

# Perceptions of Hamidian Legacies: An Institutional Analysis of the Legacy of the Hamidian Caliphate

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The period of the late Ottoman Empire under Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1908/9)<sup>1</sup> is seen from a number of different narratives and perspectives. As with most of history, it is fit into specific biases and narratives. However, as the Hamidian period witnesses the rise of nationalisms and the seeds of future nation-states, it is excessively susceptible to manipulation. As such, until recently many works on the late Ottoman Empire fit the Hamidian Sultanate into linear narratives of decline<sup>2</sup> and oppression.<sup>3</sup> In the past decade, and particularly with the publication of Selim Deringil's *The Well-Protected Domains*,<sup>4</sup> scholars have attempted to challenge these narratives by focusing on the agency of the government and by looking at the geopolitical conditions outside of the empire to analyze its actions. Deringil's thesis is that 'the Ottoman experience represents a case of imperial adjustment to the challenges of the times, comparable in varying degrees to that seen in other multi-ethnic legitimist systems'.<sup>5</sup> In this way Deringil attributes both rationality and agency to the Hamidian regime.

At the time of Abdülhamid's ascendance, increasing European penetration and the weakening of the Ottoman state created a crisis of legitimacy for the new Sultan.<sup>6</sup> One of the important ways that Deringil sees Abdülhamid II as establishing legitimacy is in his renewed emphasis on the position of the Ottoman

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<sup>1</sup> He was officially deposed in 1909 though the Young Turk revolution of 24 July 1908 effectively ended his political control over the empire.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis provides an easy target. Here he fits the Hamidian period into one long process of imperial trauma and decline waiting for the salvation provided by the nation-state: 'for most Turks, empire meant endless defeat, retreat, and suffering; nationalism and the national state meant success, victory, and the beginning of a new life'. Bernard Lewis, 'The Ottoman Empire and Its Aftermath', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1980): 32.

<sup>3</sup> Again among the plethora of examples, perhaps this cartoon printed in her book on Ottoman cartoons adequately expresses the notion of the oppressiveness of the Hamidian regime. Palmira Brummet, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>6</sup> Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 243.

Caliphate.<sup>78</sup> For Deringil, this fits into a broader use of religion<sup>9</sup> and he goes on to discuss Hamidian attempts to promote Islamism, establish relations with Muslims outside the empire, etc. Deringil's work has been largely accepted by scholars of the Ottoman Empire, with the Hamidian period now being reinterpreted more often as an attempt to recreate the empire in ways that ultimately failed in the constitutionalist Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Deringil sees the subsequent deposition of Abdülhamid in 1909 as the 'end of the Ottoman Hanefi Caliphate'.<sup>10</sup> In this, Deringil's ideas are largely echoed by the nationalist narratives he attacks. Arab historiography largely dismisses the Ottoman Caliphate, as do Turkish and Balkan sources.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, modern books and journal entries on the Caliphate refer to the Ottoman period as almost a footnote to the general institution, and many books on the Ottoman Empire itself barely mention the Caliphate at all.<sup>12</sup>

This paper aims to challenge the notions that the Ottoman Caliphate represented a 'failed' Caliphate or that the institution ended with the deposition of Abdülhamid. Instead we argue that Abdülhamid was successful in his emphasis on the Caliphate and that the institution was roundly accepted by Muslims within and outside of the empire. His deposition represented not an attack on the institution he built up but instead an attack on his own position within that institution. While recent historiography accepts that many Hamidian policies were successful and had a lasting impact, most fail to draw this separation between the institution of the Caliphate and the personage of Abdülhamid. In doing so, such scholarship ignores this separation that *nationalist groups of the period* acknowledged. We argue that during Abdülhamid's reign and afterwards the Caliphate was respected and influential among the same people who called for and cheered his deposition before 1909. It is only later narratives following the ultimate end of the Caliphate in 1924 that ascribe the minor importance given to it in modern historiography. To repeat, we argue that modern scholarship conflates the fact that nationalist groups of the period called for an end to Abdülhamid's reign with the notion that they were calling for an end to the institution that he largely 'created'.

In order to demonstrate this, we will first briefly analyze modern trends of historiography regarding the impact of the Hamidian Caliphate. Included in

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<sup>7</sup> 'Emphasis' being Deringil's word rather than creation or something of the sort. Selim Deringil, 'Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State: The Reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1909)', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3. (August 1991): 346.

