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# **The Abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate and Positioning of the new Turkey in International Relations**

**Ayla Göl**

## **Introduction**

The ghost of the ‘caliphate’ had haunted the international politics of the Middle East at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The ‘caliphate question’ was buried in the pages of history until the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) proclaimed the title of ‘Islamic Caliphate’ (*Dawlat al-hilafa l-islamiya*) in 2014 by leading to controversial debates about its restoration until its defeat five years later. The origins of the ‘caliphate question’ are deeply rooted in centuries of rivalries among Arabs, Turks, Indian Muslims, and European colonial powers. In international history, the end of First World War was a turning point which brought not only the emergence of new nation-states with the collapse of four empires (the Russian in 1917, the German and the Austro-Hungarian in 1918 and the Ottoman empire in 1922) and had consequences for the future of Europe and the Middle East. Among these empires the Ottoman state had further complications because of its universal claim to caliphate in the Muslim world after taking control of Egypt in 1517. While the ‘temporal’ caliph was moved from Cairo to Constantinople and Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-1520) bestowed the title of ‘Defender of the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina’ the Sultan-Caliph title was not officially used until the nineteenth century. Hence, the temporal (strategic) and spiritual importance of Constantinople (renamed Istanbul since 1930) would be a crucial factor in determining the empire’s and then a new Turkey’s role in international politics and Muslim history. The Ottoman Empire was the last and only Islamic caliphate that survived to the twentieth century. The last Ottoman sultan, Mehmed VI (Vahdettin) (r. 1918-1922) was forced to abdicate and had fled Istanbul into exile to Malta on a British warship seventeen days after the Turkish Grand National Assembly (GNA) separated the Sultanate and the Caliphate and abolished the former on 1 November 1922. With the resignation of the Ottoman government in Istanbul the nationalists under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal were the representatives of emerging Turkish state in Ankara. As I analysed earlier, the role of Islam in transition from an Islamic empire into a modern nation-state was the crux of this complex process, which had implications for the Turkish Republic’s national and international relations between 1919-1923 (Göl, 2013).

This chapter’s main is to critically analyse the history of the caliph and the Turkish nationalists’ decision to abolish the Ottoman Caliphate between 1922-24 by locating their discursive strategy within the complex web of internal and international politics. By applying a critical historiography method, the first section commences with an ontological study of caliph and caliphate in the Quran and then the next section focuses on the Ottoman caliphate. The third section analyses the relationship between the British colonialism and its implications for the caliphal periphery among Arab and Indian Muslims. The final section focuses on the rise of new Turkey under Mustafa Kemal’s leadership and the abolition of the caliphate. The chapter concludes by demonstrating why Turkish nationalists made the right decision, and the now defunct institution should remain in the pages of history books.

## An Ontological hierarchy of caliph and caliphate

When the new Turkish state abolished the Caliphate in 1924, *the Economist* published an article by stating the following (1924):

[It] marked an epoch in the expansion of Western ideas over the non-Western world, for our Western principles of national sovereignty and self-government [were] the real forces to which the unfortunate ‘Abdu’l Mejid Efendi [had] fallen a victim. Both by tradition and by theory, the Caliph [was] an absolute monarch over a united Islamic world, and it [was] therefore almost impossible to find a place for him in a national state (whether it be called a republic or a constitutional monarchy) in which the sovereignty [was] vested in the parliamentary representatives of the people.<sup>1</sup>

More importantly, the article speculated why the Turkish nationalists would not consider the possibility of separating between the ‘spiritualised’ Caliph and the ‘temporal’ Sultan-caliph. As will be explained later, this chapter’s analysis proves the opposite that Turkish nationalists under Mustafa Kemal’s leadership, in fact, employed a discursive strategy to the various aspects of caliphate for achieving their national goals. Moreover, the critical historiography of this chapter adds a new discussion on the ‘spatial’ aspect of the Caliphate from international relations perspective, which has been overlooked in existing debates between ‘spiritual’ and ‘temporal’ power of the caliphs. An ontological study of caliphate is necessary to unpack the layers of complexity in relations to various concepts in Arabic and English languages. When the article in the *Economist* described the Caliph as ‘an absolute monarch over a united Islamic world’ their perspective was based on the Western conception of the Pope in Christianity. Such interpretations by Western scholars and policymakers reflect not only the Eurocentric point of view but also misunderstands historical nuances between the caliph as a spiritual leader and the caliphate as a political institution, and how the ‘caliphate question’ evolved throughout the relations between Islamic dynasties and Western colonialism throughout the centuries.

The idea of caliph (*khalifa* خليفة in Arabic and *halife* in Turkish means successor) as the successor to the Muslim community emerged after Prophet Mohammed died in 632. The origins of *khalifa* can be traced in the Holy Quran (*Al-Baqara* 2:30) as follows: “And [mention, O Muhammed], when your Lords said to the angels, ‘I am placing a *khalifa* on earth.’ They said, ‘Will You place upon it once who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?’ Allah said, ‘Indeed, I know that which you do not know.’ (Qur’an, 2014).<sup>2</sup> As *khalifa* refers to ‘Adam’ it is commonly accepted that man is the successor of Allah that extends to all humanity on earth. Hence, *khalifa* can be interpreted as an ontological relationship between the creator and human beings in spiritual level. For religious significance, it is crucial to highlight that the Quran calls Prophet Muhammed as the messenger of God and never as king while Solomon and David, who are called King and *khalifa*.

For its temporal interpretation from Western perspective, it is this second usage that refers to David as *khalifa*: “O David! We have made you a *khalifa* (successor, vicegerent) in the earth; so judge between men with justice and follow not vain desires, lest it should lead you

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The Abolition of the Caliphate,’ Europe: From Archive, the Economist, 8 March 1924 [Accessed on 11 November 2023] <https://www.economist.com/europe/1924/03/08/the-abolition-of-the-caliphate>

<sup>2</sup> Al-Mehri, A.B., (ed.). (2014). *The Qur’an: With Surah Introductions and Appendices*. (Saheeh International Translation, Seventh print). (Birmingham: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers).

