning the future of the caliphate of Islam, but inadvertently suggested some answers to the question of continuity (biographical and textual) in the matter of certain imperial techniques and ideologies. Before summarising these it is important to note that they have important implications for certain epistemological questions regarding the nature of 'imperial knowledge.' However, as these lie beyond the main scope of this thesis they will be addressed only cursorily in a subsidiary section of this conclusion. The significance of the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci in relation to the objectives of this thesis is that it illustrates how the institution of the caliphate was reinvented to conform with European pre-conceptions. This 'papalisation' of the caliphate was undertaken in order to increase the 'spiritual' reach supposedly attached to the office in order to compensate for the territorial losses suffered by the Ottoman Empire in favour of encroaching *Christian* European powers. Significantly, the extra-territoriality which came to be associated with the authority of the caliphate, and which remains the salient feature of political pan-Islam, emerged *dialectically*. That is, it was neither imposed upon Islam, adopted out of veneration of European ways, nor formulated as an anti-European hoax.

For the British, the so-called 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857, although neither essentially, nor predominantly, Islamic in nature, produced the peculiarly British paranoia disparagingly known as the 'Islamic bogey' by highlighting the potential dangers of pan-Islam directed against a European empire. The most important result of Chapter 2, however, was that it established the conjuncture of the 'Hijaz Crisis' of 1879-80 with the Second Afghan War, as an historical paradigm for an alliance between Britain and one of the supposed high offices of Islam. The objective, from a British point of view, being to forestall the possibility of an anti-British jihad aided and abetted by a rival imperial power. An important feature of this relationship was that, like the Anglo-Sharifian alliance of the Great War, it depended very much on the Sharif of Mecca's perspicacity regarding inter-imperial affairs, and on the subordinate party taking the initiative to exploit this knowledge.

It was during this episode that the notion first arose among certain members of the British imperial class that the Sharif of Mecca was 'head of the faith' - his position being analogous to that of the Pope - and that it would be advantageous for Britain to obtain a protectorate over the Hijaz in order to control Islam. This was also the first occasion on which British imperialists conjoined, no matter how vaguely, the supposed spiritual pre-eminence of the Sharif of Mecca with the idea of Arab separation from the Turks. Furthermore, in a manner that would be repeated some thirty-odd years later, it was understood that the success of such an enterprise would very much depend on maintaining a semblance of non-involvement in the affairs of Islam.

As war approached, the very real possibility that the Ottoman Empire would collapse leaving those parts of the empire inhabited by Arabs open to Western imperial encroachment figured prominently in the strategic considerations of European powers – in particular those of Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Russia. It is under precisely such conditions that the notion of 'prophylactic acquisition' comes into force. Although this is a negative impulse in itself it, such a dynamic necessitates a more creative approach to imperial extension in the areas anticipated to become available. In the case of Britain this resulted in the emergence of a more positive vision of a British Middle East amongst certain, critically placed, individuals. Unusually, in this instance, the prophylactic motive came to be applied to the realm of ideas and institutions, since Turkey, the power whose secular ruler occupied the position of caliph, had become an enemy of Britain. This novel circumstance created the opportunity for Germany, the imperial archenemy, to conspire with Turkey in directing a jihad against Britain. In this regard Britain was uniquely vulnerable in having dominion over hundreds of millions of Muslim subjects in India and Egypt.

It is apparent that, in general, the ubiquitous logic of collaboration conjoined with an instance of purely prophylactic imperialism would tend to produce arrangements which preserve, rather than revolutionise, existing social relations. Under certain circumstances an imperial power might be inclined to revive traditional structures or even prolong the efficacy of moribund institutions, in order to forestall the emergence of more troublesome 'modern' political organisation and ideologies. Objectively, it may be inferred from the foregoing that the imperialists' preference would be for collaborative arrangements involving tribal structures *or* religious notables, both of which tend to encourage vertical

allegiance. A combination of the two would, on the face of it, appear to be ideal. Overtly national leaders, on the other hand, are less attractive since they might ultimately seek to occupy precisely the same political space that the imperial power would wish to commandeer. With specific regard to *nomadic-pastoral* tribal societies in general, their inherent tendency towards external collaboration has already been noted.[3] From an imperial point of view, then, the tribes of Arabia were pre-eminently co-optable.

The problem for the British at the end of 1914, however, was their general state of ignorance regarding the politics of greater Arabia amongst those assigned the task of solving Britain's Middle Eastern dilemma. Apart from what might have been gleamed from the writings of such intrepid romantics and adventurers as Burton and Doughty,[4] the knowledge of those with any practical experience was limited to Egypt and the Sudan. There were, however, the anecdotal impressions of dilettantes like Sykes, and the testimony of pseudo-experts such as Hogarth and Lawrence, each of which over-exploited the relative exclusivity of their experience. Importantly, in Britain before the Great War there was no academic foundation dedicated to the study of *contemporary* Middle Eastern societies, and consequently no comprehensive knowledge concerning the social and political conditions of the Arab Middle East. It is an indication of the depth and intractability of this state of ignorance that as late as April 1917 - some ten months after the start of the Arab Revolt, by which time British forces had occupied a substantial portion of Greater Syria - the Arab Bulletin could report that 'there was no book in any European language that provided a survey of the social and political conditions of the area.'[5]

The relevance of British ignorance for the collaborative engagement which followed, was that there was an effective carte-blanche upon which a grandiose imperial vision could be depicted. This was as much a precondition of the over indulgence of the British imperial imagination as it was an opportunity for local informants to exercise their influence in pursuit of their own interests. Accordingly, they provided their imperial correspondents with a version of Islamic history specifically constructed to reinforce British preconceptions about what was feasible in terms of the future of the caliphate. Moreover,

---

[3] Chapter 1, Note 83.
[4] Nasir, 1979, Ch. 4.
[5] Fromkin, 1991, p. 86.

this future was one in which they hoped to enhance their own positions within the anticipated political structures. Notably, as the example of Wingate shows, where the testimony of local informants diverged from the imperial vision it was conveniently suppressed.