<sup>8</sup> Though often referred to as 'Khalīfa', or the Turkish 'Halife', we will generally refer to the term Caliph as it is generally known in English. Likewise the term Caliphate will be used rather than Khilāfat, in both cases except when quoting other texts.

<sup>9</sup> Deringil, 'Legitimacy Structures', 347.

<sup>10</sup> Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 174.

<sup>11</sup> Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 269.

<sup>12</sup> This includes Deringil's own book on Abdülhamid, which saves any discussion of the Caliphate exclusively for his concluding section.

this section will be a tracing of the Caliphate in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, rejecting (as Deringil does) the previously popular conception that it was 'created' by Abdülhamid (and thus opening the window for it to have been 'ended' with Hamid's deposition). The aim of this section is to establish the basis on which Deringil and others view the Caliphate as having ended with Abdülhamid. Subsequent sections of this paper aim to demolish this narrative. First we will outline counter-narratives, focusing in part on historiography regarding World War I in the Ottoman Empire. Following this will be three 'case studies' of nationalist responses to the Caliphate as an institution and to Abdülhamid as a person: Arab, Turkish and Bosnian. In all three cases we argue that the leading intelligentsias<sup>13</sup> of the nationalist movements were for various reasons opposed to Abdülhamid while still supporting and encouraging the institution as he constructed it. This section aims to challenge the conflation established in the first section that the unpopular rule and popular deposition of Abdülhamid represented an indictment of the institution of the Caliphate. Furthermore, in using case studies from the Balkans, the Turks and the Syrian Arabs this paper aims to draw similarities between regions of the empire often not studied in tandem or compared and to fit with broader narratives of the nature of Islam in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries throughout the empire.

### **Trends in historiography of the Hamidian Caliphate: Evidence in nationalist narratives for this paradigm**

Deringil's conclusion that 'the Ottoman Hanefi Caliphate ended with the deposition of Sultan Abdülhamid II'<sup>14</sup> is one of the primary points of contention of this paper. He defends this claim by saying that 'whatever mystique' the Caliphate had was 'hollowed out' by a number of factors, concluding with an anecdote of a Turk referring to the later Caliph Mehmed Vahdettin (1918-1922) in a rude, informal manner.<sup>15</sup> This notion that 'the new weight' given to the Caliphate under Abdülhamid was 'ousted' by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and their 'promotion of Turkism' is seconded by William Ochsenwald's account of the legacy of Islam in the empire.<sup>16</sup> The link between these narratives is the belief that the relevance of the Caliphate fell with Abdülhamid largely because of nationalist programs, in both cases where Turkish leaders regarded the institution

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<sup>13</sup> Defined in this essay as the Syrian Arabist intelligentsia in Cairo, the Young Turks in Istanbul and the Bosnian Muslim intelligentsia in Bosnia.

<sup>14</sup> Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 174.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> William Ochsenwald, 'Islam and the Ottoman Legacy in the Modern Middle East,' in L. Carl Brown, ed., *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 270

as no longer important.<sup>17</sup> Evidence for this, presumably, lies in what Ebru Bayar refers to as the 'delegitimation project'<sup>18</sup> of the Young Turks. This term is an ironic play on Deringil's thesis, but refers to the number of historical publications following the July revolution of 1908 aimed specifically at attacking the Sultanate of Abdülhamid. That this subsequent writing of history after his deposition followed years of writings against him and his oppressive projects makes the case even more solid that the Young Turks (the most obvious representatives of the Turkish intelligentsia) were opposed to the Caliphate. The active deposition at the hands of the CUP followed by his replacement of what Deringil calls a 'puppet Caliph'<sup>19</sup> fuels the narrative that the institution was far from respected.

Arab narratives would similarly seem to link to this thesis. While in the build-up to the revolution of 1908 Young Turks were writing slogans such as 'science is the religion of the elite, whereas religion is the science of the masses',<sup>20</sup> influential members of the Arab intelligentsia were also publishing articles that could be interpreted as both anti-Hamidian and anti-Caliphate. Rashid Rida, for example, in 1906 wrote, 'The Ottoman Caliphate could be accepted then as a Caliphate of necessity, but it was not a real Caliphate. The Ottoman Sultans do not possess the knowledge of the Arabic language, the only language in which doctrines and laws of Islam could be thought about'.<sup>21</sup> These articles would appear to point at best to a tenuous acceptance of the Ottoman Caliphate before deposition in 1909, and certainly when combined with the rejoicing that followed, point to Deringil's thesis that the Caliphate was effectively ended in 1909.