astray from the way of Allah.’ (*Al-Sad* 38:26-7). Therefore, King David has a political title and advised to rule justly in the name of God. In this context, his political title has led to further debates about the continuity of *khalifa* as an absolute ruler among Arabs and other Muslims later. Furthermore, through the critical analysis of the Quran it is evident that *khalifa* as singular form in Arabic changes to *khulafa* in the plural form, as referred in other verses (6:166; 7:75; 10:15; 27:63; 35:40). In these verses *khalifa* indicated a spiritual reward to human beings for their righteousness. Hence, *khalifa* is not a worldly power, but moral power to do good deeds. The Quran emphasises the spiritual and ethical aspects as a requirement for receiving a blessing of *khalifa* from the creator to believers. It also makes sense within this reasoning that Prophet himself did not nominate a successor and left it to the Muslim community to choose one according to Arab tradition (Khan, 2007: 3). ‘According to Ibn Khaldun [1332-1406], the Caliph as the successor of the Prophet Mohammed ‘inasmuch as it serves, like him, to preserve the religion and to exercise (political) leadership of the world. (The institution) is called ‘the caliphate’ or ‘the imamate’. The person in charge of it is called ‘the caliph’ or ‘the imam’” (Khaldun, 1967: 3:24, 155). Ibn Khaldun further identified four pre-requisites for governing the caliphate: “(1) knowledge, (2) probity, (3) competence, and (4) freedom of the senses and limbs from any defect that might affect judgement and action. There is a difference of opinion concerning a fifth requisite, that is, (5) Qurashite descent’ (Ibid., 158). Also the further details of these pre-requisites in *Muqaddimah* indicate that the Caliph should be a Muslim and man that the idea of a woman caliph was never entertained among Islamic scholars (Ibid., 159-60, Kennedy, 2016: xvii).

Following Prophet Muhammed’s death, there were four rightly guided caliphs (*Khulafa Rashidun* – orthodox caliphs): first Abu Bakr (632-4), then Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-44), who was succeeded by Uthman ibn Affan (644-56), and then to Ali ibn Abi Talib (656-61) (Khaldun, 3:26: 161-2, Crone and Hinds, 1986: 36, Kennedy, 2016: 12). “The ideal of the caliph as successor to the Prophet, with all of its intrinsic spiritual trappings, died out within a few centuries of the Prophet’s death” (Khan, 2007: 4). Among the rivalry between Arab Kings, Muawiyye (661-80) was the first military and political leaders who initiated Caliphate in the form of hereditary monarchy and transferred the power centre of Islam from Medina to Damascus, the capital of his kingdom. The Umayyads not only transformed the conquered various regions into a unified empire but also extended ‘*khalifa* to stand for *khalifat Allah* when applied to the head of state’ (Crone and Hinds, 1986: 12). After the four ‘rightly guided caliphs’ to the Prophet, the *khalifa* lost its moral and spiritual aspects as well as its claims of universality. Nevertheless, *khalifat* was evolved into a significant political institution that survived for more than 1250 years under the rule of the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750), Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258), Mamluk Abbasid dynasty (1261-1517) and the Ottoman Empire (1517-1924). After the decline of the Umayyads the Abbasids’ political and economic success centred in Baghdad carried it to the ‘high caliphal period’ until 1258 (Armstrong, 2000: 45-7). According to Yücesoy, there are abundant of historical sources to claim that the ‘Caliphate, from its inception, made constant efforts to conquer Constantinople. Whether connected with prophecies or not, the conquest of Byzantium remained a primary political goal of the caliphs in the first two centuries of Islam’ (2009: 49). This is why this chapter highlights the spatial aspect of the caliphate that the Ottomans exploited by holding Constantinople.

Historically, as Ibn Khaldun explained clearly, the Caliphate was only symbolic, but ‘transformed into royal authority,’ and acquired more temporal than religious significance under the Umayyad and Abbasi caliphs (Khaldun, 1967, 3: 26: 165). The true characteristics of the caliphate were “preference for Islam and its ways, and adherence to the path of truth” (Ibid., 3:26, 166). The royal authority and government of the Arabs gained power while the caliphs

succeeded one another. When Arabs neglected religion and failed political leadership the characteristic traits of the caliphate faded away that only its name remained. ‘When the caliphate disappeared and was wiped out, governmental power passed altogether out of their hands’ (Ibid., 2: 27: 121). Following them, the Mamluks established a quasi-dynastic rule in Egypt and Syria and appointed a surviving member of Abbasid family as the caliph in 1262 under the patronage of Mamluk Sultanate (Kennedy 2016, 338). According to Ibn Khaldun, the religious institution of the caliphate had specific functions such the leadership of prayer, the office of mufti, the office of judge, the holy war and market supervision. While the title of ‘Commander of the Faithful’ was created in the period of the *Rashidun* the police was another religious function added under Abbasid and Umayyad dynasties (Khaldun, 1967, 3: 29: 170-80). Among its religious functions, the leadership of prayer was the highest and above royal authority. Therefore, having an Abbasid caliph at the Mamluk court in Cairo served to legitimize the accession of a new Sultan and highlight his symbolic power to impress other Muslim leaders (Kennedy 2016, 339). From this date onwards, the institution ‘remained a “shadow”/titular Caliphate, and mostly limited to only ceremonial and religious matters’ until the Ottoman defeat of Mamluks in 1517 (Ahmad, n.d.).

Therefore, the notion of ‘Islamic Caliphate’ is a modern concept which emerged during the Ottoman engagement in European relations and added another layer of complexity to contemporary debates. It is important to emphasise that the ‘primary sources of Islamic law, the Quran and Sunna, do not contain specific provisions to govern an Islamic Caliphate’ (Bammarny, 2017: 180). This chapter argues that the ontological hierarchy of *khalifa* exhibits that the *caliph* had spiritual significance to believers in the Quranic context and the caliphate was institutionalised by Muslims dynasties to gain more spatial and temporal power over the *umma*. As a leading scholar, Ibn Khaldun traced the changing nature of caliphs and evidenced that the functions of the religious institution of the caliphate in its earlier period turned into royal authority and worldly political leadership (Khaldun, 1967: 170-1). Khaldun also remarked on the words ‘Pope’ and ‘Patriarch’ in the Christian religion by highlighting differences with the caliph. Hence, it is imperative to challenge any Eurocentric view that compares between papacy and caliphate because the caliph’s earthly representative of God was different to the Pope in Christianity. More importantly, the next section argues that an idea of ‘Muslim papacy’ was in fact introduced by British colonialism to decide for the future of the Ottoman Caliphate (Ibid., 183).