9.02 The Formation and Currency of the Arab Caliphate Idea in British Thinking

By the end of 1914, both 'the idea,' and an indefinite collaborative arrangement with the Sharif of Mecca, came to be inextricably linked in the minds of certain British imperialists. The abstract generalisations associated with imperial collaboration had already attached themselves to the particular person of Sharif Husayn on account of his purported eligibility for the caliphate. A number of contextual factors have already been iterated. The need to subvert, subsume or preclude popular secular politics was partly what attracted the Cairo British to Husayn in the first instance. The same factor was later brought into play when espousing the alliance to their peers and superiors as military intelligence became convinced that the secular Arab movement was a force in its own right. Secondly, the fear that a rival imperial power would combine with the forces of pan-Islam became acute after October 1914. Interestingly, these are both manifestations of trans-national, and potentially anti-imperial, ideologies, and as such were the motive for urgent prophylactic action by Britain.

The main difference between the crisis of 1879-80 and the initiative of 1913-14 was that, prior to the onset of the Great War, Britain's disposition towards Islam was exclusively *negative* having been motivated by a fear of political pan-Islam. By the end of 1914, however, in addition to these essentially negative motivations, a new imperial vision had emerged among those surrounding the pre-eminent imperial figure of Lord Kitchener. The 'avenger of Gordon' and hero of the British Empire they hoped would, one day, become viceroy of a British Middle East, centred on Cairo and encompassing greater Arabia, Egypt and the Sudan. Most of the enthusiasts for the 'Cairo scheme' - otherwise referred to as 'Western Arabians,' in contradistinction to the representatives of the Government of India whose experience was limited to southern Mesopotamia, the Gulf and the south Arabian coast - had developed their own careers in imperial administration in the wake of Kitchener in Khartoum and Cairo. Undoubtedly, the political intelligence community in Cairo

developed an institutional attachment to this vision along with the collaborative arrangements which were pursued in its name, which manifested itself as a consistent preference for certain policy proposals, and later coalesced into the ideological *raison d'être* of the Arab Bureau.

Such grandiosity of vision was a function, both of British ignorance regarding the political conditions in greater Arabia and of the fact that there was, in any case, no evidence of an Arabia-wide ruling class capable of either serving, or indeed challenging, the British claim. Notwithstanding the ubiquity of Islam and the Arabic language, greater Arabia was in fact a vast area of considerable social and political disarticulation.[6] It soon became apparent, therefore, that the realisation of a Middle Eastern viceroyalty required an overarching idea or unifying principle which could create a single identity out of what was, for the British at least, an unknown quantity. The idea of an *Arab* caliphate based in Mecca, long associated with the project of Arab separatism, appeared to the British in Cairo as a 'universal solvent' readily adaptable to their needs.

With regard to the specific connection between such rarefied considerations and the place of Sharif Husayn in British thinking, it is self-evident that merely nominal unity could have no practical effect without a figurehead to act as its visible human expression. The idea of 'practical effect,' however, should not be taken too seriously since the *nominal* unity required by Britain was consistent with, and would become the precondition of, *actual* partition. If one were to take a purely negative view, the collaborative options available to Britain in 1914-15 were limited. Britain had no real contacts with any notables or political movements in Greater Syria for example, before the arrival of Muhammad al-Faruqi in Cairo in September 1915. Besides Sharif Husayn in the Hijaz, in the relatively accessible Western Arabian littoral, there was only al-Idrisi in 'Asir and Imam Yahya in Yemen. Although each of these held ambitions beyond the confines of their traditional homelands, and were, unlike Ibn Sa'ud and Ibn Rashid, readily accessible from the west, only the Sharif of Mecca had his own good reasons for opposing the Turks and showed any signs of doing so.

---

[6] This is not to disparage any projects for Arab unification; the comment refers to the state of affairs *at the time*.

More important than any of the above considerations, however, was the presumption that his being a member of the Quraysh, the tribe of the Prophet gave him absolute pre-eminence in any future competition over the caliphate. This notion, coupled with the idea that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent restoration of an Arab caliphate were inevitable, besides impelling Britain to intervene, made the Sharif of Mecca the most obvious collaborative partner. It is worth recalling, at this point, that the essential and most critical issue of any collaborative enterprise, is that the chosen party must be sufficiently empowered within the local social structure while, *at the same time*, being sufficiently dependent upon imperial sponsorship to ensure that imperial objectives will be served. It also worth reiterating the manner in which it was conceived in Cairo that the Sharif's impeccable credentials for the caliphate would ensure that both horns of the collaborative dilemma would be avoided.