Balkan narratives follow a similar track. Muhamed Mufaku al-Arnaut noted in 1994 that Rida was also influential in the Balkans following the 1908 dual 'blow' of the Young Turk Revolution and Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>22</sup> He argues as well that by 1909 Bosnian Muslims had little more than 'a flicker of hope (or illusion) for a return to the "good old days"'.<sup>23</sup> As with Deringil and Ochsenwald, the narrative being produced is that the fall of Abdülhamid represented (to varying degrees) the fall of many of his ideals. Whereas most scholars will argue (as Deringil to an extent does) that there were lasting effects of his Islamist policies on political or military policies, the Caliphate is seen to a degree as beginning with him<sup>24</sup> and ending with his deposition.

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<sup>17</sup> Save, Ochsenwald is quick to mention, isolated instances of 'maintaining parts of the pan-Islamic movement'.

<sup>18</sup> Ebru Bayar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 174.

<sup>20</sup> A popular saying among the Young Turks, Abdullah Cevdet, 'Bir Mükaleme', *Şark ve Garb*, No. 1, March 1896, 24.

<sup>21</sup> Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 240.

<sup>22</sup> Mohamed Arnaut, 'Islam and Muslims in Bosnia 1978-1918', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 2 (1994): 252.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>24</sup> Recent scholarship, such as Deringil's, is actually careful *not* to use words such as 'beginning' or 'created,' as mentioned above. In the following paragraphs we will outline how this paradigm has largely been

## Paradigms regarding the Ottoman Caliphate: A pre-Hamidian discussion

This fallacy is comparatively standard. Abdülhamid attempted to form what was previously a vague and new understanding of the role of the Sultan as Caliph into a more concrete and defined position during his reign. He attempted to bring further legitimacy, more power and further scope of the Caliph as protector of all Muslims. This focus on the Caliphate by Abdülhamid is often seen as an entirely new role or as Abdülhamid completely reshaping the previous role of the Sultan.<sup>25</sup> In fact, he merely attempted to consolidate a movement that had been growing well before he came to power in 1876.

The notion of there being an 'Ottoman Caliphate' existed as early as Murad I (Sultan 1359-1389), who wished to be known as 'chosen Khalifa of the Creator', and 'shadow of God on the earth'.<sup>26</sup> Murad II (1421-1451) used similar invocations, and neighbours of the empire continued to see these leaders as remnants of the Caliphate.<sup>27</sup> However, the term had come to be used as a tool to claim that God had chosen the Sultan as His vicegerents,<sup>28</sup> and the title of Caliph was not used in anything more than 'a rhetorical sense rather than as a straightforward political-legal assertion of sovereignty over the Muslim community'.<sup>29</sup> In 1517, Selim I conquered Egypt and shortly thereafter imprisoned the Caliph al-Mutawakkil. Selim did not use al-Mutawakkil to legitimize his own power over Caliphs, nor are there any references at the time period to his taking the Caliphate directly from al-Mutawakkil. His own authority did not change as a result of the conquering of the Caliphate, other than a newfound prestige and geopolitical advantage resulting from the conquest of the Mamluk lands.<sup>30</sup> Selim, as with Murad and other Sultans, was already accustomed to using the term Caliph when it pleased him, and he did not see himself as 'having taken it over from so insignificant and so negligible a personage as the Abbasid Caliph of Cairo'.<sup>31</sup>

The idea of the Sultan as Caliph had been growing throughout the eighteenth century, and with Russia's inclusion of a clause protecting Christians within the Ottoman Empire in the 1774 Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, the Ottomans included

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shattered. However, as they buy the notion that the Caliphate *ended* with Hamid, we believe there is evidence that the previous paradigm of the Ottoman Caliphate being exclusively Hamidian lingers on in Deringil's and others' works.

<sup>25</sup> Deringil, for instance, refers to his 'novel' use of the Sultanate as quasi-papal – which, as we have seen, was hardly novel by 1876. Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 356.

<sup>26</sup> Sir Thomas W. Arnold, *The Caliphate* (Oxford, 1924), 130.

<sup>27</sup> 'Khalifa', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 4, 937-949, at 945.

<sup>28</sup> Arnold, *Caliphate*, 129-130.

<sup>29</sup> Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 111.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-112.