## **A Critical Histography of the Ottoman Caliphate**

From international relations perspective, the Ottoman Empire’s capture of Constantinople in 1453 did not only change the role of Turks in world history but also has shaped the country’s place in between Islamic and Western civilisations for the following centuries (Smith, 1993: 130). The classic example of this inexorable dictate of geography can be traced in the Ottoman-Russian relations, at the heart of which was a struggle for the control of the straits (Bodger, 1984: 77-78). This clash of interests led to the use of religious symbols such as the title of caliphate for power struggle to rule over the Muslims in Russian hinterlands. Hence, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and its geographic location because of the Turkish Straits, the gateway to the Mediterranean from the Black Sea has historically determined its relations with foreign powers. In specific, the rivalry led to thirteen wars between Ottoman and Russian empires over the course of four centuries, the first in 1676 and the last in 1914 (Rubinstein, 1982: 1-2). The Ottoman Empire learned a strong historical lesson from these wars to gain the support of a Western ally and balance against its hostile neighbour. As Armaoglu argued, historically ‘the

Ottoman Empire's policy of balance' was based on the Ottoman-Western alignment against Russia (Armaoğlu, 1987, 43). From a critical historiography perspective, while the 'Ottoman policy of balance' aimed at protecting the integrity of the Empire it also served to the European balance of power system (Göl, 2013). Within this system, Britain as the traditional balancer benefited from the Ottoman weaknesses and manipulated its alliance according to its colonial interests, as will be explained later.

As Kennedy argues, it was only the Ottoman dynasty that 'attempted to make their caliphate a reality' in world politics (Kennedy, 2016, 341). The critical historiography of his chapter superficially emphasises the differences between the temporal and spatial power of the Ottoman caliphate in Constantinople as the caliphal centre and the other Muslim subjects of the empire, Arabs and Indian Muslims as the caliphal periphery. Historically, the Ottoman Sultans, Mehmed II (1432-1481) and his son Selim I, claimed the title of caliph after the conquest of Constantinople as the ruler of Islamic heartland. However, it was the defeat of Mamluks and the surrender of the last Abbasid Caliph, al-Mutawakkil III, that moved the caliphate from Cairo to Constantinople in 1517 (Ibid., 342). According to Khaldun, following the defeat of Abbasids by Mamluks 'Arab group feeling [*asabiya*] was completely destroyed and the caliphate lost its identity' (Khaldun, 1967: 3: 30: 181). In the following centuries, Arabs lost their superiority and drive to power through conquest. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, there were three major non-Arab Islamic empires: "the Safavid Empire in Iran, the Moghul Empire in India and the Ottoman Empire in Anatolia, Syria, North Africa and Arabia" (Armstrong, 2000: 97). As a non-Arab empire, the Ottoman Sultans used the title for ceremonial and symbolic reasons more than religious and political significance until the nineteenth century, but the Caliphate was set in Constantinople for four centuries.

Therefore, as mentioned the spiritual aspect of *khalifa* earlier, a clear separation is necessary between temporal, spiritual and spatial aspects of the Caliphate that many scholars overlooked. There are commonly references to the temporal and spiritual power of the Caliphs but not to the spatial role of the Caliphate, as highlighted in this chapter. The temporal and spiritual power of the Caliphate together was used first time during the Crimean War (1853-1856) by Sultan Abdulmecid I who 'declared his right to oversee the religious affairs of the Crimea's Muslims when negotiating with the Russian Empire' (FO 141 in Khan, 2007: 4). The real reason behind the use of religious discourse was to serve the empire's political power in line with British imperial designs regarding the role of Ottomans over Muslims and the spatial power of Constantinople. The colonisation of the Muslim world by European powers gained an unprecedented momentum in the nineteenth century. First France occupied Algeria in 1830, then Britain took control of Aden in 1839 (Armstrong, 2000: 127). In the mid-nineteenth century, the increasing Russian expansion in Central Asia and India challenged both British colonial interests and Ottoman sphere of influence. Britain's historic role as the 'balancer' of European balance of power strategically shaped the support for the Ottoman Empire. British-Ottoman alliance had an impact on Indian Muslims who were also against the 'infidel' Russian empire. As part of their geostrategic plan, British actively promoted the Ottoman Sultan's title as caliph to gain Indian Muslim's support for their colonial interests.

In the Ottoman history, the first legal written document was that the *Kanun-i Esasi* (Fundamental Law - the first Ottoman constitution) which came to effect in December 1876 and a proto-type of a Western-style constitution. Although there was no parliament and the *Kanun-i Esasi* introduced the separation of powers more in theory than practice it primitively indicated a new process of institutional changes to modernise the empire. While unrestricted

sovereignty belonged to the Ottoman dynasty unconditionally the sultan's person was 'sacred'. The *Kanun-i Esasi* declared the followings:

Article 3. The Ottoman sovereignty, which in the person of the Sovereign includes the Supreme Caliphate of Islam, belongs to the eldest Prince of the House of Osman, in accordance with the rules established *ab antiquo*.

Article 4. His Majesty the Sultan, under the title of 'Supreme Caliph', is the protector of the Muslim religion. He is the sovereign and Sultan [emperor] of all the Ottomans (Bammarny, 2017: 183, Ardiç, 2012: 54).

Therefore, by referring to the 'Supreme Caliph' of Islam for the first time the Ottoman Empire established the link between temporal - the Sultanate - and spiritual power - the Caliphate - in legal terms. After the era of four highly qualified caliphs, a long-standing norm for holding the title of Caliphate was to have military power to protect all Muslims in the world. Hence, Sultan Abdülhamid gained legitimacy for his claim to the highest office by adding three traditionally recognized justifications of divine will, hereditary rights and military power (Teitelbaum, 2016: 276). The hereditary rights of Ottoman Sultans were called into use by Mehmed II the Conquer and Suleyman the Magnificent that Abdülhamid did not need to add anything. His reference to the divine will of the Caliphate was based on the Umayyad Dynasty's claims as the Caliphs of God. Given the military and political power of the Ottoman Empire for six-hundred years over three continents it was undisputable that Abdülhamid controlled a powerful empire with its capital in Constantinople.

In a paradoxical way, the Ottoman Sultan's emphasis on the high Islamic caliphate was actually a strong evidence of empire's declining power in international politics for two reasons (Göl, 2013). On the one hand, the Caliphate would gain the loyalty of the Muslim *reaya* (people) under the flag of 'Islam' within Ottoman territories and that all other Muslims in the periphery, including Central Asia and India, would be united under the Caliphate to support the Sultan-Caliph. As explained earlier when Sultan Abdul-Hamid II (1876-1909) clearly emphasised his title as the protector of all Muslims in the East, including the East Indies and India it was in line with the empire's pan-Islamist policies following the Ottoman losses in the Balkans and Britain's colonial interests in India. Cabinet Office documents also confirmed Britain's strategic use of the caliphate as a "religious weapon" that "paved the way for pan-Islam and practically revived the dormant or formal Caliphate" to serve its geostrategic interests (CAB27/25 in Khan, 2007: 6).