While it was taken for granted that within Islam, politics and religion were closely related, it was also believed that there was a functional separation between so-called 'spiritual' and 'temporal' powers within the office of sultan as caliph. This belief had been suggested by the terms of the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci and reinforced during the reign of 'Abdulhamid II for reasons already stated, and was now being projected onto the future office of the Sharif of Mecca as caliph. It was intended that the functional division between the Sharif's supposed extensive spiritual reach, and his secular domain confined to the Hijaz, would leave a political space into which Britain could surreptitiously insert her rule. The area around Mecca had the dubious advantage of being out of bounds for Christians; this, it was thought, would preclude the interference of Britain's European rivals while allowing political access to Britain through her exclusive alliance with the Sharif. Under these rather imaginative arrangements the new caliph's spiritual ambit would correspond with the extent of his *nominal* sovereignty throughout the nominally independent Arab kingdom. On the other hand, his secular authority would be confined to the Hijaz, being circumscribed and qualified by a variety of alternative, and yet to be determined, nominally subordinate secular arrangements in other areas under his official suzerainty. In other words the discrepancy between the spiritual and temporal powers of the caliphate found in the Ottoman Sultan after the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci were to be greatly amplified in the case of Sharif Husayn. It was also hoped that, on a global scale, the extraterritoriality of pan-Islam which lay behind the Islamic 'bogey' would finally be

turned, prophylactically, in Britain's favour, and, more creatively, enable Britain to rule, as it were 'behind the veil of Islam.'

It is one thing to explain the origin, *tout court*, of an idea, however, such explanations amount to little, unless they also account for its further reproduction and currency. The inherent salience of the idea of a British sponsored Arab caliphate is, to a certain degree, readily apparent from the benefits which were expected to accrue to Britain, contingent upon its realisation. However, a number of other features may be brought to attention. Firstly, the idea, or more appropriately, the scheme, outlined above had a certain abstract coherence, that is, it consisted of a set of interrelated suppositions, which, regardless of their ultimate feasibility, were mutually supporting and therefore gave the appearance of being substantially corroborated.[7] Secondly, from the British point of view, this abstract internal coherence enabled Middle Eastern policy makers and advisers to contemplate a whole series of alliances and collaborative arrangements which appeared to them to be mutually compatible. Thirdly, the idea of a British backed caliphate had a certain kind of objectivity during the early years of the war in so far as a number of disparate parties seemed to accept its viability. Although the Government of India was less than wholehearted about it, they could not deny that it answered to their fears of political pan-Islamism.

More significantly, both France and Germany came to take seriously the possibility that Britain was engaged in a plot to capture the caliphate, and Egyptian nationalists believed that Britain was intending to back the Khedive as caliph. None of the latter thought the idea ridiculous in any way and seemed to be genuinely threatened by the prospect. There were other, more immediate, factors at play. While the instance of the 'Alexandretta option' usefully illustrated the *conceptual* integrity of Britain's approach to the Arab Middle East, the importance of its abandonment was that greater Arabia would not be severed, all at once and in one piece, from the Turkish Empire. This resulted in a greater emphasis on the idea of an Arab caliphate to provide a semblance of unity to the Arabic

---

[7] Explaining the currency of an idea in terms of its internal coherence should not be construed as an endorsement of 'coherence theory' (Callinicos, 1995, p. 94) which holds that beliefs gain currency and sustain justification from their compatibility with a set of related ideas, none of which is considered more fundamental than any other. Since, the nub of this thesis is that, in spite of such coherence, *in the final analysis*, certain 'facts' proved to be more fundamental than others.

speaking areas, as well as a form of vicarious political control, which the British could eventually utilise.

It has already been stated that, in the course of assembling the 'grand scheme,' the intelligence gatherers in Cairo and Khartoum were forced to rely on a small number of informants with interests of their own. Invariably, these people furnished their correspondents with self-rationalising historical collateral. This included the notion that the Turks were usurpers of the caliphate which rightly belonged to an Arab of Qurayshite descent, and the idea that possession of the Holy Cities was an established prerequisite of retaining the caliphate. They also stressed the importance of Islam being led from an independent state. Although the British convinced themselves that 'orientals' were easily deceived by outward show, i.e. nominal independence and the trappings of sovereignty, as their informants gained confidence they gradually introduced the idea that even for a 'spiritual' caliphate to succeed it must be supported by a sound political and economic base. For a brief period, policy advisers in Cairo were torn between advocating a strong Arab empire, and exploiting the fact by insisting on a more or less beleaguered Arab caliphate, since a friendly Arab caliphate, once established, would obviate the need for genuine independence.

It may be concluded that the British caliphate idea was the result of imperial necessity and not the *blind* inheritance, and *unilateral* imposition of orientalist preconceptions. This is not to say that preconceptions were not at play, or that orientalist elements were not brought to bear on the situation. Rather, these resulted from the specific engagement with 'orientals' who tended to confirm such notions for their own ends. What such engagements illustrate, the encounter with al-Faruqi being an outstanding example, is that power and knowledge are not *equipollent*. While conceding that a weaker party may well feign to conform to the dominant power's view of the world with to some effect,[8] there are fundamental limits, both to the extent to which the underlying social reality may be transformed as a result, and, consequently, to the ultimate success of any project based upon such (self-) deception. In other words, an imperial enterprise based upon such dialogue may fail on account of factors which exist independently of it. Remarkably, certain political intelligence officers were able to historicise the institution of the caliphate

[8] This is the theme of much post-colonialist writing on India, for example.

at an early stage which opened up possibilities for its future. Unfortunately for the British, however, these were without obvious limit. Their misapprehension, therefore, was over social contextual prerequisites of successful collaboration and not over the nature of the caliphate itself.

