

ARABIAN KNIGHTS

Having sided with Germany during the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was dismantled at its termination and a new geopolitical region, called the Middle East, created from its wreckage. Until recently, the constellation of Arab states and Israel that together make up the heartland of this new Middle East provided the framework for all politics in the region, but with the emergence of global networks like Al-Qaeda this is no longer the case. After all places outside the Middle East, like Afghanistan or Pakistan, are now more important to militancy in the region than Israel, insofar as they provide it with new causes, practices and vocabularies that have lost all regional reference. Such for example are the suicide bombings and sectarian killings that have become so common in Iraq following its occupation by Anglo-American forces, whose distinctive forms are all too familiar in the subcontinent. This development not only questions the very integrity of the Middle East as a geopolitical unit, it also permits Muslim militants to redefine this region's Arab character, or rather to redeploy the language of Arabness outside a Middle Eastern context.

In the midst of plots to raise the flag of war from one end of the world to another, militants like Osama bin Laden sometimes pause to contemplate the immense changes that have occurred in the geopolitics of the Middle East. In doing so they tend to invoke the Ottoman Empire, whose sultan had also claimed the title of caliph, or successor to the Prophet Muhammad's worldly authority. For Bin Laden and those he inspires attribute what they see as Islam's greatest humiliation in modern times precisely to the dismantling of the caliphate and the creation of a Middle East carved out into British and French zones of influence. By

ruing the passing of what had been a Turkish empire, and the placing of its Arab territories under European jurisdiction, these men announce their break with the ideology of Arab nationalism, itself an outgrowth of the Anglo-French condominium that came to define this region following the Great War. And by holding up the caliphate as a model for the Muslim future, they assign militancy a self-consciously global project, or at least one that cannot be confined to the Middle East.

Militants invoke the caliphate in a conceptual rather than politically instrumental way, since it serves as an idea that delegitimizes an international order they consider to be the result merely of European conquest and colonization. Ayman al-Zawahiri says as much in an interview posted by a jihadist website on September 11, 2006, referring in particular to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, by which the British and French secretly planned to divide the Ottoman Empire up between them after the First World War, thus giving rise to the Middle East as we know it. Zawahiri calls this new order of nation states idolatrous, thus following the precedent of Indian Muslim thinkers from the early twentieth century, who had transformed this old theological term by applying it to the realities of modern politics:

My dear brother: The facts of international politics which they talk about stem from what they term as international legitimacy, the United Nations, and secular states which are the fruits of the malicious Sykes-Picot Agreement. All these systems have been imposed on Muslims and the Muslim nation following the fall of the Caliphate state to force it to submit to systems and organizations that violate the Islamic law and to ensure the fragmentation of the Islamic nation. This will ultimately leave the Islamic nation subordinate, humiliated, and pillaged. The time has come for us to destroy these idols and false gods that they forced us to worship instead of Allah.¹

Although it remains a mere name among them, possessing neither theological nor political substance, the caliphate serves to globalize violent networks like Al-Qaeda as well as nonviolent ones like Hizb al-Tahrir, both of which are multinational and in fact present for the most part outside the Middle East. But this is hardly accidental, since the

1 "Al-Zawahiri calls on Muslims to wage 'war of jihad', reject UN resolutions" *United States Central Command* (<http://www.centcom.mil/sites/uscentcom1/What%20Extremists%20Say/Al-Zawahiri%20Calls%20on%20Muslims%20to%20Wage%20War%20of%20Jihad'%20Reject%20UN%20Resolutions.aspx?PageView=Shared>), p. 3.

Muslim majority beyond the Middle East has always been at the forefront of international, and now global forms of Islam, it being only very recently that Arabs have become involved in them. So when the Ottoman Empire was finally replaced by republican Turkey it was an Indian prince, the Nizam of Hyderabad, who cashed in on the caliphate's popularity among his South Asian coreligionists by supporting its exiled incumbent with a pension and marrying into his family. Perhaps Muslims outside the Middle East have taken a leading role in pan-Islamism because the religion's Arab antecedents and Arabic scriptures prevented it from becoming part merely of their national identity in modern times—instead forcing non-Arabs to think about their religion globally. The more recent Arab participation in Islam's globalization, then, might well indicate the fragmentation of the Middle East as a foundational category for their religious life, and thus its dispersal into the universal narrative of Islam.

The decline of Nasserism, Baathism and other forms of pan-Arabism that had once striven to integrate the region ideologically is matched today by the Middle East's economic disintegration, with the rich states of the Persian Gulf connected more to Europe and America, or India and China, than to their poorer Arab neighbours. Indeed in terms of its demography and transportation links alone, it is possible to split the Middle East in half, grouping its eastern portion with India, Pakistan and Iran rather than with the Fertile Crescent or North Africa. And this is not even to take into account the region's political disintegration, due to the presence and influence of American and European forces there. Yet it is these very forces that also keep the Middle East together by treating it as a single entity, having after all put it together in the first place. The region's globalization has also proceeded apace, with a so-called "Shiite crescent" cutting through the Middle East and lifting out of it a different kind of geography connecting non-Arab Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon—all countries with large Shia populations.²

Whether or not there exists such a thing as a Shiite crescent, sectarian violence in the Middle East, particularly that perpetrated by Sunni militants, takes both its rhetoric and practices directly from Pakistan,

2 For an influential statement of this position see Vali Nasr's *The Shia Revival* (New York: Norton, 2006).

where such violence has been endemic for some two decades now. Interesting about the transportation of these practices is the fact that they are replicated not in generic fashion but rather in the most particular of ways, including for instance suicide bombings in Shia mosques by militants disguised as Shiite worshippers. In other words even the forms of Middle Eastern militancy have been imported from the wider Muslim world, largely as a result of events like the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan—which provided in fact the first pan-Islamic cause in which Arabs were active. I suspect it is the political and economic disintegration of the Middle East that has permitted it to be globally redefined in sectarian terms. And while the caliphate, too, is a sectarian institution, being in fact the premier form that Sunni authority has taken in the past, it provides another way of gauging the dispersal of the Middle East and of re-imagining it in non-sectarian ways. For it is the caliphate as a cosmopolitan and pluralistic entity, rather than a specifically Sunni one, that informs the global imagination of Al-Qaeda, not least by providing a new context for its Arab character, represented as this is by the words and appearance of militant icons like Osama bin Laden.

Before its contemporary popularity with Al-Qaeda and other militant networks, the caliphate had enjoyed its most sustained support outside the Ottoman Empire, particularly in British India, home to the world's largest Muslim population and the site of more than one jihad movement in the past. At the close of the First World War, Indian Muslims, who had contributed a large number of soldiers to the British army that defeated the Ottomans in the Middle East, invoked their loyalty as well as the promise to respect Islamic sanctities made by Britain's prime minister, to demand the caliphate's preservation. Indian soldiers had not taken Jerusalem, they said, to see the Ottoman Empire liquidated and infidel troops occupy the land housing Islam's holiest sanctuaries—to say nothing of Palestine itself being given over to Jewish immigration. The popular mobilization generated by this demand united Hindus and Muslims into the first and greatest mass movement of India's history—one led by Gandhi, who was therefore considered by his Hindu assassin to be the father of pan-Islamism.³ Insofar as the

3 See Godse, *Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi*. For an analysis of Gandhi's role in the Khilafat Movement, see Faisal Devji, "A Practice of Prejudice: Gandhi's Politics of Friendship", *Subaltern Studies*, New Delhi, 12 (2005), pp. 78-

Mahatma was killed for his supposed betrayal of Hinduism, therefore, he might even be considered a martyr for Islam.

While the Khilafat (Caliphate) Movement was motivated by a complex set of causes, it illustrates very clearly that the roots of Islam's globalization lie beyond the Middle East. Indeed it was in this movement that the inviolability of the *jazirat ul-arab* or Arabian "island" first became a political cause, well before it was summoned for similar use by Osama bin Laden, with Indian clerics writing treatises demanding the removal of infidel soldiers from the peninsula that housed the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina.⁴ So it is more than appropriate that Al-Qaeda should have been founded precisely on the boundary of what was once British India, a borderland that had witnessed one of the great struggles for the caliphate, with tens of thousands of Indian Muslims passing through it without the least disorder when abandoning British territory for Islamic Afghanistan, from which some of them hoped to launch attacks upon the infidel and restore the caliph—or to establish a socialist state in the subcontinent.⁵ Even eighty years ago, then, the caliphate represented Islam's modernity as much as its tradition. More traditional than the cause of the caliphate was the refuge that Afghanistan and the North West Frontier had offered Indians fighting the British since the nineteenth century, a history that Osama bin Laden and other foreign fighters have nestled into very comfortably.

The North West Frontier, which today forms the porous borderland between Pakistan and Afghanistan, was then a stronghold of the Indian National Congress, and despite being the most fully Muslim province of British India, was opposed to the creation of Pakistan as a Muslim homeland even after having been absorbed by the new state in 1947. Its Pathan population, furthermore, who are today famed for their militancy, were among the Indians most devoted to Gandhi's nonviolent ways. Their practice of civil disobedience, peacefully carried out in the face of British reprisals much more brutal than those inflicted in less sensitive

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4 See especially Abul Kalam Azad, *Muslah-e Khilafat* (Delhi: Hali Publishing House, 1961).