Furthermore, during the 1870s, the British pro-Ottoman propaganda was carried by 'freely distributing pamphlets written in Istanbul that urged Indian and Central Asian Muslims to rally against Russia' (Khan, 2007: 10). Indian support for Ottomans increased during the next Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 and Sultan Abdul-Hamid's II (1876-1909) increasing use of his title as Sultan-Caliph. Britain's colonial interests reached to its zenith in the Muslim world when Egypt was occupied in 1882, one year after Tunisia (Armstrong, 2000: 127). With the help of Britain Abdulhamid II (1876-1909) strategically designed the policy of pan-Islamism (favouring Islam at the expense of the empire's other religious communities) to unite the empire against external and internal threats (Landau, 1994: 9-10). The ideology of pan-Islamism reintroduced the notion of caliph as the spiritual leader of all the Muslims. As Polanyi argues, during the nineteenth century when "the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was declared essential to the equilibrium of Europe, and the Concert of Europe endeavoured to maintain that empire", withing which Britain played a crucial role as the historical balancer. Similarly, when

the disintegration of the Ottomans “was deemed essential to that equilibrium, its dismemberment was provided for in a similarly orderly manner” at the end of the First World War (Polanyi, 1957: 8). During this process, British colonialism did not shy away from exploiting the idea of an Arab caliph against the declining Ottoman empire in the caliph periphery.

### **British Colonialism: an Arab Caliphate and the *Khilafet* movement**

During the nineteenth century European balance of power, Britain as the balancer benefited from British-Ottoman alliance and its policies supported the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Britain’s pro-Ottoman policy ended when London government joined the Entente Powers of France, Russia, and Italy against the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary in November 1914. During the First World War, Britain utilised the caliphate as a political tool in the Ottoman caliph periphery. Following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the ideology of nationalism shaped the future of Turks in Anatolia at the centre, but non-Turkish Muslims were left to their own destiny. New secret societies around the nationalist ideologies of Arab, Egyptian, Syrian and Lebanese emerged in the periphery. The rise of nationalism in ‘the caliph periphery’ including Arabia, North Africa and India was manipulated by colonial powers. Some pro-Ottoman modernists collaborated with British and French to protect the caliphate (Ardıç, 2012: 92). As part of Abdulhamid II’s official foreign policy, their major concern was the protection of the Muslim unity, pan-Islamism, which would also help to save the empire. However, British and French colonial interests differed from the Ottoman Empire. In fact, Britain used all pro-Ottoman discourses and activities to support Arab nationalism and instigated the idea of an Arab Caliphate. In pre-war period, British officials in the region, in specific Lord Kitchener, Lord Harding (the Viceroy of India), and Arthur Henry McMahon (Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Indian government in 1912, then British High Commissioner for Egypt in 1915-17) were well-informed about Arab discontent and secret societies’ search for gaining independence from the Ottoman rule during the war (Teitelbaum , 2016: 279-80). Consequentially, , British ‘divide and rule’ policy was implemented to take advantage of rivalries between Ottomans and Arabs in favour of creating an Arab caliphate (Ardıç, 2012: 199).

During the First World War, some of the Arab secret societies disappeared from the political landscape and others collaborated with the Allied powers to gain independence. The most noticeable one was the ‘Damascus Protocol’ which demanded ‘the independence of the Arab countries, from southern Anatolia in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south and from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Persian border in the east, in return for their cooperation with Britain’ during the war (Tauber, 1993: 332). Later this protocol constituted the basis of further Arab demands. After it was delivered to King Hussein Ibn Ali of the Hejaz, the *sharif* (protector) of the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah the Damascus Protocol would become part of a letter he sent to Arthur Henry McMahon, the British high commissioner in Egypt, in July 1915. This was the first series of letters known as ‘the McMahon-Hussein correspondence’, which eventually led to the outbreak of the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire (Ibid.).

When Jamal Pasha, the Ottoman navy minister, discovered the documents about Arab demands from the Allies belonging to the French consulate in Beirut and Damascus the Young Turks arrested many members of the Arab societies, ‘culminating in a long series of executions in August 1915 and in May 1916’ (Ibid.). The Young Turks’ harsh response did not end the



activities of Arab societies but motivated them to join Sharif Hussain's Arab Revolt in June 1916. Meanwhile, Britain's geostrategic interests in the Middle East turned the emphasis on an Arab caliphate, hinted at by Lord Kitchener (FO141 in Khan, 2007: 7).<sup>3</sup> Despite the British support an Arab caliphate was short-lived because Hussein declared himself as 'the King of the Hijaz' when the Ottomans re-established control and suppressed the Arab revolt in 1918. Nevertheless, he would declare himself the 'caliph of the Muslims' again in 1924 (Ardıç, 2012: 200).<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, French colonialism also entertained the idea of the "Maghrip Caliphate" 'in North Africa. The French Foreign Ministry's immature project nominated Morocco's Sultan Yusuf (r. 1912-1927) as an alternative, "Western" caliphate, to both the Ottoman Caliphate and British proposed Arab one (Ibid., 196-7: 238).

When the Ottoman Empire lost the war and the British army occupied Istanbul Turkish nationalists focused on the centre and the members of the Arab 'societies took senior positions in leading the Arab countries toward independence' at the periphery (Tauber, 1993: 333). The crucial issue was the legitimacy of the Caliphate related to the entire Muslim umma. The multifaceted forms of dynastic rivalries and internal conflicts leading to oppression and bloodshed among Muslim communities indicated that under the influence of Abbasids, Umayyads and Ottomans the caliphs were distanced from the Prophet's pathway and the early *Khulafa*'s examples as the true leaders of Muslims. None of the following caliphs had the qualities for the spiritual and religious leadership of the whole *Umma* (Al-Islam, nd). The idea of an Arab Caliphate lost its relevance.