<sup>31</sup> Arnold, *Caliphate*, 145.

a clause stating that the Sultan was 'the imām of the Believers and the Caliph of those who profess the divine unity'.<sup>32</sup> Though this was later struck from the record by the Russians, the claim of the Sultan as Caliph continued from this time as a dominant theme in the empire in the nineteenth century, 'such as is without parallel in the preceding centuries of the Ottoman rule'.<sup>33</sup> With this focus on the status of the Sultan as Caliph came a renewed look at history by both the Sultan and Ottoman intellectuals. The Capture of al-Mutawakkil by Selim I came to be seen as evidence of an official transfer of the Caliphate to the Ottoman Sultan, something Selim himself certainly did not envision at the time it took place.<sup>34</sup>

The first mention of the formal transfer of the Caliphate to Selim I was in 1787 in *Tableau general de l'Empire Othoman*, written by Hugh Thomson, an Armenian who had been a dragoman at the Swedish Legation.<sup>35</sup> The claim would grow and become solidified over time. Along with tying Selim's seizure of the Caliph to his seizure of the Caliphate,<sup>36</sup> old traditions were reframed to accord with the Sultan's new position and tie him further to the Caliphate. For example, since 1566 new Sultans had held a ceremony in which they chose their sword as part of the accession ritual. In 1808, Sultan Mahmud II was girded with the (supposed) swords of the Prophet Muhammad and Osman I, thus defining himself as both the military head and religious leader of the empire.<sup>37</sup> The accession ritual became a standard practice for legitimization of the title of Caliph. Abdülmeceid (1839-1860) girt himself only in the sword of Umar,<sup>38</sup> the second Caliph of Islam who had called himself the 'commander of the Faithful'.<sup>39</sup> The donning of Umar's sword was described by the Ottoman historiographer Lûtfî as an ancient Ottoman practice, another example of the Ottomans shifting historical accounts to cement their claims to the Caliphate.<sup>40</sup> By 1861 Sultan Abdülaziz had chosen the same sword, and the story of its use and the acquisition of the Caliphate were tied together by Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, the Sultan's guide in many aspects of his politics of Islam:<sup>41</sup> 'When Sultan Selim [I] conquered Egypt and brought the Abbasid Caliph to Istanbul, the Abbasid Caliph girded Sultan Selim with this sword [of Umar] and thus transferred the Islamic Caliphate to the house of Osman'.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Donald Quartaert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83-84.

<sup>33</sup> Arnold, *Caliphate*, 173.

<sup>34</sup> Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 111.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 493.

<sup>36</sup> Joshua Teitelbaum, 'Taking Back the Caliphate: Sharîf Husayn Ibn 'Alî, Mustafa Kemal and the Ottoman Caliphate', *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (November 2000): 412-424, 419.

<sup>37</sup> Bernard Lewis, 'The Ottoman Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: A Review', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April 1965): 283-295, 292.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 4, 937-949, at 947.

<sup>40</sup> Lewis, 'Ottoman Empire', 292-293.

<sup>41</sup> Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 493.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis, 'Ottoman Empire', 293.

It is within this context, then, that Abdülhamid's Caliphate grew. Deringil is correct to show that Abdülhamid only 'emphasized' a movement that had been growing for over a hundred years, but then he falls back onto old paradigms that the Caliphate ended with the fall of Abdülhamid at the end of the 1909 counterrevolution. Deringil bases this, I have argued, by placing his belief firmly within an accepted paradigm of scholarship (that the Ottoman Caliphate essentially *is* Abdülhamid's Caliphate) and by looking at later Turkish sources who viewed the institution as almost a joke. As a result, the subsequent section of our paper will take a closer look at Turkish, Arabic and Bosnian sources so as to analyze their understandings of the institution of the Caliphate, aiming to go beyond simplistic understandings that conflate the Hamidian Caliphate with the institution itself.