5 For this extraordinary emigration see Dietrich Reetz, *Hijrat: The Flight of the Faithful; A British File on the Exodus of Muslim Peasants from North India to Afghanistan in 1920* (Berlin: Verlag Das Arabische Buch, 1995).

parts of the country, has even been described as "the most heroic and extraordinary of all such episodes in the Indian nationalist movement."⁶ These Pathans were led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as the Frontier Gandhi, whose standing among his people was demonstrated long after the end of nonviolent protest in the North West Frontier, when an unprecedented one-day ceasefire was declared between the Soviet army and the Afghan *mujahideen* on the day of his funeral in 1988, so that thousands of mourners could pay him their last respects in Jalalabad, many accompanying his body there across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border that had been temporarily opened for this purpose.⁷

How can this first movement of mass politics among the Pathans, which continued well after the Khilafat Movement and dominated political life in their homeland for nearly twenty years between 1930 and 1947, be fitted into existing narratives of religion, tribalism and warfare on the North West Frontier? Perhaps by recognizing that Gandhian nonviolence rather than bloodshed might have constituted the founding moment of popular Pathan militancy there, which would make a Hindu Mahatma as much an ancestor in the Taliban's family tree as the Muslim Prophet. Indeed Gandhi's supporters on the North West Frontier even called their practice of nonviolence a "jihad", thus transforming the modern history of this word and inadvertently giving substance to liberal Muslim efforts at reinterpreting it as a peaceable form of struggle. The fact that all this happened in a place famous since the nineteenth century for its violent tradition of jihad presents an embarrassment to those who would trace the continuous and self-contained character of such a tradition there, which might explain why the Khudai Khidmatgars or Servants of God, as Gandhi's Pathan allies were known, have systematically been written out of the history of militancy on the North West Frontier. And yet in the Pakistani elections of 2008, it was the Frontier Gandhi's organization, now called the Awami National Party, which staged a spectacular victory in the province on its old platform of nonviolence, thus demonstrating that it remains the longest surviving and most successful Gandhian movement in existence. The party's much-touted "secularism", in other words, has more to do with

6 Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition and Memory in the North West Frontier* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 71.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

the Mahatma and indeed with the modern history of jihad than with any idea of freedom being pushed by the West today.

Returning to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's early career, we should recognize that Muslims resident in other parts of India refused to be outdone in their commitment to the caliphate by those who had migrated to Afghanistan, donating enormous sums of money as well as medicine and clothing for the Turks fighting to preserve their Anatolian homeland from European depredation. What could prefigure today's globalized Islam more than such an event? Al-Qaeda's founding fathers are fully conscious of this history, with Ayman al-Zawahiri, for example, lauding the long history of pan-Islamic zeal among Pakistani Muslims in a way that he never does for the Arabs. However he also recognizes that the mercenary role of Britain's Indian army around the world, especially in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East, has in no small way been inherited by its Pakistani successor.⁸ None of this is to suggest that the Middle East has no role to play in the globalization of Islam, indeed quite the contrary, though I will argue in this chapter that it has been fragmented and dispersed throughout the Muslim world as a conceptual rather than political category, and one that takes on a new meaning in the terms of an imagined caliphate.

The Middle East that is studied and discussed by scholars and journalists in the West remains a Euro-American category defined primarily in terms of its natural resources and political instabilities, both overlaid with a patina of religiosity. The same region looks rather different when seen from places other than Washington or London, as my brief recounting of the Khilafat Movement illustrates. My point here is not that this extraordinary event occurred outside Euro-American politics, but that it created both a different history and a different geography while being internal to the politics of the great powers during the First World War. How might standard narratives of Middle Eastern history even begin to account for a mass movement, led by Gandhi no less, that was dedicated to preserving the caliphate against its Arab as well as European enemies? In fact they cannot account for it, and must margin-

8 "Al-Qaeda Leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri's Interview to Al-Sahab (Part II): Osama Bin Laden Still Commands the Jihad, but the Jihad is Larger than Individuals. Mujahideen Should Attack Oil Infrastructure in the Middle East", *The Middle East Media Research Institute*, TV Monitor Project, Clip No. 952, 12 July, 2005 (www.memri.org).

alise this history in order to protect the autonomy of the Middle East as a political stage upon which Americans or Europeans can play the only foreign parts.

The Turks themselves abolished the caliphate in 1924, at least partly in response to Indian attempts at internationalizing this institution beyond the jurisdiction of their newly founded state. But now that it has returned bearing an even ghostlier mien than before, the caliphate recapitulates the pre-history of Islam's globalization in events like the Khilafat Movement, which fundamentally destabilize received ideas of the Middle East as constituting some origin for global Islam, though we shall see that the region does indeed provide a conceptual focus for it. Perhaps this is why we are now faced with the unedifying spectacle of "experts" on the area trying desperately to claw militant Islam, in particular, back to the Middle East, which they can only do by concentrating on the "Arabness" of men like Osama bin Laden and ignoring his location outside the Arab world, to say nothing of the Afghans or Pakistanis who risk their lives in sheltering him, and who themselves participate so enthusiastically in global forms of militancy. Only a few voices, like that of the sociologist Olivier Roy, have so far been raised against this attempt to read global Islam primarily in Arab terms—these of course being identical with Euro-American terms.⁹

Locating militancy in the Middle East allows specialists on the region to predicate it on traditional political causes like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as to the poverty and oppression that are said to afflict the Arab world in general. But how are we to explain the Britons of Pakistani descent who are also willing to die for Palestine, without undermining this political account of militancy by their entirely vicarious identification with Palestinian suffering? Like millions of their fellow South Asians living in the Middle East, such men are often treated by academics and journalists in the West as servants there only to take instruction from their Arab masters, with the issues that animate them seen as psychological rather than political in nature.¹⁰ Instead of relying

9 See Olivier Roy's *Globalised Islam* (London: Hurst, 2004), and *The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East* (London: Hurst, 2008).

10 Given that South Asian labourers, clerks and businessmen form a long-standing and indeed overwhelming demographic majority in some Persian Gulf states, the fact that scholars regularly write about Islam and Arabness in these places without any reference to them is astonishing. It would be like (though much

upon such forced distinctions as that between the psychological and political causes for militancy, or by engaging in the futile effort to measure the relative strengths of each, I propose taking the globalization of Islam seriously and looking at the way in which militancy fragments the Middle East in its quest for a global politics, doing this by stretching the term Arab beyond geography and even language to locate it within Al-Qaeda's caliphal narrative as a globalized concept.

Fantasy island

Osama bin Laden's Arabness, and particularly his provenance from the Arabian Peninsula, are crucial to his global stature as Islam's greatest rebel. No Muslim from another geographical or linguistic tradition, I would warrant, has a chance of assuming a comparable role, however spectacular his career. Of course Arabia and its language have always possessed a certain prestige in the larger Muslim world, but it is well to remember that not so long ago it was Istanbul rather than Mecca, and the Turks rather than the Arabs, who were seen by Muslims as well as Christians to represent the politics of Sunni Islam in particular. Indeed the Arab world, and the Arabian Peninsula not least, remained relatively unimportant as far as the exercise of Muslim leadership was concerned until the break-up of the Ottoman Empire in the twentieth century. It is true that the Wahhabi revolts of the nineteenth century created something of a stir throughout the Muslim world, because of their attempts to proscribe certain religious practices in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, as well as to destroy saintly tombs and other monuments revered by the generality of pilgrims there. But this agitation for one of the earliest international Muslim causes only supported Ottoman efforts to reestablish control of the peninsula, and to protect the passage and practices there of pilgrims who were for the most part non-Arabs.

Given this history it is tempting to trace the emergence of Arabia and the Arabs as figures of Muslim leadership to the carving out of independent states in the Middle East after the First World War, and particularly to the discovery of oil in countries like Saudi Arabia, which suddenly brought them to the centre of the global economy. While the

worse than) dealing with Christianity among Whites in the American south without mentioning the presence and influence of Blacks upon them.

new wealth and therefore influence of these states in the greater Muslim world is undeniable, not least because of the huge migrant flows they invited from it, we should not overestimate the effect of Arab forms of Islam like Wahhabism, even with its aggressive marketing by the Saudis there. For one thing Wahhabism has never managed to reproduce itself in any significant way outside its homeland. Thus hardly any Muslim group outside the Middle East acknowledges the authority of Abd al-Wahhab himself, which is a remarkable thing given the Saudi funding that so many of them receive. Indeed the name Wahhabi is more often used as a slur to be defended against than otherwise, notwithstanding any other gestures of loyalty these groups owe their donors.

But then the Wahhabi establishment has itself been unable either intellectually or even in terms of manpower to expand its reach globally, despite the many foreign students who are trained in Saudi Arabia to spread its message abroad. This is why their global outreach programmes, like the famous *Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami* or Muslim World League, are so often staffed by sympathetic but not necessarily Wahhabi hirelings from countries like Pakistan. Even their propaganda material is sometimes taken from non-Wahhabi sources, for instance an English translation of the Quran by the Indian Shiite Abdullah Yusuf Ali, whose objectionable passages and footnotes the Saudis simply expurgated after purchasing its copyright. Militants like Ayman al-Zawahiri are themselves fully conscious of the limitations of Wahhabi and other fundamentalist movements in the greater Muslim world, however important Saudi funding may be there. Thus he comments sarcastically upon the fact that Sufis and even footballers have a far greater following among Muslims than any fundamentalist, let alone militant movement.¹¹

As figures of Islam's leadership, Arabia and the Arabs have a history prior to the emergence of the Persian Gulf states as economic powers, one that continues to inform the global charisma of men like Bin Laden. This prior history is significant enough to mitigate the great resentment and even hatred that Arab wealth and the arrogance it gives rise to so regularly provoke among non-Arab Muslims both within and without the militant pale. Indeed we shall see that for many of them the term Arab by no means refers solely to a region, language or people

11 "Al-Zawahiri calls on Muslims to wage 'war of jihad', reject UN resolutions", p. 12.

in any narrowly ethnic sense. On the contrary Arabness has assumed a global dimension to become a category that is open in various ways for Muslim occupation more generally, something that is not true of any other "cultural" designation in the Muslim world, no matter how glorious its history. One cannot lay claim to Turkishness, for example, in the way that one can to Arabness. And of this global category Osama bin Laden is probably the best spokesman.