Nevertheless, according to Ahmad, the moral and spiritual aspects of *khilafat* survived through the strong pious belief of Islamic scholars (Ulama) but mostly preserved by *Aulia* (saints), *Imams* (religious guides), *Mujjaddids* (religious reformers) and *Sufis* (mystics) to the twentieth century (Ibid.). In particular, the use of the title of *khalifa* became customary among the successors and deputies of the founders of Sufi orders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Ottoman dominion and India. 'The Sufi leaders and their *Khulafa* exercised spiritual power over the hearts and minds of the people by laying emphasis on attaining nearness to God through esoteric doctrine, piety, and resistance to worldly temptations' (Ibid.). During the First World War, the British Empire utilised the spiritual aspects of the caliphate to gain the support of Indian Muslims against its geostrategic rivalry with Russia. The title of Ottoman sultan-caliph served to maintain Indian Muslims' support for its colonial policies in India in the previous century. As evidence in Foreign Office and Cabinet documents, "When [Britain] were pro-Turk and anti-Russia we also rallied Indian Moslems to the green flag and filled them with strange ideas regarding the Ottoman Caliphate" (FO882/12 in Khan, 2007: 6).<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned earlier, during the Crimean War, British government supported the Ottomans against the Russians and used the caliphate as a "religious weapon" that "paved the way for pan-Islam and practically revived the dormant or formal Caliphate," much to its

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<sup>3</sup> Lord Kitchener was (Consul-general in Egypt, 1911-14; then the governor-general of Sudan and suggested the following in 1914: '... it may be that an Arab of true race will assume the Khalifate at Mecca or Medina and so good may come by the help of God out of all the evil that is now occurring.' FO 141/587/2, "Extract from Letter to the Sheriff of Mecca," 31.10.1914 in Khan, p. 7

<sup>4</sup> Ardıç, 200

<sup>5</sup> FO 882/12, "Note 1," Col. C. E. Wilson, 17.11.1916 - who was a principle British instigator of the Arab revolt.

detriment (CAB 27/25 in Khan, 2007: 6 fn 12).<sup>6</sup> A critical analysis of British involvement in the caliphate issue reveals that the colonial policies introduced the idea of pan-Islamism in India. For Indian Muslims in the caliphate periphery, the abandonment of British pro-Ottoman policies during the First World War was also a betrayal to them. Consequentially, the *Khilafet* (Caliphate) Movement was the first pan-Islamic organisation that emerged during the war in December 1918. A Khilafat Committee was formed with two goals to achieve: “First, to urge the retention of the temporal powers of the Sultan of Turkey as Caliph,” and second to ensure his continued authority over the Islamic holy places of Mecca and Madinah (Al-Islam, nd). Almost immediately after knowledge of McMahon’s endorsement of Hussein as caliph became public, the India Office warned “the Foreign Office to exercise caution as to the acceptability of such a claim to other Muslims, especially other Arab leaders. Surely, this caution was based on the recognition of how the Khilafat movement could use this endorsement as fuel for an anti-colonial campaign.” (FO371 in Khan 2007: 12, Teitelbaum, 1998: 103-22). This was an accurate prediction because the Indian Muslims strongly supported the Turkish national movement following the British invasion of Istanbul in March 1919. Now they were both fighting against the same enemy – European colonialism – to gain independence from Britain although Indian Muslims opted for peaceful methods as opposed to the Turkish armed struggle.

Initially, the *Khilafet* movement’s primary concern was post-Ottoman polity and the future of holy places as abovementioned. The movement began tangential on the Indian political landscape but their activities reached a peak in 1920 (Yapp, 1992: 12). They had two meetings with the British prime minister, David Lloyd George (Oliver-Dee, 2009: 108, 110, 117). In their first meeting three days after the occupation of Istanbul on 20 March 1920, they strongly supported the Turkish nationalists and published the Khilafat Manifesto that called the British to protect the Caliphate (Ardıç, 2012: 95). Although the Khilafat Movement presumed the Sultan-Caliph as the Universal Caliph who protected all Muslims in the world, the British ‘intelligence reports in Persia, Afghanistan, and much of Central Asia indicated a lack of enthusiasm’ for saving the Ottoman Empire and the caliphate (FO608 in Khan, 2007: 13).<sup>7</sup> The All-India Muslim League organised conferences on the *Khilafat* and sent a letter to Prime Minister Lloyd George to express their opinion that the British war with the Turks was ‘essentially a Christian “crusade” against Islam. The Muslim League recommended that “Great Britain should therefore revert to its policy of friendship with [Ottoman] Turkey and Islam and that will guarantee the future peace as well as the prosperity of the British Empire” (Ibid.).<sup>8</sup> However, in the Khilafat Delegation’s second meeting with Lloyd George one year later, on 21 March 1921, Britain was not in a powerful position but under pressure both home and abroad. While the Delegation’s perception of what the Ottoman Caliph was different than what the nationalist Turks were proposing Lloyd George used it as an opportunity to make Indian Muslims less angry by giving him more space for manoeuvring during discussions of redrafting the Treaty of Sevres, which eventually lead to the Lausanne peace talks.

Therefore, Britain’s position on the Caliphate question was constrained by its promises to the Arabs and Indian Muslims in the post-war order of the Middle East given its earlier pro-Ottoman policies. Shaped by ‘the British Empire’s ethic of “liberal toleration,” especially

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<sup>6</sup> ‘CAB 27/25, “Eastern Committee: Action regard to Sherif Faisal,” memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes, n.d.’ in Khan 6 fn12.

<sup>7</sup> FO 608/273/11, *From Viceroy, Army Department to Secretary of State for India, 4. 1.1920; FO 608/273/11, Mussulmans and the Caliphate, 18.1.1920 in Khan, 13*

<sup>8</sup> FO 608/273/11, “Turkish Settlement,” letter from All-India Muslim League to Lloyd George, 7.1.1920 in Khan, 13.

among its 80 million Muslim Subjects', the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire would undermine Britain's moral integrity, 'or at least that was the concern that the Foreign Office had given to the Indo-Muslim sacralization' of the Sultan-Caliph (Khan, 2007: 12-13). British policymakers were misled about the future of Caliphate question because Foreign Office, the Arab Bureau, the Indian Office and the Intelligence Reports all had contradictory viewpoints of the post-war politics (Oliver-Dee, 2009: 56-7). In the 1920s, the British and Allied powers abandoned the Caliphate question until the Treaty of Sevres. As will be explained later, the peace treaty with the Turks in Lausanne in 1923 had further clauses regarding the caliphate. When the Turks abolished the caliphate a year later the demands of the *Khilafet* Movement lost their relevance and the movement dispersed that some of its leaders joined the Muslim League to work towards the foundation of Pakistan later in 1947 (Ardıç, 2012: 95). The next section turns to the critical analysis of the post-war order to unpack the reasons behind the Turkish nationalists' decision for the future of the Caliphate.