9.03 Explaining the Failure of the Arab Caliphate Idea

It is evident from the foregoing reconstruction that, even in its pristine abstractness, a closer examination of the British vision reveals deep structural flaws and potentially fatal contradictions. Firstly, the functional separation of 'spiritual' from 'temporal' authority, which was less of a problem for an already established power like the Ottoman sultan-caliph, would become a stumbling block for Sharif Husayn. The mistake was to misconstrue 'functional separation' as 'total disarticulation.' Whereas the British had chosen the Sharif on the assumption that his extensive 'spiritual authority' would be exercised from a restricted 'temporal' base, in practice his religious standing counted for little as long as he effected no real political and military power. The British made the mistake of thinking that because the established caliphate had been reduced to a condition of nominal authority, an alternative caliphate possessing only nominal status could be created *ex nihilo*. Secondly, the denial of Christian access to the vicinity of the Holy Cities was the most trivial aspect of what turned out to be a more intractable problem: that the Sharif of Mecca's standing within Islam - the precise reason for Britain seeking an alliance with him in the first place - meant that he could receive no direct, or visible aid from a Christian power.

It soon became apparent during the course of the Arab Revolt of 1916 that under his own resources Sharif Husayn could attract no reliable following amongst either the tribes-people of the Peninsula or amongst the city-dwellers further afield. In terms of the logic of imperial collaboration, it has been shown how, as a consequence of their own ignorance and the lack of a viable alternative, the political intelligence establishment in Cairo failed to locate the precise balance of dependence/independence required in a successful collaborative relationship.

Unfortunately for him, Husayn's lack of religious standing among the tribes, or rather its irrelevance, would not exempt him from the charge of collaborating with infidels, in the wider Muslim world. Four months into the Revolt T. E. Lawrence wrote:

> I do not think there is really much religious antipathy to Christians landing in the Hejaz. On the Turkish side the religious cry would be used as a stick with which to beat the Sherif .... and on the Arab side it is used as an excuse to hide the really political objections to our coming.[9]

In fact what Lawrence was describing were various manifestations of anti-imperialism rationalised and legitimised through the language of Islam. What many of Lawrence's recondite intelligence reports indicated, was that the nature of tribal politics meant that allegiance could only be secured by 'gifts' of gold and cash. When the flow of cash stopped so did the allegiance. In spite of the necessarily clandestine and low-key nature of British support, this made Lawrence's guerrilla war an unusually expensive business.

In the final reckoning, Sharif Husayn's supposed religious credentials, coupled with his dependence on Britain, put him at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* his Arabian rivals. A brief comparison with 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Sa'ud is apposite. The Sharif of Mecca, unlike other tribal chieftains, did not rely primarily on income from trade or on the exploitation of the tribal political system, but on income derived from the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The latter was limited in quantity, duration and obviously confined to a certain area. Neither did Sharif Husayn's secular ambitions find resonance in the cosmopolitan milieu of Mecca where most of the citizens were not Arab. Quite simply, Sharif Husayn's location within the social and economic structure of Arabia was not conducive to state building, and, *ipso facto*, not properly suited to collaboration from an imperial point of view. Ibn Sa'ud, on the other hand, was more effectively integrated into the tribal political, and economic, system. More importantly, however, he had the foresight to embark on a programme of agricultural settlement which would provide a stable tax base as well as the recruiting ground for a standing army, in other words, the foundations of a state. Unlike Sharif Husayn, Ibn Sa'ud was able to transform his own structural capacities, and in a very objective sense, enhance his suitability for imperial collaboration. This would seem to be a more satisfactory form of explanation than one elucidated in terms of the success of one department's romantic

---

[9] FO 882 Vol. V, HRG 16/57, Report by T. E. Lawrence, 27 October 1916.

proclivities over another: specifically, those of the Government of India over those of Cairo and the Foreign Office.

There remains the question of the precise relationship between the central contradiction of the original caliphate scheme, essentially a logical one, and the practical limitations inherent in Sharif Husayn's social structural location. One is forced to speculate what might have been the outcome had Britain been able to aid Husayn openly and directly. The likely result is that the caliphate project would have failed for the same reasons that it did anyway. Although it is conceivable that unlimited amounts of gold and cash may have secured widespread tribal allegiance, this would have been self-defeating since the salience of the British caliphate idea was that it provided a cheap, arms-length solution to the problem of British intervention in the Middle East. In this sense the logical contradiction, although operative in the sense that it precluded Britain from certain actions, was ultimately superfluous and not a *critical* factor in explaining the demise of the Sharifian caliphate idea. However, the problems connected with an important Islamic dignitary being closely associated with a Christian power undoubtedly contributed to Husayn's eventual exclusion from the Sharifain Arab 'façade.'

The conclusion that the British, Sharifian caliphate project failed on account of Sharif Husayn's structural incapacity should not be seen as deriving solely from retrospective historical inquiry, since it is evidenced by numerous intelligence reports, mostly those of T. E. Lawrence and C. E. Wilson, drafted during the early months of the Arab Revolt. In other words, the abandonment of the Britain's Arab caliphate aspirations, or at least the gradual appreciation that they were unrealisable in the terms in which they had originally been constructed, coincided with the assimilation of information gathered in attempting to implement the Cairo 'Grand plan.' It was precisely at the point of their attempting to give concrete expression to what had been an entirely abstract scheme that theory failed in the face of practice, and from whence matters of departmental and romantic preference followed.