Based as he is outside the peninsula, and speaking as he does to a global audience, Bin Laden's frequent invocations of Arabia and Arabness cannot be seen merely as elements in some debate internal to the Middle East. In fact his deployment of the category Arab is markedly global in its separation from any ethno-linguistic particularity. To begin with this most notorious and celebrated of Arabs routinely redraws the map of the Middle East by linking it to an older cartography, of which the "Arabian island" forms only one part. Thus we have seen how Mesopotamia replaces Iraq and Khorasan replaces Afghanistan in militant rhetoric, though neither name is coterminous with the state it displaces. The Middle East, along with its constituent states, disappears altogether from this revived cartography, turning Arabness into a floating category. As for the Arabian island, which is also produced by erasing the Peninsula's political boundaries, it has meaning only within the ambit of a larger imperial order, or of today's Muslim world, and not regionally or in its own right.

We may recall here that the first modern use of this designation was made during India's Khilafat Movement, with Muslim divines allied to Gandhi laying out the island's sacrosanct character to defy the military presence of Britain and France there in the aftermath of the First World War. The Mahatma himself was not averse to inhabiting this older Islamic geography within which the Arabian island belonged, most famously in referring to India by the medieval Arabic name of Hind, which, though it continues to be used in modern Arabic, had already become archaic in Indian and European languages alike by the Mahatma's time. Using the word Hind for his treatise of 1909 titled *Hind Swaraj* or Indian Self-Rule, then, to say nothing of its common use elsewhere in slogans like "Jai Hind" or Victory to India, allowed Gandhi to peel away the British map of empire and position India within a precolonial Islamic cartography, one that included the *Jazirat ul-Arab*

but not, say, Italian Somaliland or German East Africa—to say nothing of British India.

Focussing on the Arabian Peninsula as part of Islam's sacred geography rather than as part of the Middle East allows Osama bin Laden to ignore descent from the Prophet or tribal affiliation, which are supposedly important elements in traditional Arabness. Of course those who claim descent from Muhammad or his companions are to be found throughout the Muslim world, but the relative unimportance of such genealogical factors among militants is significant nevertheless, for it is linked to the explicitly formulated criticism of Arabness as an ethnic category. So Ayman al-Zawahiri, in his famous letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was then the head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, warns the latter to guard against the possibility of his struggle devolving into something purely Iraqi or Arab.¹² Apart from any utilitarian reasons for preventing the localization and ethnicization of Al-Qaeda's war, then, Zawahiri's warning evoked a whole history of anti-nationalist and anti-racialist feeling in modern Islamic thought, itself probably derived from a deep suspicion of European racism and nationalism. Moreover in this letter and elsewhere Zawahiri pointed to the fact that he and Bin Laden had sworn allegiance to the Taliban's Mullah Omar, even calling him by the caliphal title "prince of believers", despite the fact that he was neither an Arab nor even a proper Muslim by their lights:

Praise be to God, all the Jihadist movements are ideological enemies not only to the Iraqi Ba'th Party but to all the nationalist and secular trends whose principles conflict with the fundamentals of Islam, which is based on equality between Muslims and the bonds of faith and not on the nationalist spirit. Almighty God says: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you." This is the point as far as the faith is concerned. As for the practice, the mujahidin everywhere—from the Philippines to Iraq—have in their ranks Muslims from all countries and races without discrimination between Arab and a non-Arab, white or black. [...] We in Al-Qaeda organization have pledged allegiance to the com-

12 "Letter from Al-Zawahiri to Al-Zarqawi", *Office of the Director of National Intelligence*, 11 October 2005 (http://www.dni.gov/release_letter_101105.html), pp. 10-11.

mander of the faithful, Mulla Muhammad Omar, who is not an Arab. So by the grace of God, we are the farthest people from the nationalist trend.¹³

[We must conduct our struggle from] the standpoint of not highlighting the doctrinal differences which the masses do not understand, such as this one is Matrīdī or this one is Asharī or this one is Salafī, and from the standpoint of doing justice to the people, for there may be in the world a heresy or an inadequacy in a side which may have something to give to jihad, fighting, and sacrifice for God. We have seen magnificent examples in the Afghan jihad, and the prince of believers, Mullah Muhammad Omar—may God protect him—himself is of Hanafī adherence, Matrīdī doctrine, but he stood in the history of Islam with a stance rarely taken.¹⁴

While the caliphate had been more or less delinked from its tribal Arab origins by the time the Ottomans adopted it in the sixteenth century, it was only in the twentieth that the institution came to be set against modern forms of national and racial belonging. The Iranian pan-Islamist Jamal al-Din Afghani, who identified himself as an Afghan to avoid being dismissed as a Shi'ite in the nineteenth-century Sunni world he hoped to influence, is by common consent seen as the greatest propagator of a modern and thoroughly ecumenical caliphate, though he was still wedded to its Ottoman form.¹⁵ It was therefore only after the First World War that the idea of the caliphate was truly radicalized, with Muslim thinkers willing to redefine it not only in anti-national or anti-racial ways, but even to reconstitute it as an elected assembly. One of the most important of these thinkers, and one active in the Khilafat Movement, was the cleric-turned-politician Abul Kalam Azad, who became a close associate of Gandhi's, president of the Indian National Congress and independent India's first minister of education. His celebrated Urdu book on the caliphate, published in the immediate aftermath of the Great War and called *The Question of the Caliphate and the Arabian Island*, advocated an Arabia free of infidel troops and a non-specific or rather non-Arab caliph, and could therefore almost have served as a primer for Bin Laden and Zawahiri.

13 "Al-Zawahiri calls on Muslims to wage 'war of jihad', reject UN resolutions", p. 8. Square brackets mine.

14 "Letter from Al-Zawahiri to Al-Zarqawi", p. 6.

15 For Afghani see Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal al-Din "al-Afghani": A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

Azad denuded the caliph of his traditional qualifications, including membership of the Prophet's tribe, wisdom and even piety, by acknowledging that none of the dynasties laying claim to the caliphate in the past had in fact possessed all of these.¹⁶ In the absence of such personal traits the caliph was to represent a modern function—that of constituting a source of authority and focus of loyalty for the Muslim world. Azad justified this functional interpretation of the caliphate by attributing the personal qualifications that had once marked this institution to the rival Shiite concept of the imamate, which would confine the leadership of the Muslim world to a direct descendant of Muhammad.¹⁷ Yet the caliph as Azad defined him continued to bear a close resemblance to the Shia imam, not only because he is always called an imam in *The Question of the Caliphate and the Arabian Island*, but also because his authority is made equivalent to that of God and the Prophet.¹⁸ The Ottoman sultan, it is important to point out, possessed neither of these characteristics. Moreover like the Shia imam, Azad's caliph does not actually have to rule the world's Muslims in even the most formal of political senses but rather to give them meaning as a global community, if only by serving as their symbolic point of reference.

Abul Kalam Azad's book on the caliphate, then, was not some old-fashioned contribution to Islamic theology but an attempt to conceive of the Muslim community as a new kind of actor in the wake of the First World War. The text spiritualized the caliph's role in a very Shiite way, though it also did the opposite by reducing it to a function. In other words Azad's paradoxical mission was to spiritualize a caliphate that he had himself made into a geometrical point. Thus he described the worldwide Muslim community as a circle whose centre was the caliphate, which meant that the caliph was not an historical entity so much as a logical requirement.¹⁹ Similar was the function of the Arabian Peninsula, which for Azad constituted the territorial centre of Islam not because it lay at the heart of the Muslim world, since it wasn't even the seat of the caliphate, but because it represented a geometrical centre

without which the very idea of an Islamic territory could not exist.²⁰ It was only by divesting the caliphate as well as the Arabian "island" of any ethnic, linguistic, or even geopolitical particularity, that Azad could invest them with significance for Muslims worldwide. And it is interesting to note in this respect that like Abul Kalam Azad, Osama bin Laden, too, has turned the caliphate and the Arabian Peninsula into the most abstract of entities, with the "island" taking its significance from a new global arena named by the caliphate.

If Al-Qaeda's leaders have, like their Indian forebears, emptied the Middle East of its Arabness and dispersed it within the global geography of Islam, their dealings with the Arabic language have not been any less radical. Bin Laden, for example, is famous for speaking in a beautiful if archaic style, full of Quranic cadences, that is sometimes difficult even for Arabic-speaking laymen to understand. This does not stop many of them from trying to imitate him, and we have a description of the Kuwaiti-based Pakistani Khalid Sheikh Mohammed doing just that, though rather unsuccessfully, in the interview he gave to Al-Jazeera just before being captured.²¹ At first glance it might seem counter-productive for Osama bin Laden to speak a stilted Arabic when he wants to reach the largest possible audience. But this would be to presume that he is speaking primarily to an Arab audience. Let us suppose, however, that Bin Laden's language, whatever forms it takes in private life, is rendered difficult for broadcast precisely because it presupposes translation. For his words are very deliberately directed at a global rather than Arab audience, often explicitly to the British and American people or their leaders. In fact Al-Sahab, the media arm of Al-Qaeda, increasingly provides English translations and subtitles for their broadcasts, just as Bin Laden provided English translators to foreign fighters at his Afghan camps. And this is to say nothing about Al-Sahab's bilingual or made-in-English productions, such as those featuring the American convert Adam Gadahn—whose English perorations are sometimes prefaced by Zawahiri's Arabic comments.