### **Emergence of new Turkey and the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate**

When the Ottoman Empire signed the Armistice of Mudros with Britain, representing all Allied powers on 31 October 1918, the expectation was that its territories, apart from the Dardanelles Straits, would not be occupied by European forces (Tunçay, 1995: 55). The day after the armistice was signed, 1 November 1918, the main decision-makers – *İttihad ve Terraki*, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) leaders: Enver, Talat, and Cemal Pashas - left the country on a German cruiser, and the era of the CUP was over. On 12 November, a squadron under the command of Admiral Calthorpe entered the Dardanelles under the British flag and landed at Istanbul (Fromkin, 1989: 373). When the Allied forces entered the Ottoman territories their authority would not be limited only to military issues but would also include the civil and social aspects of the empire's domestic affairs. Following the Armistice, the Ottoman government in Istanbul aimed to protect the Sultan-Caliph and searched for other options to prevent the disintegration of the empire. The idea of accepting an American mandate was discussed strongly because of US President Woodrow Wilson's (1913-21) Fourteen Points (Erol, 1972: 41). In specific, Article 12 of these 'points' promised the Turkish areas of the empire the rights of national self-determination and national sovereignty. Meanwhile, the nationalist Turks interpreted this article very positively for the creation of a Turkish state, where the majority of people were Turkish would be possible (Avcıoğlu, 1993: 257).

However, the American mandate would have connotations very different from the Wilsonian right to self-determination that the nationalists disagreed with the defeated government in Istanbul. The acceptance of a foreign mandate was not an option under either American or British control (Göl, 2013: 87-88). There was an already emerging national hero who led the Turkish victory at the Gallipoli peninsula on the European side of the Dardanelles, against the Allies in 1915-16. Mustafa Kemal's name emerged as the *gazi* commander without a defeat from four long disastrous years of war (Ibid., 169). When the Istanbul government appointed Mustafa Kemal as Inspector-General of the Ninth Army on 30 April 1919, Turkish history was changed forever. Four days after the Greek occupation of Izmir on 15 May, the Turkish National Liberation War was declared on the day Mustafa Kemal landed at Samsun (Şahinler, 1998: 47, Gönlübol, 1989: 8). It is important to note that following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the British did not remove the Caliphate from Istanbul even though the Turkish national struggle gained new momentum.

Eight months later, on 28 January 1920, the National Pact (*Misak-i Milli*) defined the main goals of the Turkish national movement, and a new government was declared in Ankara. The National Pact's point four stated the following (Göl, 2013: 200):

The city of Istanbul, which is the seat of the Islamic Caliphate and of the Ottoman Sultanate and government, as well as the Sea of Marmara must be protected from every danger. So long as this principle is observed, whatever decision arrived at jointly by us and other states concerning the use for trade and communication of the Straits of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean shall be honoured.

The critical historiography of this chapter argues that Mustafa Kemal's discursive strategies were designed to respond pressure and constraints from both internal and international affairs. Neither the separation of Sultan-Caliph title nor the abolition of the Caliphate was a sudden decision but integral part of nationalist discursive policies. Indeed, after the consolidation of the national power internally two years between 1922 and 24 were crucial to put the discursive strategies into action step by step. In domestic politics, the power struggle between Ankara and Istanbul governments was essentially between the territorially defined national form of a new state and the universally defined multi-religious nature of the Ottoman state. In international politics, there were disagreements among the Muslims outside Turkey in India, Afghanistan, Iran, North Africa and the Arab world. When the Turkish nationalists' aim was to save the state as part of national sovereignty in opposition to Arab intellectuals' most popular subject, which was the unity of the Muslim world – and, hence, the need to preserve a universal Islamic Caliphate for the entire *ummah*. Nevertheless, Arab and Turkish nationalists agreed that the Ottoman caliphate was un-Islamic and illegitimate. Both sides used these arguments for different purposes. For Turks, they helped to gain legitimacy for the GNA's decision to separate the sultanate from the caliphate to strip of its temporal power. For Arabs, an Arab Caliphate could replace the Ottoman one in the post-war polity (Ardıç, 2012: 119-121; Bammarny, 2017: 183). Therefore, the future of the Caliphate had to be resolved for the best strategic gain of the new Turkey neither Muslims in the post-Ottoman territories and beyond nor foreign imperial powers could exploit its spiritual or ideological power for their political purposes. There were three international events that influenced the Turkish nationalists' decisions about the caliphate's future.

The Allied occupation of Istanbul was the first international event. Immediately, on the day following Istanbul's occupation, 17 March 1920, a circular was sent to the entire Islamic world. Mustafa Kemal described the occupation as an insult to the Muslim people of Azerbaijan, the Caucasus, Turkestan, Afghanistan, Iran and Indochina. The whole Muslim world would have to unite against this action which was described as the last attempt of crusaders against the Caliphate (Göl, 2013: 101). This call was an early indication of nationalists' tactics that laid the foundations of their discursive strategies about the future of the caliphate. Internal affairs, the critical response of nationalists to the occupation of Istanbul was to convene a new assembly and to find a nationalist government outside Istanbul (Akşin, 1996]: 123).<sup>9</sup> On **18 March 1920**, Mustafa Kemal sent a telegram to the commander in Sivas saying that it was necessary to convene a national assembly in Ankara (ATTB, Doc No 257, 1991: 272-74). Interestingly, the immediate link between the occupation of Istanbul and the

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<sup>9</sup> The decision to go to Ankara on 27 December 1919 was not a coincidence. The local people in Ankara had a quality which attracted the attention of the nationalist leaders: they rebelled against the Ottoman bureaucrats and believed in a national-democratic movement.

opening of the Grand National Assembly (GNA) had been neglected by many scholars until recently (Gökay, 1997: 198, Göl, 2013). The GNA, declaring the establishment of a new Turkey, was opened in Ankara on 23 April 1920. As part of nationalists' discursive strategy, the opening day of the GNA was chosen symbolically after prayer on Friday, the holy day of Muslims to open with public prayers and Qur'an recitations. Mustafa Kemal emphasised the spiritual significance of the day by stating that "as it will be opened on a Friday, the solemn character of this day will be profited by for offering solemn prayer, before the opening, in the Hadji Bairam Mosque" (Atatürk, 1929: 372). Therefore, the interdependency of national and international politics is critical in analysing the logic of nationalist decision-making that led to the abolition of the caliphate. The nationalist policies were designed in a way to transcend tensions between the universal claim of the Caliphate as an Islamic institution and the territorial base of sovereignty. Initially, they capitalised on religious narratives of justification for social mobilisation to harness political support for their leadership at home and abroad. Hence, Islamic legitimization was used selectively and discursively to erode the power of Caliph gradually that this chapter particularly argues.