By the summer of 1916 Britain began to play down Husayn's caliphate ambitions having become increasingly embarrassed by their vanity since they were clearly incommensurate with his actual capacity for self-aggrandisement. Although the preference for an Arab caliphate was not abandoned entirely, by the end of 1916 the objective had been deferred

indefinitely, and the 'official' policy of non-interference was now zealously endorsed – hypocritically so when used in attempts to stall Sharif Husayn's belated bid for the caliphate. Although the British eventually came to understand the implications of the Treaty of Kuçuk Kaynarci for European, *Christian* empires some one hundred and forty four years later courtesy of the Italian and Dutch academe, the idea of an Arab caliphate was already a dead letter. This lesson, once learnt, was applied whilst negotiating the Treaty of Lausanne in ensuring that the juridical device of a caliphate with extra-territorial authority (first created by the Turks in 1774) which the British had failed to bring into their own service, was finally abrogated. When Sharif Husayn, as 'King of the Hijaz,' finally made his rather bungled claim to the caliphate, the viability of the endeavour was treated with virtual disdain.

Whether Husayn ever experienced feelings of malicious satisfaction as Britain encountered the kind of trouble in Palestine and Iraq which the caliphate scheme had been conceived to forestall, is not recorded. In any case the British had already moved on to the policy of an 'Arab façade,'[10] more accurately, a Sharifian Arab façade, though, ironically, one which excluded the Sharif of Mecca. It was soon realised that the need for a 'principle of unity' which Britain's backing of an Arab caliphate was designed to satisfy, was no longer required, since there was no corresponding political class which existed throughout Arabia which could challenge British hegemony in all its guises. As regards the 'Islamic bogey,' it was realised, also during the early months of the Revolt, that there had been no 'general rising of Islam' on account of the economic diversity of the Muslim world and the divisions to which it had been subjected by imperial powers.[11] It was for precisely such reasons that the caliphate conferences of 1926 were unable to choose a successor to the Ottoman caliphate and that the institution lapsed indefinitely. It was in this way, and not through British intrigue, that the *sine qua non* of de Bunsen was eventually satisfied. Ultimately, the facts of the Arabian social structure in conjunction with the effects of local nationalism and global imperialism, had rendered the Sharifian caliphate project both inoperable, and unnecessary.

---

[10] L/P&S/10/807, War Cabinet Eastern Committee, Minutes of Meeting of Thursday, Nov. 21, 1918.
[11] This conclusion, too, was gleaned from a continental source, this time a *German* one. See Chapter 7, Note 96.

9.04 Matters for Further Research

This thesis might well have been subtitled: 'A Case Study in the Production of Knowledge under Conditions of Imperialism.' The comparison made in Chapters 2 and 3 between Britain's part in the Hijaz crises of 1879-80 and 1913-14 resulted in the conclusion that since there had been no textual or biographical continuity between the two episodes, the first could not be construed as a prototype for the second. Rather, the first Hijaz crisis was described as an *historical paradigm*, discernible only by retrospective objective analysis and not to those taking part. Consequently, the formal similarities underlying the correspondence of interests between Britain and the Sharif of Mecca in each instance has been explained in terms of the re-emergence of necessity, and the rediscovery of objectively available techniques, rather than a continuous legacy of area 'expertise.' Where historical example has been brought into play by imperialists, it has been selected according to its usefulness in terms of pre-set objectives arising from imperial compulsion. This gives the *appearance* that such 'knowledge' reproduces itself autonomously (Said's 'intertextuality'), whereas the components of such knowledge (the phenomena of Said's orientalism[12]) are constantly, and consciously, re-selected.

The question that arises from this recapitulation, and which lies beyond the scope of this thesis, is an epistemological one regarding the nature of what, provisionally, may be termed 'imperial knowledge.' It would have been tempting to conclude that the political intelligence community could, and should, have learnt the lessons of history. However, it is suggested here that the exigencies of imperial competition require prompt action, and that, in any case, there is no such thing as once-and-for-all success in such matters since imperialism always produces victims, and victims always produce resistance. This fact is inherent in the logic of imperial collaboration. Empires are, by their very nature, vulnerable, transient and subject to paranoia, and, paradoxically, always in a state of loosing even when they are winning. It is precisely when an empire attains its greatest extent that strength is turned into its opposite: weakness and vulnerability. In so far as empires are deemed to be successful in their own terms, this is invariably the result of military and economic compulsion and not because political solutions have been found to the problems of compelling other peoples and other economies to yield to the imperial will.

---

[12] Aziz al-Azmeh has referred to Edward Said's *Orientalism* as a 'phenomenology of Orientalism.' al-Azmeh, 1981, p. 390.

It is suggested here that the perpetual necessity of intervention and re-intervention in order to control *actual* resources *immediately*, or *potential* resources *prophylactically*, ensures that the lessons of history cannot be learnt since they are only likely to indicate that 'successful' collaboration is virtually impossible. Furthermore, as this study has shown, dependence on informants with interests of their own is unavoidable. To the extent that imperial incursions may be deemed successful, such success is achieved in spite of, and conceivably, because of, the ignorance of the imperialist. Besides which, there is always the need to rationalise, and, moreover, self-rationalise, each new imperial intervention and each continuing imperial presence. With self-rationalisation comes self-deception. This is not to say that the imperialist has no requirement for objective knowledge. However, such knowledge tends to be assimilated at a very instrumental level, that is, in relation to very specific tasks subsumed under the 'head project' of a given imperial intervention