## Deconstruction

Before focusing on nationalist narratives, however, it is first necessary to consider alternative frameworks within which Abdülhamid is viewed. What is interesting in the dominant paradigms of the literature is that when it is the Hamidian Caliphate that is under study, the paradigm outlined above is most prevalent. However, when a different subject is the issue at hand – we will discuss World War I – then the paradigm itself shifts to fit a new framework. This is, specifically, the fact that most World War I scholars see the Caliphate as being a critical factor to the British and to the various nationalities that previously appeared to view the institution as defunct. One need look no further than Deringil himself for such opinions: 'Even after Abdülhamid, the Young Turks were supported in the Muslim world during the Balkan Wars: an Indian medical mission arrived in Istanbul in December 1912 as a gesture of solidarity'.<sup>43</sup> This he wrote in an article on the Ottoman Empire in a section about the war, but he goes on to discuss specifically the continued influence of the Caliphate.<sup>44</sup> This article was written in 1991 by Deringil, well before *The Well-Protected Domains*, but is consistent with scholarship given the changing focus of the subject. Likewise in the same book in which Ochsenswald wrote that 'the Caliphate fell'<sup>45</sup> with Abdülhamid, Carl Brown writes in the introduction that "The symbolism of the Caliphate had become so important that Ataturk's abolition of that office in 1924 sent shock waves throughout the Muslim world".

Both this narrative regarding World War I and the founding of the Turkish Republic include the institution of the Caliphate. Hasan Kayali's influential study on the relationship between the Arabs and Turks notes the position of

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<sup>43</sup> Deringil, 'Legitimacy Structures', 356.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Ochsenswald, 'Islam', 270.

the Sultan-Caliph as crucial during wartime,<sup>46</sup> as does Andrew Mango's recent biography of Atatürk.<sup>47</sup> Of course this clashes directly with the narratives above that focus exclusively on the Caliphate. Though it is not necessarily surprising that narratives differ depending on the focus of the study, in this case it is notable that the relevance of the institution of the Caliphate for Muslims in the Ottoman Empire is so little understood, or at least its position is little agreed upon. As a result it is necessary to focus on what the Muslims at the time were saying about the institution. In the following three case studies we will focus on what specific groups were saying about the institution of the Caliphate, and in doing so we are necessarily attempting to separate both the institution from the personage and also the Caliphate from the Sultanate in what was said. Of course, as we shall see, the distinctions we are making were not always made by the people themselves, but their attitudes taken as a whole reflect an understanding of a respect for the institution that was not necessarily there for the person himself.

### **The Turkish case**

The case of the Turkish-speaking intelligentsia and particularly the Young Turks will be analyzed first. At an initial glance, it would appear that the Young Turks were the most obviously 'against' the institution of the Caliphate. Deringil concludes that with the Young Turk Revolution and the 1909 deposition, the Caliphate ended. Numerous other works follow this path: that the Hamidian attempt at the Caliphate 'failed'.<sup>48</sup> This narrative sees Abdülhamid as either creating or 'emphasizing'<sup>49</sup> the position of the Caliphate in a new way and that as a result it ends with his own metaphorical end. Instead we argue, first, that the Young Turks were opposed (vehemently) to Abdülhamid the Sultan and were in favour of a constitutional government; and second, while they conflated the Hamidian Caliphate with the Hamidian Sultanate, and even though they were against the institution of the Sultanate (as it had been before the constitution), they were not against the institution of the Caliphate.

The attacks on Abdülhamid in foreign press and in memoirs from Turkish intellectuals, and from the Young Turks in particular, are too numerous to list here.

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<sup>46</sup> Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 187.

<sup>47</sup> Andrew Mango, *Atatürk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (New York: Kirkus, 2002), 398.

<sup>48</sup> E.g. Nevill Forbes, *The Balkans: A History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania, Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915), 239; Marietta Stepaniants, *Islamic Philosophy and Social Thought: In the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Seattle: People's Publishing House, 1989), 109; Kari Vogt, Lena Larsen and Christina Moe, *New Directions in Islamic Thought: Exploring Reform and Muslim Tradition* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 194; Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Ottomans: Dissolving Images* (London: Penguin, 1995), 203.

<sup>49</sup> Deringil's word. See, Deringil, 'Legitimacy Structures', 346.



In 1906 Atatürk himself wrote that Abdülhamid was 'a hateful figure, addicted to pleasure and autocracy'. This was the standard line, reinforced by Abdülhamid's censorship of the press, which otherwise would have been a primary forum for expression for the intellectuals of the empire. As a result, it is hardly surprising that the press reported with glee on the Young Turks' 'avowed primary object to secure Abdülhamid's abdication'.<sup>50</sup> However, the press and (it appears) foreign and Turkish modernists, many of whom had been exiled or left Istanbul, were convinced of Abdülhamid's 'misrule',<sup>51</sup> and as a ruler who 'struggled to keep the 13<sup>th</sup> century alive in the 20<sup>th</sup>'.<sup>52</sup> Muhammad Farid Bey referred to Abdülhamid as 'absolutist',<sup>53</sup> as did the Young Turks themselves.<sup>54</sup> Though views on Abdülhamid may have been affected by later events,<sup>55</sup> the notion that he and his 'network of spies'<sup>56</sup> were repressive was prevalent at the time as well.