The Treaty of Sèvres, the so-called 'peace' treaty imposed on Turkey on 10 August 1920, was the second international event shaping the discursive strategies of Turkish nationalist. Sèvres was immediately rejected by the new government in Ankara (Göl, 2013: 120). As a British Foreign Office report subsequently described the Treaty 'as the origin of Turkish nationalism', it certainly triggered the nationalists in search of new strategies in their struggle against European imperialism, including establishing relations with another renegade regime in Moscow, the Bolsheviks and the future of the caliphate (FO 371 in Göl, 2013: 121). The Treaty was consisted of 433 articles in details that revealed what the Allied powers designed for the future of Turkey (Göl, 2013: 202). Article 139 as part of political clauses was related to the Sultan-caliph's authority and stated the following (HRI Project, nd):

Turkey formally renounces all rights of suzerainty or jurisdiction of any kind over Moslems who are subject to the sovereignty or protectorate of any other State.

No power shall be exercised directly or indirectly by any Turkish authority whatever in any territory detached from Turkey or of which the existing status under the present Treaty is recognised by Turkey.

This clause intended to remove the Ottoman Caliph's temporal and spiritual 'power' over the Muslim world. While the Ankara government declared the Treaty as null and void it influenced their discursive strategies in domestic and foreign policies against the Allied partition of Turkey. Interestingly, the Treaty of Sèvres was interpreted as a 'crime against Islam' by the *Khilafet* Movement leaders and Indian Muslims that most likely influenced the British government's decision for excluding the possibility of an Arab caliph in the Treaty (Teitelbaum, 2000: 420).

Although Turkish nationalists explicitly stated that their main goal was to protect the Caliphate and serve the sultan their priority was to establish the sovereignty of a nation-state over these goals. The GNA accepted the 1921 constitution and declared in Article 1 that 'sovereignty belongs with no restrictions and no conditions, to the nation...' (Ardıç, 2012: 255). Hence, they annulled the sultan-caliph's authority and curtailed the power of Caliphate in practice gradually without estranging the public support. The 1921 Constitution was proclaimed in a context in which Istanbul was under British occupation and the members of the Parliament were still loyal to the 'powerless' sultan-caliph until mid-1922. Many scholars

in the literature agree that the nationalists conducted the ‘War of Independence’ in the name of caliph (Satan 2008, Oliver-Dee, 2009; Ardiç, 2012: 58).

The Treaty of Lausanne was the third international event. When the peace talks at Lausanne began on 20 November 1922 (and ended on 24 July 1923) the abolition of the Sultanate was put on the agenda because the Allies invited Sultan Vahideddin and Istanbul government to send a joint delegation with Ankara government ’ (Ardiç, 2012: 255). After Vahdeddin as the last Ottoman Sultan was forced to flee to Malta the GNA at Ankara elected the Crown Prince Abdul Majid II (1922-1924) as the new Caliph in 1922. When the leaders of the *Khilafet* movement expressed their loyalty to Abdul Majid as the Caliph and sent a letter from London to the Istanbul government in support of the Caliphate the nationalists had to design a new strategy. From the nationalists’ perspective, the letter indicated the British intervention in Turkey’s internal affairs, and they suspected that ‘the Caliph of plotting to revive the Ottoman dynasty’ (Ardiç, 2012: 85). Turkish nationalists initially indicated that the Caliphate would survive alongside the GNA which would function as its basis. However, Abdul Majid II ended up having the title only for only two years as the last Caliph among the Muslim (*Aakhir Khalifatul Muslimeen*) (Al-Islam, nd).

During Lausanne peace talks, the future of caliphate was not directly put on the official agenda of negotiations between the Allies and Ankara Government. The caliphate issue seemed to be left to Ankara as Turkey’s internal affair. First step of putting Mustafa Kemal’s key discursive strategies in practice was to emphasise that mixing religion and corrupt politics was harmful to the ‘true’ Islam ’ (Ardiç, 2012: 66). While touring Anatolia in mid-1923, he glorified the importance of Islam without monarchy (Ibid., 114). In his speech, Mustafa Kemal indicated the redundancy of a politicised Caliphate as follows (Oliver-Dee, 2009: 13-14):

Our Prophet has instructed his disciples to convert the nations of the world to Islam; he has not ordered them to provide for the government of those nations. Never did such an idea pas through his mind. Caliphate means government and administration. ... The notion of a single Caliph exercising supreme religious authority over all the Muslim people, is one which has come out of books, not reality. The Caliph has never exercised over Muslims a power similar to that held by the Pope over the Catholics. Our religion has neither the same requirements, nor the same discipline as Christianity. The criticism provoked by our recent reform [separating the Caliphate from the Sultanate] are inspired by an abstract, unreal idea; the idea of Pan-Islamism. Such an idea has never been translated into reality.

The next step was to explain that the Caliphate was only a spiritual and symbolic institution without any political and temporal power, which belonged to the GNA. The Islamic character of the new Turkish state would later be reinforced when the constitution was amended on the day the Republic was proclaimed (October 29, 1923) by adding a new article to it that read: ‘The religion of the state is Islam’ (Article 2) (Ardiç, 2012: 59). The future of the Caliphate was resolved in favour of nationalists to highlight the caliph’s spiritual authority. In the end, the treaty of Lausanne, like the Treaty of Sevres, had a clause related to the Caliphate (Ibid., 290-92):

Article 27: No power or jurisdiction in political, legislative or administrative matters shall be exercised outside Turkish territory by the Turkish Government or authorities, for any reason whatsoever, over the nationals of a territory placed under the sovereignty

or protectorate of the other Powers signatory of the present Treaty, or over the nationals of a territory detached from Turkey.

It is understood that the spiritual attributions of the Moslem religious authorities are in no way infringed.