The recent controversy surrounding the gathering and use of military and political intelligence in preparation for the war against Iraq would make an equally pertinent case study in relation to the same question of epistemology. Many of the problems encountered by the 'Allies' since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 are associated with a reliance on a single source of information who, like al-Faruqi, had an interest in a certain outcome which only outside (in this instance US) intervention could bring about. Just as the British had hoped to rule Arabia 'behind the veil of Islam,' the 'Allies' hoped to 'decapitate' the Ba'thist regime and insert a coterie headed by Ahmad Chalabi of the Iraqi National Congress, itself a US sponsored organisation, through which the US would assert its interests. Once the policy of 'decapitation' failed in practice it became necessary to destroy the country and the very structures upon which the 'Allies' had intended to rely. Naturally, Chalabi told the US government exactly what it wanted to hear and he became their 'authentic' source in the same way that al-Faruqi, among others, had served the British in 1915. In neither instance did the question of deception arise since 'intelligence' was gathered in the service of policies which had already been determined. The contrast between science and such 'intelligence' (i.e. 'imperial knowledge') may be illustrated by imagining the consequence if science were to serve engineering design in exactly the same way. Except by pure chance, there would not be a bridge capable of supporting traffic, nor a dwelling fit to live in. Of relevance here, however, is that engineering know-how could not develop accumulatively, since each new structural whim would require a unique post-

rationalisation. Furthermore it is no coincidence that the present intelligence services, like the Arab Bureau before it, are responsible for information gathering *and* the dissemination of propaganda. For the reasons just described the products of these ostensibly separate functions may, under certain circumstances, become virtually indistinguishable.

What the present case study confirms is that 'imperial knowledge' is perpetually re-assembled *episodically* and, unlike scientific knowledge, does not accumulate. This would now seem to be the view of Edward Said, when, in relation to the whole history of imperial intervention in the Middle East, he affirms that, '*Each* of these phases and eras produces *its own* distorted knowledge of the other, *each* its own reductive images, *its own* disputatious polemics.' [emphases added][13] Furthermore, to the imperialist, 'facts' do not always present themselves as quanta of knowledge, but frequently as the bullets and bombs of resistance. Such 'facts' must be explained away. To grasp the whole picture would be to undermine the entire project of empire. The active imperialist, therefore, must be in a constant 'state of denial.' When the dialectician cries: 'Always totalise' the imperialist must reply: 'Never!'

[13] Said, 2003. This formulation stands in contrast to the continuous, autonomous, and, ultimately, paralogical discourse implied by the mechanism of intertextuality.

Manuscript Sources

British Library

Oriental and India Office Collections

Political and Secret Department:

L/P&S/10 (subject files) series, 1914-1924
L/P&S/11 (annual files) series, 1917-1918

Public Record Office

Cabinet Office Papers:

CAB 23 – War Cabinet Minutes, 1916-1919 & 1921
CAB 24 – Cabinet Memoranda, 1915, 1917 & 1922
CAB 27 – Committees General Series, 1915, 1917-1918 & 1921
CAB 37/1 – Papers Sent to Cabinet: Correspondence relating to the Sharif of Mecca, 1879-1880
CAB 37 – Papers Sent to Cabinet: Other, 1915-1916
CAB 42 – Papers of the War Council, Dardanelles Committee and the War Committee, 1915-1916

Foreign Office Papers:

FO 78/3017 & 3131 – Foreign Office General Correspondence: Turkey: Consul at Jeddah, 1879-1880
FO 141 – Foreign Office: Political Correspondence: Egypt, 1895, 1914-1919, 1922-1924 & 1926
FO 195 – Foreign Office: Consular Correspondence: Turkey, 1912
FO 371 – Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence: Turkey, 1913-1921
FO 373 – Peace Conference Handbooks, 1919
FO 395 – News Miscellaneous (General) Files, 1917
FO 608 – Peace Conference of 1919-1920 Correspondence
FO 882 – Arab Bureau Papers: Reports and Correspondence, 1916-1920 (including material from 1912-1915)

Home Office Papers:

HO 139/2/3PT – Home Office: Official Press Bureau 1914-1919: Correspondence relating to 'D' Notice No. D.122 of 24 December 1914 on the question of the Caliphate

Private Papers at the Public Record Office:

FO 633 – Cromer Papers, 1910 & 1913-1916
FO 800/80 – Grey Papers, 1912-1915
PRO 30/57 – Kitchener Papers, 1884, 1892, 1899, 1904-1905 & 1911-1916

University of Durham, Palace Green Library

Sudan Archive:

SAD WP – Wingate Papers: Sudan Correspondence, 1881-1882, 1887, 1889, 1892, 1902, 1914-1918, 1926 & 1936

SAD CP – Clayton Papers, 1914-1917 & 1926

University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library

Sledmere Papers:

DDSY/(2) 4 – Papers of Sir Mark Sykes: Correspondence: Papers relating to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Zionist Movement and British Policy in Islamic Countries, 1914-1918

University of Oxford, St Antony's College

Middle East Centre, Private Papers Collection:

Deedes Papers, 1915-1916

Feisal, Emir of Hejaz, Papers, 1919

Hogarth Papers, 1915 – 1920

Samuel Papers, 1915, 1920 & 1922

Bibliography

Aburish, Said K., *A Brutal Friendship: The West and the Arab Elite*, (London, Victor Gollancz, 1997)

Addo, Herb, *Imperialism: The Permanent Stage of Capitalism*, (Tokyo, United Nations University, 1986)

Ahmad, Aijaz, 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality', *Race & Class*, Vol. 36, Number 3, January-March, 1995, 1-20.