Is it possible that Osama bin Laden can afford to speak in archaic Arabic because he relies upon its English translation? This would make

16 Azad, *Alaslah-e Khilafat*, p. 127.

17 Ibid., pp. 91-3.

18 Ibid., pp. 34-43.

19 Ibid., pp. 31-3.

20 Ibid., p. 247.

21 Yosri Fouda and Nick Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003), pp. 116-117.

English and not Arabic into the language of global Islam, which is probably true enough since it is primarily from English that Bin Laden's words are translated even into other Muslim languages like Urdu. In any case most Muslims around the world are used to hearing Arabic only in the Quranic style that Bin Laden favours and without understanding a word of it. Yet the globally broadcast Arabic used by militants cannot simply be received traditionally, as a ritual language across the Islamic world. Like a number of religious and social practices associated with it, Arabic has become instead a kind of operating code for many Muslims, a standardized technique made up of recognizable if not necessarily comprehensible words, phrases and scriptural citations. These bits of code, Olivier Roy points out in his book *Globalised Islam*, work to produce global Islam as a kind of universal technology cut off from the vagaries of living cultures and languages.

In addition to the usual quotations from the Quran or sayings of the Prophet, Osama bin Laden's Arabic in particular is larded with adulatory references to pre-Islamic Arabia, and especially to its heroes and poets, though these have for centuries been criticized by pious Muslims and indeed by the Prophet and the Quran themselves. Such references to the chivalric tradition of pagan Arabia were popular in the literary works of profane writers attached to royal courts in the past, and continue to be so among both secular and nationalist Arabs. What then does it mean for Bin Laden to associate his jihad with pre-Islamic battles and compare his martyrs to pagan warriors, especially given the execration that fundamentalist thinkers tend to reserve for this period of ignorance, or *jahiliyya*, whose evil they think survives into the present? In a certain sense it is precisely the particularity of this pagan past that defines Arabness, and not the universal narrative of Islam, which is all about Muhammad's truth departing its Arabian cradle. In other words Osama Bin Laden can only anchor his own much-trumpeted Arabness to this pre-Islamic past, which thus serves as a caesura connecting Arabia to Islam.

That there is something paradoxical about this move to the pagan past goes without saying, though it pales into insignificance beside the greater paradox of locating pre-Islamic Arabia in the mountains of the Hindu Kush. For it turns out that it is on the war-weary frontiers of the Muslim world, in places like Afghanistan, Chechnya and Somalia as

much as in Iraq, that the pre-Islamic chivalry Bin Laden celebrates can find its modern manifestation. The charging horses and fiery deserts of pagan Arabia take on a new life in the battlefields of Africa and Central Asia, and perhaps even on the buses and trains of London. And so having been anchored in the pre-Islamic past, this chivalrous form of Arabness is immediately put into global circulation, as if Arabia had itself become a nomad in the world. But this is exactly what has happened, with Arabness globalized by way of sartorial, linguistic and ritual signs that evoke romantic images of virtuous knighthood, as if in a kind of Arthurian romance for the Muslim world that books like Ayman al-Zawahiri's *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet* purposefully gesture towards. Thus also the "Arab" headscarves worn by the London bombers in their martyrdom videotapes, articles of clothing which had nothing to do with their Pakistani background. More interesting is the fact that these signs of Arabness are often mixed with sartorial elements from other Muslim traditions, not least among Arab fighters themselves in places like Afghanistan, creating a cosmopolitan Islam in this theatrical way by subverting its cultures of origin.

Empires of the mind

The globalization of Arabness as a moral category has a well-established pre-history in the Muslim world beyond the Middle East, which has for centuries now had to reconcile the Arab element in Islam with its own traditions and languages. Naturally in the period before nationalism this reconciliation had nothing to do with any culture war between Arab and non-Arab, such terms themselves being fluid and changeable, though a nationalist factor does enter the equation in modern times. Prior to the emergence of the oil-rich states of the Gulf, then, and prior even to the emergence of the Middle East, let alone the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Arabness was defined as a conceptual category in important and influential ways outside the region. It found expression in British India, through the literary and expository work of the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal, who was undoubtedly the most important and indeed the most popular Muslim thinker of twentieth-century South Asia, though his influence went well beyond the subcontinent. For I want to suggest that only by attaching itself to such histories of the imagination

does globalized militancy today achieve intellectual and political traction in the larger Muslim world.

Like Azad's claims for the sanctity of the Arabian Peninsula, Iqbal's conception of Arabness as an intellectual category fell heir to a long literary history in which the word Arab had exercised the Indian imagination. In earlier times, of course, Arabia was imagined neither in ethno-linguistic nor territorial terms, but was defined rather by the cosmopolitan and, as we would say today, multinational pilgrim cities of Mecca and Medina. And because these cities had lost power very soon after the Prophet's death, with Arabia as a whole becoming a minor province within the great empires that succeeded him, they possessed little if any political importance of their own. Indeed the holy cities were treated both by Muslim rulers and their rivals as honourable places of exile, a role the peninsula continues to play even today for deposed heads of state. Naturally the sanctuary of Mecca in particular was even more important as a place of exile for dissident clerics, and it is remarkable how many of them fled there from the exactions of colonial rule eventually to return and lead resistance movements, whether violent or pacifist in nature. The Mahatma's associate Abul Kalam Azad was himself born in Mecca, and throughout his career made full use of the prestige this Arabian background lent him. Dependent though this prestige was upon Azad's use of the Arabic language, or rather an Urdu larded with Arabic locutions, there was nothing of the ethno-national in it. In fact the stereotyped character of the Bedouin, as Arabia's indigenous peoples were called, possessed mostly negative connotations in the literary culture to which Azad belonged, being associated mostly with savagery and the looting of pilgrim caravans. We owe the romantic image of the desert Arab to European influence.

By the middle of the eighteenth century this distant peninsula that was so difficult to traverse had begun to occupy a different kind of space in the imagination of India's Muslim elite. For one thing the emergence of Wahhabism as a military force that would in due course threaten the great cities of the Fertile Crescent suddenly put Arabia back on Islam's political map. Yet far more important was the fact that it provided Muslim intellectuals with an alternative political geography: Mecca and Medina could now be juxtaposed with capital cities like Istanbul or Delhi, not to foreground the former's religious status so much as to withdraw

from the contracting circle of the latter's power. So Shah Waliullah of Delhi, an eighteenth-century thinker claimed as a founding father by all the subcontinent's reformers, modernist as well as fundamentalist, had in his last testament urged his descendants to adopt the Arab dress and mannerisms of his ancestors, an injunction that was much derided at the time given the peculiarity of such habits in his city of residence.²² But in retrospect it seems clear that this instruction, with its echoes in the sartorial and linguistic "Arabness" of so many Muslims outside the Middle East today, represented a recognition of Delhi's declining power and a repudiation of its Islamic character. Well into the nineteenth century, then, Arabia and Arabness continued to define neither an ethno-linguistic nor a territorial entity but precisely the religious void created by India's political disintegration. Thus the popular Urdu writer Nazir Ahmad, in a novel promoting girls' education that was published in 1873, very typically described Arabia in the lesson on geography he imparts his female students as a place devoid of all meaning but that of Islam's revelation.²³

In the tradition that Muhammad Iqbal inherited, therefore, Arabia occupied an increasingly important place within a pan-Islamic imagination. And while it had always been part of a larger Muslim geography in India's literary culture, by the beginning of the twentieth century the peninsula's fate was bound closely to that of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed Turkey had come to represent as important a figure in the Muslim imagination as Arabia, though for very different reasons, since unlike the latter it represented both Islam's power and its modernity. And so from the nineteenth century Indians who identified with these qualities very commonly sported the Ottoman fez as a sign of their own intellectual and political aspirations, but with the fall of the caliphate this whole world of the imagination collapsed, its modernity being replaced by the accoutrements of an Arabian purity. How did this transformation occur and what were its implications for imagining the Muslim world anew? Looking in more detail at Iqbal's conception of Arabness

22 Shah Waliullah, *Armughan-e Shah Waliullah*, trans. Muhammad Sarvar (Lahore: Idarah-e Thaqafat-e Islamiyya, 1971), pp. 17-18.

23 Nazir Ahmad, *Banat un-Na'ash* (Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore, 1967), pp. 185-6.

should allow us to trace the outlines of Islam's globalization, not least among militants like Osama bin Laden in our own times.