Within the secrecy of negotiations and diplomatic bargaining between the new Turkey and Allied powers during the nine months of the peace talks there are arguments that the abolition of the Caliphate was used as a leverage. Ardiç and Satan argues that 'Britain required its abolition as a condition for recognising Turkish independence' (Ardiç, 2012; Satan, 2008: 185-6). Historically, there were some indications at the international level that the negotiations at Lausanne were broken down because of the caliphate question in February 1923. When the Turkish delegate Ismet pasha returned to Turkey and informed Mustafa Kemal that abolishing the caliphate was necessary for signing the treaty with Britain. The British government continued putting pressure on Ankara by its ambiguous policies when the Foreign Office stated on 5 March that there was no explicit or implicit indication of recognising the Turkish Caliphate's status in the Lausanne Treaty (Satan, 2008: 237). In domestic politics, Mustafa Kemal decided to have national elections to eliminate the opposition from pro-monarchy and pro-caliphate and have the parliament to ratify the Lausanne Treaty in July 1923. Coincidentally in the same month, a leader of the Indian Caliphate movement penned an article and claimed that Britain required the abolition of the caliphate. 'Finally, according to a secret British report, after signing the treaty, Ismet Pasha told Turkish generals that abolishing the Caliphate and exiling the Ottoman royal family may have helped Ankara on the Mosul question by convincing the British that Turkey would not pursue Pan-Islamist policies in the Middle East' (Ardiç, 2012: 291). All these historical narratives and evidence indicate that the path of new Turkey was clear to participate the Western international society and there was no place for the Caliphate in a modern nation-state.

After legitimating their power, the majority of GNA members 'who were present on that day unanimously voted to change the Islamic sultanate into a republic and elect Mustafa Kemal as its first president. Caliph Abdulmecid was one of the first to congratulate him' on 29 October 1923 (Ibid., 295). The Caliph's public support of Kemal and careful avoidance of politics were not enough to be suspicious of the Caliphate's potential power. Indeed, when a letter sent by Indian Muslim leader Aga Khan and London Islamic Society President Amri Ali to Turkish nationalists was published in Istanbul newspapers on 5 December it was clear that they 'requested on behalf of Indian Muslims that the caliph's official status be clearly defined after the October 29 amendments, and that it should be protected as a religious connection between Muslim peoples' (Ibid., 296). The GNA government interpreted such request as a sign of a political plot to re-instate Ottoman monarch in Istanbul and the British intervention in Turkey's internal affairs. Hence, the reconfiguration of diplomatic relations both at national and international level had to be progressed strategically to gain the support of pro-Islamic members of the government and the society and send the message to foreign powers that Ankara was in charge. Prime Minister Ismet Inonu's speech aimed to assure the GNA members that 'there will not be any defects in the protection and full application of Islamic principles after the abolition of the Caliphate' (Satan 2008, 219). A new law passed, of which two crucial articles stated the following:

1. The caliph has been deposed. Because the Caliphate is essentially intrinsic to the concept and purview of the government and the republic, the office of the Caliphate is abolished.

2. The deposed caliph and all male and female members and sons-in-law of the previously abolished Ottoman dynasty are permanently banned from residing within the territory of the Republic of Turkey. Those who are born of the female members of this dynasty are also considered to belong to the Ottoman family. (TBMMZC 1924, VII: 62-64) (Ardıç, 2012: 298).

Mustafa Kemal as the first President of the new republic approved the law on the same day and it was published in the official gazette as Law 431 on 7 April 1924 (Ibid., 299). While the Caliph and royal family members were exiled to Switzerland the new law was made public through the press and mosques. In specific, 'the muftis and imams were forced to sign a document promising to not mention the caliph's name in Friday sermons but, instead, pray for the republic's safety' (Satan, 2008: 222-226, Ardıç, 2012: 300).

The interdependency of decision-making processes in Ankara and London proves the role of international relations and diplomatic bargaining during the abolition of the Caliphate. The treaty of Lausanne was signed on 24 July and ratified by the GNA on 23 August 1923 but the British parliament ratified it later on 15 April 1924, after the GNA's decision to abolish the Caliphate on 3 March. According to Tunçay, the Caliphate's demise was a 'great favour' for the British empire (2005: 82-83). Nevertheless, Ankara's decision to abolish the caliphate was part of the GNA's discursive strategy to place the new state in international relations and was praised by the press in Paris, London and New York that proved the new Turkey's pro-Western orientation (Ardıç, 2012: 302). As part of nationalist reforms, the GNA introduced radical institutional changes at the executive and legislative levels: the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 progressed hand in hand by closure of the Holy Places, banning on Dervish orders and importantly, to regulate the role of religion, the Directorate for Religious Affairs (1924) was created. Moreover, it was also a strong indication of the new state's secularisation and civilisational positioning in Western modernity. The constitutional amendments replaced Article 2's statement of 'the religion of the State is that of Islam' with the following: the Turkish Republic is a secular state (Ibid, 298).

## Conclusion

The critical historiography of this chapter demonstrated the complex interdependency between domestic and international relations at the end of the First World War and why the origins of the 'caliphate question' were embedded in centuries of rivalries among Arabs, Turks, Indian Muslims, and European colonial powers. The ontological study of the caliph in the Qur'an and the critical analysis of Khaldun showed that while the *caliph* had spiritual significance to believers in the religious context the caliphate was institutionalised by Muslim dynasties to gain more spatial and temporal power over the *umma*. The Ottoman Sultans established the link between temporal - the Sultanate - and spiritual power - the Caliphate - in legal terms and attempted to turn their Caliphate into a reality in international affairs. Meanwhile, the British colonialism manipulated the Caliphate question with implications for the Arab revolt and the *Khilafet* movement among Indian Muslims. The chapter specifically emphasised the discursive strategy applied by the Turkish nationalists during the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate

The nationalist policies were designed in a way to transcend tensions between the universal claim of the Caliphate as an Islamic institution and the territorial base of sovereignty. Initially, they capitalised on religious narratives of justification for social mobilisation to harness



political support for their leadership at home and abroad. Hence, Islamic legitimization was used selectively and discursively to erode the power of Caliph gradually. The justification for radical change of any Ottoman institution was framed in religious terms to gain public support. The alternating discourses of Mustafa Kemal first discursively elevated the spiritual status of the Caliphate to separate it from the Ottoman monarchy in late 1922 and then less than a year later the caliphate was described as an 'un-Islamic' institution. These narratives were part of nationalist discursive strategy to keep Islam in the private sphere on the path of separating religion and politics in internal affairs. In international politics, the new Turkey's abolition of the caliphate sent a powerful message to the West that Ankara abandoned the imperialist policies of the Ottoman Empire in the Muslim world. This radical change was an assurance by Mustafa Kemal that Turkey would not be a threat to British and the Allies interests and make the new Turkey a member of the European international system.