That the Young Turks were opposed to Hamidian rule is, of course, unquestionable. The above, however, clearly represent attacks on the Sultanate, not the Caliphate. In the Young Turks' minds it seems likely that for Abdülhamid the two institutions were linked – the Young Turks were interested in forcing the abdication of both Abdülhamid the Sultan and the Caliph. However, they only attempted to diminish the power of the institution of the Sultanate, and attempted to retain the Caliphate, replacing Abdülhamid with Mehmed V in 1909.<sup>57</sup> This, of course, links back to the previous point about World War I, wherein the power of the Caliphate was utilized for political ends by the Ottoman government. Thus at least on a political level the Young Turks viewed the institution of the Caliphate as useful and valuable despite the fact that they actively tried to rescind the powers of the Sultanate. As the powers of the Caliphate were largely the emphasis of Abdülhamid, Deringil's statement that the Caliphate ended with Abdülhamid seems tenuous.

Beyond the purely political value the Young Turks appear to have placed on the institution of the Caliphate, there was clearly a reverence paid to the institution

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<sup>50</sup> A 31 July *London Times* article quoted in the *Egyptian Gazette*, 'European Opinions on the Turkish Constitution', 1 August 1908.

<sup>51</sup> Sir Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1915), 225.

<sup>52</sup> H. G. Dwight, *Constantinople, Old and New* (Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis, 2002), 404. Originally published in 1915.

<sup>53</sup> 'Istibdad' in both Turkish and Arabic. From Dr. M. J. Reimer's translation of Farid. M. J. Reimer, 'An Egyptian Nationalist's View of Ottoman History and Young Turk Politics: Muhammad Farid's *Tarikh al-Dawlah al-'Aliyah al-'Uthmaniyyah*', lecture presented to the American University in Cairo's Middle Eastern Studies Dept., 3 March 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Pears, *Forty Years*, 246.

<sup>55</sup> For instance, in Farid's work in his 1896 history Abdülhamid's *tuğra* appears on the copy whereas in the 1912 version Abdülhamid is denounced as 'absolutist', suggesting that time has brought a change of perspective on the Sultan/Caliph. Reimer, 'An Egyptian Nationalist's View'.

<sup>56</sup> Pears, *Forty Years*, 242.

<sup>57</sup> Feroz Ahmad, 'Politics and Islam in Modern Turkey', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1991): 3-21, at 5.

that reflects the perceived separation made between the two institutions that Abdülhamid carried. As noted, one of the standard justifications for the belief that the Caliphate ended with the Hamidian deposition was the jubilation that surrounded the Young Turk revolution. However, ironically, the celebrations in Istanbul and throughout the empire following the revolution<sup>58</sup> led to rallies of crowds shouting 'down with despotism' and similar cries *while holding pictures of Abdülhamid!*<sup>59</sup> This more than anything else reflects the distinction made between the two institutions. While shouts of 'down with despotism' were a clear reference to the position of the Sultanate (and clearly were in tandem with a dislike for Abdülhamid), simultaneous support for Abdülhamid reflects the fact that he was revered in one way while despised in another. Writing in 1910, Francis McCullagh stated specifically that he was deposed as Caliph *because of 'the weighty arguments against him as Sultan'*.<sup>60</sup>

That the Young Turks did not abolish the institution after 1909, that they used it after 1909, and that the eventual abolition of the Caliphate raised such an outcry all point to an institution of extreme importance after Abdülhamid's deposition. This is but one example of how the institution was perceived throughout the empire. We turn now to the Arab example to outline the perception of the Caliphate as an institution.