Ahmad, Aijaz, *Orientalism* and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said, in, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, (London, Verso, 1994)

Amin, Samir, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, trans. by Brian Pearce (Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1976)

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London, Verso, 1991)

Anderson, M. S., *The Eastern Question 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations*, (London, Macmillan, 1966)

Antonius, George, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1938)

Arnold, Sir Thomas, *The Caliphate*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924)

Ayubi, Nazih N., *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, (London, I.B.Tauris, 1995)

al-'Azm, Sadik Jalal, 'Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse', *Khamsin* No.8, 1981, 5-26.

al-Azmeh, Aziz, 'The Articulation of Orientalism', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 3, 1981, 384-402.

al-Azmeh, Aziz, *Islams and Modernities*, (London, Verso, 1993)

Baldick, Chris, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (Oxford, OUP, 1990)

Baumgart, Winfried, *Imperialism: The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880–1914*, (Oxford, OUP, 1982)

Best, Steven, *The Politics of Historical Vision: Marx, Foucault, Habermas*, (New York, Guildford Press, 1995)

Black, Antony, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present*, (Edinburgh, EUP, 2001)

Blackbourn, David, and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, (Oxford, OUP, 1984)

Blunt, Wilfred Scawen, *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt, Being a Personal Narrative of Events*, (London, T.Fisher Unwin, 1907)

Brewer, Anthony, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980)

Buchan, John, *Greenmantle*, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1916)

Bukharin, Nikolai, *Imperialism and World Economy*, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1973)

Bury, G. Wyman, *Pan-Islam*, (London, Macmillan, 1919)

Busch, Briton Cooper, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914-21*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971)

Busch, Briton Cooper, *Mudros to Lausanne: Britain's Frontier in West Asia, 1918-1923*, (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1976)

Callinicos, Alex, *Making History: Agency, Structure and Change in Social Theory*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989)

Callinicos, Alex, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989)

Callinicos, Alex, *Theories and Narratives: Reflections on the Philosophy of History*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995)

Cecil, Lady Gwendolen, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury Vol. IV 1887-1892*, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1932)

Colletti, Lucio, *From Rousseau to Lenin: Studies in Ideology and Society*, trans. by John Merrington and Judith White, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1974)

Cooke, Alistair, 'Tears and anthems', *Letter from America*, BBC World Service, broadcast 30 December 2001, 1.45 am BST, (published online 31 December 2001), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/letter_from_america/1735598.stm, accessed 9 August 2001.

Davidson, Neil, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*, (London, Pluto Press, 2000)

Dawn, C. Ernest, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism*, (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1973)

Elster, Jon, *Making Sense of Marx*, (*Cambridge, CUP, 1985)*

Enayat, Hamid, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan Education, 1982)

Fisher, John, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-19*, (London, Frank Cass, 1999)

Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979)

Fox, Nick J., 'Foucault, Foucauldians and sociology', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 49, No. 3, September 1998, 415-433.

Friedman, Isaiah, *The Question of Palestine, 1914-1918: British-Jewish-Arab Relations*, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973)

Fromkin, David, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East 1914-1922*, (London, Penguin Books, 1991)

Fyfe, Christopher, 'Review of *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, with Alice Denny, (London, Macmillan, 1961)', *Irish Historical Studies*, Volume XIII, 1962-3, No. 49, March 1962, 93-4.

Garnett, David, (ed.), *Selected Letters of T. E. Lawrence*, (London, Reprint Society, 1938)

Giddens, Anthony, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1979)

Gilbert, Martin, First World War, (London, HarperCollins, 1995)

Haim, Sylvia G., 'Blunt and al-Kawakibi', *Oriento Moderno*, Anno XXXV, Nr.3. Marzo 1955, 132-143.

Halliday, Fred, *Islam & the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, (London, I.B.Tauris, 1995)

Hamilton, Paul, *Historicism*, (London, Routledge, 1996)

Hardy, P., *The Moslems of British India*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1972)

Harman, Chris, 'The State and Capitalism Today', *International Socialism*, Issue 51, Summer 1991, 3-54.

Hawting, Gerald R., *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, (London, Croom Helm, 1986)

Heller, Joseph, *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire*, 1908-1914, (London, Frank Cass, 1983)

Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1983)

Hopkirk, Peter, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, (Oxford, OUP, 1990)

Hourani, Albert, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1983)

Hughes, Matthew, *Allenby and British Strategy in the Middle East, 1917-1919*, (London, Frank Cass, 1999)

Hurewitz, J. C., *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1535-1914*, Volume I, (Princeton, D.Van Nostrand, 1956)

Hurewitz, J. C., *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914-1956*, Volume II, (Princeton, D.Van Nostrand, 1956)

Hurgronje, Snouck, Dr. C., *The Revolt in Arabia*, (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1917)

James, Simon T., *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient People or Modern Invention?*, (London, British Museum Press, 1999)

Jessop, Bob, *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place*, (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990)

Kayali, Hasan, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997)

Kedourie, Elie, 'Egypt and the Caliphate 1915-1946', Reprinted from the *Journal of The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Parts 3 & 4, October1963, 208-248.

Kedourie, Elie, *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Stories*, (London, Frank Cass, 1974)

Kedourie, Elie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914-21*, (London, Bowes & Bowes, 1956)

Kedourie, Elie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations 1914-1939*, Cambridge, CUP, 1976)

Kemp, Tom, *Theories of Imperialism*, (London, Dobson, 1967)

Khairallah, Shereen, *Railways in the Middle East 1856-1948: Political and Economic Background*, (Beirut, Librairie Du Liban, 1991)

Khalidi, Rashid Ismail, *British Policy towards Syria & Palestine 1906-1914: A Study of the Antecedents of the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Balfour Declaration*, (London, Ithaca Press, 1980)

Kiernan, V. G., 'Farewells to Empire: Some Recent Studies of Imperialism', *Socialist Register*, 1964, 259-279.