Although Iqbal did not support the Khilafat Movement, which he thought was too medieval in fancy, he was certainly a pan-Islamist and one who was not averse to defining the caliphate in terms of an elected parliament. Indeed he saw the Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the Atatürk who had abolished this centuries-old institution, as a great Muslim figure and almost a modern caliph himself, excessive and unfortunate though his republicanism might be. And it was from this modernized idea of the caliphate, or rather of pan-Islamism, that Iqbal's idea of Arabness drew its meaning. Like many other Muslim thinkers of the period, Muhammad Iqbal set his face against the racial and national ideologies that he thought lay at the root of European colonialism and that were destructive of Christian ethics in the West as much as they would be of Muslim ones in the East. If it was Iqbal's distrust of such ideologies that accounted for his pan-Islamist vision of the caliphate, in other words, this very distrust also led him to support the Roman Catholic Church as its Christian equivalent. And so it was the Reformation's destruction of Latin Christendom that he thought had brought about the racial nationalism that lay behind liberalism, imperialism and fascism alike:

The result is a series of mutually ill-adjusted states dominated by interests not human but national. And these mutually ill-adjusted states after trampling over the morals and convictions of Christianity, are today feeling the need of a federated Europe, i.e., the need of a unity which Christian church-organisation originally gave them, but which instead of reconstructing it in the light of Christ's vision of human brotherhood they considered it fit to destroy under the inspiration of Luther.²⁴

Despite its Islamic particularity, therefore, the caliphate represented for Muhammad Iqbal a conceptual form with equivalents in other religious traditions. Crucial here is the fact that he linked pan-Islamism with the Roman Catholic Church rather than with the Holy Roman Empire, specifying in this way its religious dimension over any merely political one. Perhaps it was the generality of its form that also allowed Iqbal to redefine the caliphate so radically, making of it a bulwark

24 Muhammad Iqbal, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, edited with notes by Syed Abdul Wahid (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1992), pp. 163-4.

against the violent practices of European nationalism. This criticism of ethno-national ideology was not confined to Europe but included modern Arab as much as Indian forms of chauvinism. More importantly it also extended to what Iqbal called "Arabian imperialism", referring thus to the Arabization of Islam in the course of its early expansion. Muhammad Iqbal then sought to modernize Islam by purifying it of what he saw as the medieval tradition of Arab conquest. This was in fact his only religious reason for supporting some kind of autonomous Muslim state within India—what eventually became Pakistan. Such autonomy was required not in order to save Muslims from any Hindu or British dominion so much as to set them free from an Arabian one:

I therefore demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim state in the best interest of India and Islam. For India it means security and peace resulting from an internal balance of power; for Islam an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilize its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times.²⁵

Today Iqbal is acclaimed as the spiritual father of Pakistan, though his criticism of Arabian imperialism has been replaced in the curiously anti-nationalist ideology of this state by the poet-philosopher's glorification of Arabness as an intellectual ideal. Muhammad Iqbal invoked this Arab ideal in two ways: first by using the word *hijazi*, an adjective referring to that part of the Arabian Peninsula called the Hijaz, which had been the Prophet's homeland. Used thus, *hijazi*, like the Arabian island as a whole, referred not to a political entity but to a set of historical ideals that were attached in the literary imagination to the region it named. These are the same ideals, comprising courage, honour, daring and the like that Osama bin Laden invokes in our own times, often also under the rubric *hijazi*, when he glorifies the chivalric spirit of pre-Islamic Arabia. The second way in which Iqbal describes this ideal is by counterposing the Arab (*arab*) to the Persian (*ajam*). The distinction between Arab and Persian is a long-standing one in the history of Islam, but for Iqbal it does not stand either for a political or an ethno-linguistic difference between two peoples. These terms refer instead to distinct philosophical ideals, with the Arab standing in for passionate

25 Ibid. p. 173.

action and an unyielding insistence on the letter of the law, while the Persian stood in for a contemplative life and the intellectual flexibility of compromise.

Whatever the literary precedents for the pairing of Arab and Persian in Islamic tradition, Muhammad Iqbal modernized their relationship by adding some European leavening to it. To some degree this included elements from the field of Semitic studies, and even from the ethno-linguistic classification of humanity into categories like Aryan and Semite. Given Iqbal's dislike of racial categories, however, the ethnic and national ballast of such classifications tended to be thrown overboard in his work, and their categories lent philosophical weight instead. Oswald Spengler's highly influential book *The Decline of the West* provided Muhammad Iqbal with one model of such philosophical classification, though he remained deeply critical of some aspects of it.²⁶ More important as a model perhaps was the nineteenth-century pairing of Athens and Jerusalem, or Hebraism and Hellenism, as Matthew Arnold put it in *Culture and Anarchy*.²⁷ And in fact the distinction of Arab and Persian mirrors that of Jew and Greek in almost every respect, with the formers' moral grandeur differentiated from the latter's aesthetic perfection.

Nietzsche's pairing of the Apollonian and the Dionysian provided a final model for Iqbal's *ajam* and *arab*. And like Nietzsche, whose Indian admirer he was, Iqbal investigated these terms not merely as names, but because their very reduction to stereotypes indicated that the Arab and the Persian, much like the Jew and the Greek, had become embodied in popular attitudes and prejudices, manifested as these were in articles of clothing, uses of language and forms of behaviour. Such categories were in this sense almost visceral in their effects and not simply ideas that flitted across minds while leaving bodies both undifferentiated and untouched.²⁸ Like Nietzsche again, Muhammad Iqbal thought of these categories not as cultural particularities but precisely as philosophical principles that could be identified by different names over more than

one civilization. It is possible, in other words, to read Iqbal's Arab as an equivalent for Jew, and his Persian as an equivalent for Greek. Moreover these principles were neither autonomous nor discrete, representing instead historical traits of human dimension that always interacted with one another and sometimes even took each other's place, whether this was among a people or within a single individual. The Arab and the Persian, in other words, named the Muslim history of an intellectual relationship that stretched beyond the world of Islam, though this history possessed its own particularity. And as intellectual principles the Arab and the Persian were open to occupation, whatever the role that "actual" Arabs and Persians had played in their constitution. Thus Muhammad Iqbal sang the Arab's praises while writing in Persian.

Now if the Arab and the Persian represented principles that were in a constant state of play, then there was no question of opting for one over another in any absolute sense. Indeed this would make of them a Manichaean duality, something that Iqbal thought was un-Islamic and that he placed in the Persian world. On the contrary, the Arab and the Persian each had its virtues, and it was only right that one should dominate the other at certain historical moments. So Muhammad Iqbal's doctoral dissertation, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, describes the universalism of Islam in medieval times by evaluating the Aryan contribution to this Semitic religion, something that he thought made it into a truly synthetic phenomenon.²⁹ And while Iqbal identified the term Aryan in this work with Persia, he also recognized India as its home, thus making *ajam* itself into a complex and expansive category more or less equivalent to the scholarly designation of Indo-European. Whatever its past glories, however, Muhammad Iqbal believed that in his own day, when so much of the Muslim world lived under European colonialism, the passionate activism and moral rigour of the Arab was required more than the contemplative aesthetic of the Persian for an Islam revived.

Here then we have a whole genealogy of Arabness outside the Middle East, one in which it is transformed into a philosophical principle that is neither autonomous nor absolute, but open to occupation and in a constant state of play with a Persia that complements rather than

26 See Mohammed Iqbal, 'The Reconstruction of religious Thought in Islam' (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1990), pp. 142-45.

27 See Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 126-137.

28 The key text here is Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen, (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1998).

29 See Muhammad Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia: A Contribution to the Study of Muslim Philosophy* (Lahore: Bazm-e Iqbal, 1959).

opposes it. And however different in origin Osama bin Laden's conception of Arabness may be, his vision converges with that of Iqbal in setting up the category Arab against ethno-nationalism to have it represent a remarkably similar set of intellectual ideals. Bin Laden's globalization of Arabness, in other words, has assimilated itself to the category's prehistory outside the Middle East, in formulations like Muhammad Iqbal's, to turn the stuff of geopolitics into a philosophical principle of great depth and complexity. But whatever its genealogy, Arabness does not possess its own meaning, instead deriving it from the larger Muslim world, precisely in contrast to entities like Persia, with which it has formed a stereotyped pairing for many centuries now. In fact for Osama bin Laden today as much as for Muhammad Iqbal yesterday, the Arab is compared, contrasted and otherwise related to elements only within the Muslim world and not to the West. For the West's peer in friendship as much as enmity is Islam or the Muslim world as a whole—just as among Middle Eastern nationalists in the past Arabness was counterposed to the West only as part of the East however defined.

The militant and the Mahatma

As part of a narrative internal to Islam but external to the Middle East, it is easy to see how Arabness can achieve meaning within the imaginative context of a caliphate. But despite its Arab beginnings as well as its long and glorious Arab history, militants today insist on linking the caliphate primarily to its last owners, the supposedly decadent Ottoman Turks who not only ended up being defeated by European powers, but with their Westernized ways are not even considered to be models of Islamic piety. Why then insist on attaching the caliphate, even as a future possibility, to the House of Osman, which had in addition to all its other faults also reduced the Arabs to servitude? Having fought for long periods against Christian powers, and having been defeated by them in living memory, the Ottoman caliphate offers militants both a cause and a model. The consequences of adopting this model, however, go well beyond such tactical reasoning. For in addition to announcing its anti-national and cosmopolitan credentials, the Ottoman model of a militant caliphate foregrounds precisely the modernity and even the

secularism of this imaginary order—or at the very least its anti-fundamentalist character.

The caliphate as it is reinterpreted in contemporary Muslim thought tends to be resolutely modern in form, as we have seen, even as the precedents for its transformation are still sought in the past. Nevertheless it is evident to all those who reimagine it that no future caliphate will constitute simply a reiteration of some original model, no matter how updated in appearance. In this sense the caliphate cannot be linked back either to its earliest period under the "rightly guided" caliphs, nor to its later Umayyad and Abbasid glories. Interesting about this recognition of historical change is that its upholders will often refuse to countenance such change when thinking about individual Muslim states. The nation state, therefore, is to be domesticated by being modelled with technical alterations upon the Prophet's dispensation in Medina, while the caliphate, perhaps because it is an indigenous and imaginary entity, can be envisioned in more transformative ways.³⁰ After all the language of the Islamic state is essentially defensive in nature, seeking as it does to translate the nation state into Islamic terms, as well as to regulate and limit its inroads into traditional Muslim societies.³¹ And for this to happen great weight must be placed upon an original constitution. Yet when they have actually come into being, Islamic states have never in practice been able to fulfil their regulative role, and are now in the process of casting it off to become, quite self-consciously, the primary agents of change in Muslim societies.³²

The caliphate, in other words, has always had a modern and even secular form in contemporary Muslim thought, this being the truest link it possesses with the Ottoman Empire, which was itself officially secular from the late nineteenth century.³³ Indeed the Turkish sultan only started emphasizing his caliphal authority late in the eighteenth

30 This is true not only of the secularist Abul Kalam Azad's *Muslah-e Khilafat*, but also of his contemporary and compatriot the fundamentalist Abul Ala Mawdudi's *Khilafat o Mulukhiyyat* (New Delhi: Markazi Maktabah-e Islami Publishers, 2006).