## The Arab Case

Like the Young Turks, Arabists within the Syrian intelligentsia were not in opposition to the institution of the Caliphate established by Abdülhamid. On the contrary, Arabists within this group initially appreciated Abdülhamid's efforts to elevate religion.<sup>61</sup> As was the case with the Young Turks, over time Abdülhamid's oppressive actions<sup>62</sup> as Sultan led to dissatisfaction with his regime.<sup>63</sup> In addition, the Syrian Arabist narrative was also shaped by the fact that Abdülhamid was himself not Arab and thus lacked what Arabists came to see as the necessary credentials to hold the position of Caliph.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> For example: The effect produced in Cairo and Alexandria by the telegraphic dispatches giving an account of the Imperial Iradé edict published on Friday [24 July] and granting Turkey a constitutional Government with parliamentary institutions was nothing short of stupendous. So sudden and unexpected was the news that the surprise, not free from a certain amount of incredulity, was all the greater, but as wire after wire was received confirming the first report, a wave of frank, unmitigated delight swept over the foreign colonies and the native element and found an expressive echo in the press of all shades and political opinions. ('The New Turkish Regime: Egypt and Macedonia', *Egyptian Gazette*, 25 July 1908)

<sup>59</sup> Naim Turfan, *Rise of the Young Turks: Politics, the Military, and Ottoman Collapse* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 144.

<sup>60</sup> Francis McCullagh, *The Fall of Abd-Ul-Hamid* (London: Methuen, 1910).

<sup>61</sup> C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 139.

<sup>62</sup> But again, these represent a reaction against the political element of the Hamidian Sultanate/Caliphate.

<sup>63</sup> Eliezer Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 51.

<sup>64</sup> Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakabi, 'The Excellence of the Arabs', 1901, reprinted in Sylvia Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 78-80.

Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakabi (1855-1902) believed that the Hamidian era was one in which the concern for Muslim affairs was at its highest since the time of the Rightly-guided Caliphs.<sup>65</sup> Kawakabi was one of the most fervent supporters of revitalizing the institution of the Caliphate,<sup>66</sup> and hence he was initially enthusiastic about the Hamidian emphasis on the Caliphate. However, Kawakabi was also among the first to politicize Arabist ideology.<sup>67</sup> It was his tendency to conflate the revival of Arab society with the revival of the Caliphate that led to a growing sense of dissatisfaction with Abdülhamid.

In Kawakabi's view Abdülhamid lacked the essential characteristics to hold the position of Caliph. It is critical to reemphasize that he was not opposed to Abdülhamid's attempt to revitalize the Caliphate as an institution; however, he believed that the Caliph of Islam necessarily had to come from the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>68</sup> For Kawakabi, the Arabs from Arabia had the deepest historical connections to the Prophet and the Rightly-guided Caliphs.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Kawakabi's Arabist leanings led him to conflate Arab revival and a return to Islamic purity.<sup>70</sup> Thus, for Kawakabi, the 'true' Caliph necessarily had to be of Arab descent.

Another Arabist within the Syrian intelligentsia to share Kawakabi's view of the Caliphate was Muhammad Rashid Rida. Rida echoed Kawakabi's sentiments regarding the criteria for a Caliphate/Caliph.<sup>71</sup> Despite this, Rida did not advocate 'the founding of a new Caliphate to replace that of the Ottomans'.<sup>72</sup> Though he did believe that the Ottoman Caliphate was not a 'real Caliphate' and could only serve as a 'Caliphate of necessity', this was again related more to concerns with Abdülhamid the person than concerns regarding the validity of the Caliphate as an institution.<sup>73</sup> Because Abdülhamid was not of Arab descent and did not have command of the 'language of Islam' (Arabic), he was precluded from being able to legitimately act as Caliph. Thus, for Rida the Ottoman institution of the Caliphate was not a failed one that should be abolished. Instead, he advocated that the institution continue under the guidance of a legitimate, Arab Caliph.

As has already been discussed, the idea that Arabists within the Syrian intelligentsia viewed the Ottoman Caliphate as a legitimate institution can be seen as late as the start of World War I. Though British diplomats in the region believed that supporting Syrian Arabist movements against the Ottomans was an effective

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<sup>65</sup> Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 139.

<sup>66</sup> Haim, *Arab Nationalism*, 78-80.

<sup>67</sup> Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 138.

<sup>68</sup> Haim, *Arab Nationalism*, 78-80.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakabi, *Umm al-qura* (The Mother of the Villages) (Cairo: al-Matba'ah al-Misriyah bi-al-Azhar, 1931), 12-13. Originally written in 1901.

<sup>71</sup> A. A. Duri, *The Historical Formation of the Arab Nation* (New York: Croom Helm, 1987), 187.

<sup>72</sup> Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 240.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

strategy,<sup>74</sup> the British were perfectly aware of the potential of the Ottomans to use the Caliphate as a tool to prevent the Arabs from siding with the British.<sup>75</sup> In the end, British success in winning over Syrian Arabist support seemed to have less to do with the notion that the Caliphate itself was an illegitimate institution and more to do with the fact that the Turks were not legitimate Muslims<sup>76</sup> and that the cooperation with the British could lead to the instalment of an Arab Caliph (Sherif Hussein).