Kiernan, V. G., *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse 1815-1960*, (Leicester, LUP, 1982)

Kramer, Martin S., *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1986)

Landau, Jacob M., *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1990)

Lenin, V. I., 'From *The Junius Pamphlet*' (written July 1916), in, *The National Liberation Movement in the East*, comp. C. Leiteisen, (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1969)

Lenin, V. I., *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*, (London, Pluto Press, London, 1996)

Louis, Wm. Roger, (ed.), *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy*, (New York, New Viewpoints, 1976)

Macfie, A. L., *Orientalism*, (London, Longman, 2002)

Macfie, A. L., *The End of the Ottoman Empire 1908-23*, (London, Longman, 1998)

MacKenzie, John M., *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, (Manchester, MUP, 1995)

Madelung, Wilferd, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1997)

Magnus, Philip, *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist*, (London, Arrow Books, 1961)

Majumdar, Margaret A., *Althusser and the End of Leninism?*, (London, Pluto Press, 1995)

Marlowe, John, *Cromer in Egypt*, (London, Elek Books, 1970)

Marx, K., *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1954)

Mayer, Arno J., *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?: The "Final Solution" in History*, (London, Verso, 1990)

McKale, Donald M., *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I*, (Kent, Kent State University Press, 1998)

Mészáros, István, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, (London, Merlin Press, 1972)

Mill, John Stuart, 'On Liberty', in, *John Stuart Mill: A Selection of His Works*, ed. by John M. Robson (New York, Odyssey Press, 1966)

Mommsen, Wolfgang, J., *Theories of Imperialism*, trans. by P. S. Falla, (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981)

Mommsen, Wolfgang J. and Jürgen Osterhammel, (eds.), *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, (London, Allen & Unwin, 1986)

Monroe, Elizabeth, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-56*, (London, Chatto & Windus, 1963)

Moore-Gilbert, Bart, *Post Colonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*, (London, Verso, 1997)

Nasir, Sari J., *The Arabs and the English*, (London, Longman, 1979)

Nicolson, Colin, *The Longman Companion to the First World War, Europe, 1914-1918*, (London, Longman, 2001)

Ochsenwald, William, 'Ironic Origins: Arab Nationalism in the Hijaz, 1882-1914', in, *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. by Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeva S. Simon, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1991)

Orwell, George, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, (London, Penguin, 1989)

Owen, Roger, 'Robinson and Gallagher and Middle Eastern Nationalism: The Egyptian Argument', in, *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy*, ed. by Wm. Roger Louis, (New York, New Viewpoints, 1976)

Peters, Rudolph, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History*, (The Hague, Mouton, 1979)

Pollock, John, *Kitchener*, (London, Constable, 2001)

Robinson, Ronald, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration', in, *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, eds. Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe, (London, Longman, 1972)

Robinson, Ronald, 'The Excentric Idea of Imperialism, with or without Empire', in, *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, ed. by Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, (London, Allen & Unwin, 1986)

Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1985)

Said, Edward W., *Culture and Imperialism*, (London, Chatto & Windus, 1993)

Said, Edward W., 'A window on the world', *The Guardian* Review, 2 August 2003, pp. 4-6, (Adapted from the introduction to a new edition of *Orientalism*, published by Penguin on 28 August 2003).

Sanders, Ronald, *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate for Palestine*, (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984)

Smith, Janet Adam, *John Buchan: A Biography*, (London, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1965)

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravarty, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. by Sarah Harasym (New York, Routledge, 1990)

Stein, Leonard, *The Balfour Declaration*, (London, Valentine·Mitchell, 1961)

Storrs, Ronald, *Orientations*, (London, Nicholson & Watson, 1943)

Sweezy, Paul M., *The Theory of Capitalist Development: Principles of Marxian Political Economy*, (New York, Modern Reader Paperbacks, 1968)

Sykes, Christopher, *Cross Roads to Israel: Palestine from Balfour to Bevin*, (London, Nel Mentor, 1967)

Tauber, Eliezer, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, (London, Frank Cass, 1993)

Thomas, Nicholas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1994)

Tibawi A. L., *Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine 1914-1921*, (London, Luzac, 1978)

Tibi, Bassam, *Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry*, ed. and trans. by Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1981)

Tripp, Rhoda Thomas, (comp.), *The International Thesaurus of Quotations*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976)

Venn, Fiona, *Oil Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan Education, 1986)

Westrate, Bruce, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916-1920*, (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992)

Whitaker, Brian, 'Saudi Arabia: Pressure builds up inside the closed kingdom', *The Guardian*, 6 October 2001, p. 8.

White, Hayden V., *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1973)

Williams, Neville, *Chronology of the Modern World 1763-1965*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1975)

Wilson, Jeremy, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorised Biography of T. E. Lawrence*, (London, Minerva, 1990)

Wilson, Mary C., 'The Hashemites, the Arab Revolt, and Arab Nationalism', in, *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. by Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeva S. Simon, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1991)

Wilson, Mary C., *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1990)

Wright, Erik Olin, *Class, Crisis and the State*, (London, Verso, 1979)

Yapp, M. E., *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923*, (Harlow, Longman, 1987)

Zeine, Zeine N., *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism: with a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East*, (Beirut, Khayats, 1966)