31 For this see the work of Olivier Roy, particularly *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

32 Olivier Roy describes these efforts in *The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East*.

33 See for this the classic work by Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst, 1998).

century, and claiming authority over Muslims outside his domains on the same principle as Christian powers were doing for their co-religionists in Ottoman lands. So the Arabist T. W. Arnold, who had been Muhammad Iqbal's teacher at Government College, Lahore, and who advised Britain on dealing with the Khilafatists, points out that the first such claims put forward in a diplomatic document were in the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji between Sultan Abdul Hamid I and the Empress Catherine II of Russia.³⁴ Though it had become an institution by which Muslim thinkers imagined their modernity, the caliphate was paradoxically not envisioned in completely utopian terms even after the abolition of its Ottoman form. So just like Osama bin Laden and in very similar terms too, Gandhi was adamant about defending the institution's latter-day reality, however decadent its Ottoman form might be, even going so far as to describe the First World War as a crusade against Islam and the dismantling of the caliphate as the greatest humiliation suffered by Muslims in the twentieth century:

Oppose all Turkish misrule by all means, but it is wicked to seek to efface the Turk and with him Islam from Europe under the false plea of Turkish misrule. [...] Was the late war a crusade against Islam, in which the Mussalmans of India were invited to join?³⁵

I do say that the affront such as has been put upon Islam cannot be repeated for a century. Islam must rise now or 'be fallen' if not for ever, certainly for a century.³⁶

The Mahatma was undoubtedly the most important propagator of the caliphate in modern times, not least because it was he rather than the much-acclaimed Afghani who managed to lead a significant religious and political movement in its favour, one with incalculable consequences for Islam in South Asia and beyond. For Gandhi the caliphate was a moral ideal but not a utopian one because it referred to a reality that, half-vanished though it might be, existed with neither name nor form in the world of European politics. Similarly for Bin Laden this institution names the otherwise nameless reality of an Islam that occupies

34 T.W. Arnold, , *The Caliphate* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 165.

35 M.K. Gandhi, "The Meaning of the Khilafat", *Young India*, 8 September 1921. Parenthesis mine.

36 M.K. Gandhi, "At the Call of the Country", *Young India*, 21 July 1920.

a global arena lacking political forms proper to itself. But the caliphate's curious realism harbours a momentous secret: that as an imaginary institution it serves to hold back another imaginary one with equally deep roots in the history of Islam. What the caliphate in all its profane reality forestalls is a messianic order based on the institution of the Mahdi in Muslim tradition. Indeed messianism is remarkable by its absence from modern narratives of the caliphate—which do not lend the institution any religious charisma—and in fact from Muslim militancy more generally. The messianic impulse, as well as the apocalypse to which it is related, is far more characteristic of contemporary Jewish and Christian movements instead.

Maybe it is the caliphate's very lack of any utopian project or religious charisma that allows it to name the global arena in all its cosmopolitan reality. Ayman al-Zawahiri's letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, for instance, does more than underline the anti-national and non-Arab character of the jihad. It also expostulates with the bloodthirsty head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq to cease gratuitous attacks upon the Shia—not simply for tactical reasons, but because Zawahiri recognized that however strong sectarian passions may run in any region, and however perfidious he considered Iraq's Shiites, the world's Sunni majority limning his imaginary caliphate would not countenance such attacks.³⁷ So while denouncing these treacherous heretics and reserving their punishment for God, Zawahiri was careful to name them not as Shiites so much as American collaborators. It also worth noting that the more sectarian passions are stoked in parts of the Muslim world the less do Zawahiri or Bin Laden invoke them, so that in recent times we even see them referring for the first time to sacred Shiite heroes like the Imam Husayn as models of martyrdom.³⁸

But the cosmopolitanism of this uncharismatic caliphate has precedents more recent than the Ottoman Empire. For the Khilafat Movement, seen by so many Indian Sunnis as comprising a religious obligation, also managed to win not only Hindu but also Shiite support—because it re-imagined the new world that emerged from the First World War in terms that differed radically from those in use among the surviving

37 "Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi", pp. 8-9.

38 "Al-Zawahiri calls on Muslims to wage 'war of jihad', reject UN resolutions", pp. 5-6.

European empires. Now while Hindus are indifferent to the religious status of the caliphate, it is for the Shia a quite illegitimate institution because the Ottomans, like the caliphs who went before, are seen as having usurped the position of their imams. Yet among the many Shia leaders who supported the Khilafat was the eminent jurist and privy councillor Syed Ameer Ali, who apart from his desire to support Muslim sentiment in India, argued that the caliphate's abolition would fragment religious as much as political authority in the Sunni world and thus leave it prey to fanaticism and violence—a rather prescient analysis and one echoed by Osama bin Laden in our own times.³⁹ Ameer Ali and the Aga Khan, who as the imam of a Shia subsect was himself a religious rival of the caliph, nevertheless supported the institution's Ottoman form so assiduously that it was their public letter to the Turkish prime minister urging its preservation that provided Atatürk with a reason to terminate the House of Osman. The founder of the Turkish republic thought India's interference in his country's affairs unseemly, and failed to understand how a Sunni caliphate could be defended by Shiites, for whom it was after all religiously illegitimate.

Looking back at the caliphate's abolition after some three decades, the Aga Khan, than whom no Muslim more Westernized existed, still justified India's battle for the Ottoman cause, which Indian delegates to the Peace of Versailles had been the only ones to champion at that august assembly. The Aga Khan's defence of the caliphate against Arab nationalism as much as European imperialism was conducted in terms that lent rationality to an institution whose supporters are too often dismissed as irrational today, seeing in it the potential for a Middle Eastern federation that bears comparison with the Commonwealth of Nations as it was meant to be and with the European Union as it is. Agreeing in most respects with militant advocates of the caliphate in our own times, this very "moderate" defence of a Sunni institution by one of the most prominent Shia leaders of the period deserves to be quoted at length, if only to cast light upon the curiously mixed genealogy of pan-Islamism:

39 See for instance "Ameer Ali's letter with the Aga Khan to His Excellency Ghazi Ismat Pasha, the Prime Minister of Turkey", in Shan Muhammad (ed.), *The Right Hon'ble Syed Ameer Ali: Political Writings* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1989), pp. 288-290.

Muslim opposition to the break-up of the Turkish Empire had a basis—however much misunderstood it may have been—of true statesmanship and of understanding of the absorbing political realities of the Middle East. First, we felt that the separation of the Arabs from the Turks (hailed at the time as emancipation from a tyranny, although within a few years all Arab nationalists were singing a very different tune) would not lead to the emergence of a single strong Arab nation extending from Egypt to Persia and from Alexandretta to Aden and the Indian Ocean. We foresaw in large measure what actually happened; the formation of a number of small Arab nations, for many years of little more than colonial status, under British and French overlordship. We predicted that the Arabs would in fact merely be changing masters, and where these masters had been Muslim Turks they would now be Christians, or (as ultimately happened in a large part of Palestine) Jews. Even now, after the lapse of thirty years or more, the Arab states that succeeded the Ottoman Empire—though the ignominious protectorate and mandated status has been abolished—are nothing but an aggregation of small kingdoms and republics, not one of them capable of standing up alone in the face of any powerful opposition and, despite the Arab League, incapable of maintaining either individually or collectively real resistance to the influence either of Soviet Russia or the Western Democracies. Neutrality in any conflict between these two is a forlorn dream.

Consider for a moment how different matters might have been had there emerged after the First World War a federal union of Turkey, the Arab states of the Middle East, and Egypt, with a single defence force and a united foreign policy. Our instinctive Muslim faith in the idea of the continuance of Turkey as a Great Power had wisdom in it, for it would have achieved practical results, in the security and stability of the Middle East, far transcending anything that the makeshift, haphazard policies of the years since the end of the Second World War—piecemeal withdrawal of political suzerainty by Britain, piecemeal financial, economic and military aid by the United States have been able to effect. Consider the disruption and the political *malaise* which have been the lot of the Middle East in recent years; consider all the unavailing effort that has gone into the attempt to build up a Middle East Defence Organization, in any degree paralleling N.A.T.O., and ponder how easily, how honourably all this might have been avoided.⁴⁰

How did this extraordinary alliance of religious groups come about in the Khilafat Movement? Whatever the pragmatic politics and horse-trading that occurred between the leaders of these groups, for Gandhi it

40 Aga Khan, *The Memoirs of the Aga Khan: World Enough and Time* (London: Cassell and Co., 1954), pp. 156-7.

was clear that as a popular movement, the Khilafat was founded upon relationships that were suprapolitical in nature. Thus the Mahatma was strongly drawn to what he called the idealistic motives of India's Sunnis, who were after all sacrificing their time, money, well-being and even freedom for a faraway cause that seemed to bear no relation to their everyday needs and concerns. According to Gandhi its lack at least of direct political or economic advantage was what made of the Khilafat Movement something truly religious. And if the Mahatma admired this religious spirit, it was because he realized that only disinterested and sacrificial movements were capable of transforming entire societies, thus creating new political possibilities in their aftermath. So it was the idealistic character of Sunni sacrifice that he thought allowed Hindus, Shiites and others to befriend them, because by doing so they were supporting a neighbour's heartfelt prejudice rather than some cause that competed with any of their own. Whether or not this support was extended to India's Sunnis for reasons of self-interest, then, the Khilafat's idealism reduced such interests to relative insignificance by subordinating them to a movement that was not itself structured according to any recognizable calculus of interests.