### The Bosnian Case

The Bosnian example matches the previous two examples in that the institution of the Caliphate was seen as being of crucial import. However, unlike the previous two examples, this would largely be what a scholar would expect. Because of the Austrian occupation of Bosnia in 1887,<sup>77</sup> the Ottoman state was viewed in terms of religion more so than it was in the Arab lands where it still represented a ruling body. As a result the Caliph was revered in opposition to the Austrians as a religious head, and his administrative role was largely unimportant.<sup>78</sup> In the Bosnian context the position of the Caliph as religious head was viewed in opposition to two particular movements going on in Bosnia during the Hamidian era. First, the rise of nationalisms produced different reactions within different groups throughout the empire. In the Bosnian case it was based on opposition to the rise of Serbian nationalism;<sup>79</sup> thus there was no problem with accepting the Ottoman Empire's Caliphate in the way that there was in the Arab example.<sup>80</sup> Second, politically the (Catholic) Austro-Hungarian Empire had virtual sovereignty over Bosnians by 1887 and actual sovereignty by 1908. As a result, the aforementioned hatred of Abdülhamid that was spurred by his 'despotism' did not affect Bosnia/n Muslims. They viewed him primarily as a religious figure and the institution of the Caliphate was likewise seen to live on beyond his death.

Fikret Adanir notes in his work on Bosnian historiography that even in the 1880s the 'Bosnian Muslim elites' protested in Berlin and Istanbul against Austrian rule.<sup>81</sup> In 1906 the first Muslim society was formed, which explicitly viewed the

<sup>74</sup> 'Memorandum by Mr. Fitzmaurice', 11 October 1914, reprinted in *Arab Dissident Movements*, 1905-1955, 6 vols., ed. A.L.P. Burdett, Archive Editions, 1996, 1.

<sup>75</sup> Sir L. Mallet's dispatch No. 604, 22 September 1914, reprinted in *Arab Dissident Movements*, 1905-1955, 6 vols., ed. A.L.P. Burdett, Archive Editions, 1996, 253.

<sup>76</sup> 'Proclamation to the Arabs, Sons of Qahtan', 1913, reprinted in Haim, *Arab Nationalism*, 86-87.

<sup>77</sup> And officially in 1908. Mark Pinson, *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 100.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Whereas in the Arab case it was in reaction to Turkism, to the extent that either was in reaction to anything.

<sup>80</sup> Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* 269.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

Caliph as having sovereignty over Muslims.<sup>82</sup> By 1908 the Austro-Hungarian Empire had official control over the territory, which happened simultaneously with 'the radicalization of Serbian nationalism'.<sup>83</sup> As a result Bosnian Muslims looked to the institution of the Caliph even during the Hamidian Caliphate. After his deposition and during the Balkan wars, Bosnian intelligentsia were in direct contact with Arab and Turkish intelligentsia<sup>84</sup> and repeatedly protested and fought for the Ottoman Empire in the name of the Ottoman Caliph.<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusion

Given the evidence provided in this study, it is fair to say that all three of the intelligentsia of these Muslim ethnic groups – the Turks, the Bosnians and the Arabs – supported the institution of the Ottoman Caliphate even in the circumstances where they did not actively support Abdülhamid as the Caliph. Though plenty of animosity towards Abdülhamid can be seen within these groups (particularly the Turks and Arabs), it is important to separate this from their attitudes towards the Caliphate. Whether the dissatisfaction was the result of Abdülhamid's oppressive Sultanate or his lack of credentials as Caliph, these attitudes were directed towards Abdülhamid himself, not the Caliphate as an institution. The tendency to ignore this distinction has led to a misunderstanding of the legacy of the Hamidian Caliphate that persists in current historiography. Therefore, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the legacy of the Hamidian Caliphate it is imperative to avoid the conflating of attitudes towards Abdülhamid as an individual and attitudes towards the Caliphate as an institution.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 275-276.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>84</sup> For instance, Rashid Rida was appointed *reis-ul-Islam* in Bosnia in 1910. Arnaut, 'Islam', 252.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 252-253. It should also be noted that Austrian authorities did seek to establish control over the Bosnian Muslims through the installation of their hand-picked Sheikh-ül-Islam.

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