The movement was in fact replete with sacrifices volunteered to secure the friendship of others. Such for example were the *fatwas* issued by Muslim divines prohibiting cow-slaughter because it was a practice offensive to Hindus: religious pronouncements whose gratuitous nature the Mahatma insisted upon in order to prevent this sacrifice from turning into the basis of a political deal. And however recent the attachment of India's Muslims to the caliphate might be, dating back to the nineteenth century and thus to the period of colonial domination at its earliest, these forms of sacrifice had a history that predated both Gandhi and the Khilafat Movement. For it was in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 that such sacrifices made their first appearance, with Hindu and Muslim soldiers of the East India Company taking to arms in support of each other's very particular fears about what they saw as British attempts to destroy their caste and religious distinctions, thus turning them into an undifferentiated race of Christian slaves. So when the Company's Muslim soldiers refused to bite open the bullet cartridges that were believed to have been greased with animal fat and rose up in revolt against the British, they did so not because of any religious prohibitions of their

own, but out of solidarity with those of their Hindu compatriots who constituted the bulk of the mutineers. It was for the sake of their Hindu countrymen, too, that they gave up slaughtering cows, though this was a customary practice especially during the Islamic feast of sacrifice.⁴¹ More important about these events than their interested nature is the fact that they often ignored the language of compromise and contract to rely upon that of sacrifice alone—and in the case of cow-slaughter even upon its doubling to achieve a sacrifice of sacrifice itself. These were, in other words, gestures that invited the friendship of others by defining sacrifice as a form of hospitality.

Gandhian forms of sacrifice, therefore, possessed not only a prehistory but a violent one at that, since the Mutiny represented the most important revolt by far against European imperialism in the nineteenth century, leading to savage reprisals by the British, who emptied out entire cities of their inhabitants while indulging in massacre, loot and rapine. The Khilafat Movement was often compared by its advocates as well as detractors to the Mutiny because it constituted the most significant threat to British rule in India since 1857, but also because it brought together different religious groups not to further some common aim so much as to achieve a completely pluralistic freedom each by sacrificing its interest for another's ideal. And so like the Hindu mutineers before them, the caliphate's Hindu supporters strengthened Muslim resolve by offering up their own sacrifices as a reminder of the former's Islamic obligations. By cultivating these disinterested relationships, said the Mahatma, Indians of all faiths were cultivating their own moral capacities and therefore claiming their freedom—which they could in any case achieve not by military but only such hospitable forms of sacrifice. Whatever the truth of Gandhi's analysis, it was broadcast in pamphlet and speech to become the mantra of the Khilafat Movement, which is why he is probably the greatest and certainly the most creative modern thinker of the caliphate: a Hindu who received the adulation of Muslim divines and was credited with nothing less than the revival of Indian Islam by friends and enemies alike.

41 See Irfan Habib, "History from below", *Frontline*, New Delhi, June 29, 2007, pp. 11-18, as well as Salim al-Din Quraishi's *Cry for Freedom: Proclamations of Muslim Revolutionaries of 1857* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1997).

Of course the Khilafat Movement finally failed, not only because the Turks abolished the institution, but even before this when Gandhi himself called it off though agitations were at their peak—because he objected to the violence that began breaking out among his followers, Hindu as well as Muslim, whom the Mahatma did not therefore think possessed the requisite spirit of sacrifice. He would rather have them volunteer to die than kill for material gain. Nevertheless Gandhi saw the movement as a successful experiment that demonstrated the possibility of what he called idealism in political life. The comparison with Al-Qaeda's advocacy of martyrdom in the service of a new caliphate needs no belabouring, since like the Indian Mutiny and the Khilafat Movement before it, the language of militant sacrifice today is pluralistic and hospitable enough to possess no common ideology. And yet the truly interesting thing about Gandhi calling off a movement which the British Empire was struggling to contain, was that he could do so without either an army or a police force and despite the disagreement of many Muslim leaders, who tried unsuccessfully to carry it forward on their own. Little did these men realize that the radical simplicity of a Hindu's logic might have more effect upon Muslims than their own complicated theology, since it was Gandhi rather than any of his Muslim partners who was acknowledged as the movement's "dictator". But this is precisely the role that the Mahatma's alter ego Osama bin Laden plays in our own day, especially when offering his enemies a truce while himself living in fear of his life.

However disenchanted Indian Muslims eventually become with him, the Mahatma laid a deep impress upon South Asian Islam by opening it out to the world in a quite novel way. Indeed Gandhi's form of religious leadership among Hindus even provided Muslim divines with a model for their own participation in political life, with some among them vying to become Muslim mahatmas.⁴² So it is no accident that while Gandhi's Hindu enemies saw him as pro-Muslim, and his Muslim enemies saw him as pro-Hindu, both concurred in regretting his opening the subcontinent's political arena to Islam's religious class. And in fact the largest body of clerics in India, called the Jamiat-ul Ulama-ye Hind or Society of Indian Divines, was founded in 1919 to support Gandhi and

the secular vision of the Indian National Congress during the Khilafat Movement, providing in its turn the founding model for clerical organizations belonging to different political orientations in Pakistan. If anything this reveals that Islam, whether in its peaceable or militant forms, is not self-produced but, as Muhammad Iqbal might say, a synthetic phenomenon. More than this, Gandhi's role in the Khilafat Movement and his influence upon Muslim politics subsequently tells us that Islam, even in modern times, is not defined simply by its relationship with the West but possesses a far more complex historical constitution.

This complexity was evident in the Khilafat Movement's effort to reimagine the still inchoate new world emerging from the ruin of both imperial and national states after the Great War—a world in whose creation the Indian army had played a leading role in the Middle East. The pluralistic and anti-national form taken by this effort of imagination is mirrored in militant thinking about the caliphate today, which I would argue represents an effort to re-imagine the new global arena still emerging from the ruins of the Cold War—one which possesses as yet no institutions of its own. It is therefore no accident that Osama bin Laden and his epigones should so insistently compare Islam's current predicament to the transformation it underwent after the Great War, since then as much as now it is not the Middle East so much as the Muslim world as a whole that is in the process of being redefined. Gandhi's caliphate, however, resembles Bin Laden's in more than its geographical sweep, for unlike Muslim attempts to set up caliphates elsewhere, for example in colonial Nigeria, neither of these projects is strictly speaking a territorial one. Indian Muslims therefore struggled for the caliphate as what Gandhi called an ideal rather than territorial entity, since they had no intention of becoming Ottoman subjects, while militants today refuse even to locate the caliphate territorially let alone to plan for its establishment. The Mahatma's description of the caliphate is therefore as valid now as it was then:

In my opinion, if the demands of the Muslims of India are conceded, it will not much matter whether Turkey's are satisfied or not. [...] The Khilafat is an ideal and when a man works for an ideal, he becomes irresistible. The Muslims, who represent the ideal, have behind them the opinion of the whole mass of the Indian people.⁴³

⁴² See for example Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere: Religious Groups in India, 1900-1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 145.

⁴³ M.K. Gandhi, "The Khilafat", in *Young India*, 23 March 1921. Parenthesis mine.

Unlike the imperial and internationalist vision of Jamal al-Din Afghani, or indeed of the Ottomans themselves in their promotion of pan-Islamism both before and during the First World War, the caliphate promoted by a Gandhi or a Bin Laden certainly re-imagines the Muslim world and even the global arena as I argue, but it does so in a way as removed as it can possibly be from the conventions of political life. And yet it is precisely the caliphate as a thoroughly unconventional project that has had any traction among Muslims—which suggests that its role is in fact to re-imagine the world for a politics yet to come. This is true even when such projects touch ground and assume a territorial politics. Not only the so-called “Islamic state of Iraq”, therefore, but also the “caliphate state” set up in south-western India by the Mappila Revolt in 1921 take their meaning from such moments of idealism. Launched against colonial authorities as much as against Hindu landlords and moneylenders at the height of the Khilafat Movement, this violent uprising by Muslim peasants who traced their descent to Arab traders from the Yemen resulted in the establishment of a short-lived state dedicated to the pan-Islamist cause of the caliphate and not to its own sovereignty.

In the bowels of the Islamic state

The Khilafat Movement did survive Gandhi's abdication of leadership, though only in a minor note, with a number of India's Muslim leaders travelling to the Middle East to participate in discussions over the institution's possible future. These Indians remained opposed for the most part to the making of such caliphs on the cheap, especially if their claims were founded, as were those of its primarily Arab applicants, upon tribal and other genealogical forms of legitimacy. But with the hope of a revived caliphate receding, the remnants of the Khilafat Movement were eventually dedicated to the cause of Palestine, with Azad, for instance, clearly linking this cause to that of the caliphate well before the latter's abolition.⁴⁴ The end of the caliphate, in other words, resulted in the transference of pan-Islamist passions to a national cause, though one that derived its meaning not from its Arab character so much as from the defeat of the Turks. So the widespread outcry against Jewish immi-

gration to Palestine had pan-Islamic resonance precisely because it had come to inherit the conceptual tools and affective motivations of the Khilafatist cause, including the sanctity of the Arabian Island and the resistance to European imperialism. For South Asian Muslims at least, Zionism had to be opposed not in its own right, given that it was quite insignificant in their eyes, but because it was part of Europe's re-shaping of the world in the wake of the First World War, of which the passing of the caliphate became the greatest symbol. And like his Indian forebears, Osama bin Laden, too, sees Zionism and Arab nationalism in the same light, considering both the Arab states and Israel to be creations of the West implanted like weeds in the grave of the caliphate. Or as Gandhi put it in 1921, describing a “holy war” between Jews and Christians on the one side and Muslims on the other nearly three decades before the creation of Israel and seven decades before the emergence of Bin Laden:

Britain has made promises to the Zionists. [...] The Jews, it is contended, must remain a homeless wandering race unless they have obtained possession of Palestine. I do not propose to examine the soundness or otherwise of the doctrine underlying the proposition. All I contend is that they cannot possess Palestine through a trick or a moral breach. Palestine was not a stake in the war. The British Government could not dare have asked a single Muslim soldier to wrest control of Palestine from fellow-Muslims and give it to the Jews. Palestine, as a place of Jewish worship, is a sentiment to be respected, and the Jews would have a just cause of complaint against Musulman idealists if they were to prevent Jews from offering worship as freely as themselves. [...] By no canon of ethics or war, therefore, can Palestine be given to the Jews as a result of the war. Either Zionists must revise their ideal about Palestine, or, if Judaism permits the arbitrament of war, engage in a ‘holy war’ with the Muslims of the world with the Christians throwing in their influence on their side.⁴⁵

The nation-state came to embody Islamic aspirations as well as Muslim politics only with the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and the reconstitution of an international order following the First World War.⁴⁶ In this sense it served as a consolation prize for the loss of the caliphate as a way of thinking about Islamic authority beyond political borders, though we have seen, with respect to the Indian and later

⁴⁴ See Azad, *Maslah-e Khilafat*, pp. 261–4.

⁴⁵ M.K. Gandhi, “The Khilafat”. Parentheses mine.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the transformation in Muslim politics wrought by the caliphate's abolition see Bobby Sayyid's *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London and New York: Zed Book, 1997).

Pakistani support of the Palestinian cause well before the establishment of Israel, that Muslim national movements too were often defined in pan-Islamic terms whose popularity dated back to the Khilafat Movement. Now the quest for a Muslim version of the nation state, I have said, represents a fundamentally negative enterprise, its proponents grappling with the task of translating this state into Islamic terms while at the same time limiting the reach of its institutions within traditional Muslim society. However visions of the caliphate continued to proliferate even in its heyday during the Cold War, with great thinkers of the Islamic state like the Pakistani Abul Ala Mawdudi, the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb and even the Shi'ite Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran all feeling the need to deal with this institution, though it be only as an historical and future ideal.

Mawdudi, for example, began his book *Caliphate and Monarchy*, first published in 1966, by defining this institution as the stewardship of a divine trust. This definition explicitly set the caliphate against any concept of state sovereignty, which was something Mawdudi thought belonged to God alone.⁴⁷ And while the distrust of dictatorial as much as popular intervention in the affairs of society is evident in this attempt to curb the sovereign power of states by placing it under religious guidance, Mawdudi's criticism of the idea of sovereignty went much further. Recognizing its theological origins and character, he pointed out that sovereignty was a dangerous concept because it represented the divinization of power even in the secular West. Quoting from standard European definitions of sovereignty in another work, Mawdudi showed that its absolute and untrammelled nature, however hedged by conditions and limited to emergencies it might be, nevertheless exposed the tyrannical foundations as well as possibilities of the modern state. Not stopping at this analysis worthy of Carl Schmitt, he went on to claim that the real problem with sovereignty was not power but the lack of it, since not even the most powerful and ruthless of dictators could match up to its formal definition. And it was this inability to express itself fully that inevitably made sovereign power violent and abusive. The modern state, in other words, depended upon God insofar as it required a theo-

logical concept of sovereignty, but became tyrannical the moment it tried to exercise this sovereignty in its own name.⁴⁸

The founder of the Jamaat-e Islami, now a global fundamentalist organization, was dedicated to displacing sovereignty altogether by handing it over to God and turning politics into a merely administrative matter. While he was happy to describe as theocratic the Islamic state created by this abnegation of sovereignty, then, Mawdudi's political ideal actually excludes theocracy from the state by proscribing its exercise of divine power. But whether or not this procedure enjoyed any success even at a theoretical level, it does have the virtue of explicating Mawdudi's purpose in limiting the realm of politics within the modern state. For whether the caliph is to be an individual or a parliament, he is selected by the Muslim community to act as the steward of a sacred trust.⁴⁹ By focussing on the caliph's guardianship role, then, Mawdudi tried to shift politics from its instrumental character by dealing with it precisely as a divine trust. And despite the many differences between them, this definition of politics as a trust was characteristic of Gandhi's thought as well. So perhaps it was no accident that Mawdudi should in his younger days and at the height of the Khilafat Movement have written a book, proscribed by British authorities, that sang the Mahatma's praises. Indeed the Jamaat-e Islami still bears Gandhi's impress, particularly in its call for Muslims to nonviolently withdraw their cooperation from what Mawdudi defined as the tyrannical and infidel order of secular nationalism.

Now Mawdudi's vision of the caliphate differed very little from his vision of an Islamic state, whose president possessed the same duties as a caliph, though without his title or eminence. And this meant that Mawdudi modelled his Islamic state upon the caliphate, though of course the reverse is also true, since the caliphate was in fact predicated upon the existence of a modern state. What purpose then did the caliphate serve? On the one hand it functioned as a universal ideal, something like the Communist International, which made of actual states only its provisional and limited forms. But on the other hand Mawdudi's caliphate addressed the general problem of sectarian difference within the Muslim

47 Mawdudi, *Khilafat o Mulukiyyat*, pp. 18-39.

48 Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, *First Principles of the Islamic State*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), pp. 16-26.

49 Mawdudi, *Khilafat*, pp. 51-65.

world—just as his work on the Islamic state addressed the specific one of religious differences between its Muslim and non-Muslim citizens. It was over the question of the caliphate, after all, that sectarian differences were said to have arisen within Islam in the first place, and particularly the difference between Shia and Sunni claims to the succession of Muhammad. In addition to setting the stage for the now customary rejection of racial or national privilege in both its European and Arab forms, in other words, the caliphate provided Mawdudi with the ground from which to address the plurality of the Muslim world.

Mawdudi's task in *Caliphate and Monarchy* was to show that the emergence of sectarian differences followed a certain historical logic and could not be reduced to plots and conspiracies against Islam. And this logic Mawdudi found in the transformation of what he considered the democratic caliphate of earlier times into a dynastic institution. In other words Mawdudi attributed sectarian differences to the caliphate's corruption, which he in turn attributed to the entirely legitimate attempts by Muhammad's companions to deal with the new problems that faced them after his death.⁵⁰ Rather than blame Shia malevolence for Islam's fragmentation, which he thought was to give them too much say in the course of Muslim history, Mawdudi derived it from the sometimes mistaken but always inadvertent actions of the Prophet's successors in battling political exigencies whose logic eventually led to the replacement of the caliphate by a monarchy.⁵¹ This setback nevertheless brought its own virtues with it, making for a division of powers where Muslim divines separated from the state protected Islam while Muslim kings separated from religious authority fitfully protected its domains.⁵² Mawdudi's theory of the caliphate was thus very clearly an effort to think about Muslim plurality on a global scale. No wonder he was accused by so many of his detractors for being pro-Shia.⁵³

In addition to its theoretical afterlife in the writing of men like Mawdudi, the caliphate continued to influence Islamic states in more material ways. Pakistan, which was the first state founded for Muslims as well as being the world's first Islamic republic, provides us with a good

example of this. Though created by men who had repudiated both Gandhi and pan-Islamism, Pakistan has never been able to constitute itself as a nation-state but must always reach out to the wider Muslim world for self-definition. For it is Islam rather than any historical, linguistic, or even territorial bond that constitutes Pakistani citizenship—these latter elements in fact depriving the country of integrity by linking it back to India. But this means that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan can only be defined as a nation-state by virtue of its non-Muslim citizens, who are therefore the only true Pakistanis because the only ones whose citizenship is defined by territory, language and the like. And indeed Muslim or rather Sunni Pakistan continues to be agitated by pan-Islamic causes that descend in a single file from India, which is to say from the Mahatma's first popular experiment in suprapolitics.

Yet the caliphate by no means represents some traditional way of doing politics or of ordering the world that has willy-nilly survived in modern times to subvert the nation-state. I have tried to show with reference to the Khilafat Movement that the contrary is rather the case, since the caliphate was very little invoked in South Asia before the twentieth century, with Muslim dynasties in precolonial times not granting the religious claims of the House of Osman even ritual recognition. So while a Muslim ruler like Tipu Sultan in the nineteenth century sought to gain caliphal investiture, as well as French assistance, in his fight against the British during the 1830s, these acts can be seen as attempts to size up the worldwide contours of British dominance both conceptually and strategically. The Mutineers of 1857, however, paid the caliphate little heed, though they did place credence in rumours that the Persians and Egyptians were dispatching armies in their support. In fact the Ottomans had been persuaded by the British to issue an edict urging India's Muslims to remain loyal to the East India Company, though to no perceptible effect. Whatever its religious status or past glory, then, the caliphate is a thoroughly modern ideal, something that Gandhi himself acknowledged when supporting Muslim efforts to re-imagine a new world in its name. And after an interregnum of eighty years, this ideal today enjoys the support of Osama bin Laden, for whom it serves to re-imagine the new global arena that has emerged in the Cold War's wake with neither a name nor a politics of its own.

50 Ibid., pp. 87-122.

51 Ibid., pp. 129-166.

52 Ibid., pp. 167-180.

53 For his response to these accusations see *ibid.*, pp. 243-286.