

Discussion over Theological and Political Foundations of Caliphate in Islam

Dr. Recep Dogan¹

Abstract

The institution of the Caliphate in Islam has an honourable place among Muslims therefore it has been discussed by many scholars throughout Islamic history. Muslim scholars have conducted investigations into the institution of Caliphate to find out whether it is based on religious or political grounds and its significance for Muslim nations while Western scholars deemed it as politic authority hence constituted their views accordingly. When the Caliphate was abolished by the secular Turkish government in 1924, various views have been articulated to understand if a religious institution can be abolished by any state. There are three views among Muslim scholars regarding the Caliphate; the first view: Caliphate is a sacred institution, it is universal and necessary for all Muslims; the second view: it is a political institution and was established according to the needs of Muslims; the third view: there is no such institution in Islam nor is there a need for it. It is imperative to examine Islamic sources to identify the nature of Caliphate, its theological and political values. This essay will investigate the meaning and the objectives of Caliphate in Islamic history and will also analyse the efforts of Modern Muslims to revitalize it.

Keywords: caliphate, caliph, ISIS, radicalism, theological basis of caliphate

Caliphate in early Islamic History

The first ruler for Muslims in Islamic history was Prophet Muhammad. During 13 years in the first part of revelation, he carried out the mission of Messengership by inviting people to monotheist belief in Mecca. In the second part of revelation which covers 10 years in Medina, Prophet Muhammad took the responsibility of rulership and became the head of the state for a cosmopolite society. The community of Jews, paganist Arabs and Muslims accepted him as their leader and ruler. During the period of Medina, Prophet Muhammad performed two missions; receiving revelation from God and teaching it to his followers and ruling people of Medina. In short, he had religious and political position during 10 years in Medina.

However, the Prophet did not state who would be the head of the state after his dead nor the Qur'an assign any one for this job. In this regard, his wife A'isha states that Messenger of God passed away while he did not assign anyone as the head of the state after him. (Ahmad b. Hanbal 1993, vol. 6 p. 63). Similarly, 'Umar, the second Caliph stated that if he did not assign anyone as a ruler after him, he did not oppose the practice of the Prophet (Ibn Hisham 2013). On the basis of these statements it is wise to say that choosing a ruler for Muslims is a political issue therefore it is left to the choice of people.

However, election of first Caliph after the Prophet was extremely important for the unity of Muslims due to the political and social conditions of that time. Right after the death of the Prophet, Muslims of Makkah gathered around Abū Bakr and Muslims of Medina around Sa'd bin 'Ubadā (Ibn Sa'd 2012). After long discussions Abu Bakr was elected as the first ruler of Muslim population (Ibn Hisham 2013). His title was *Khalifatu Rasul al-Allah* (Successor of Messenger of God) which can be understood as the ruler who comes after the Prophet.

¹ Lecturer in Islamic Studies, Wisdom College, Brisbane/Australia. E-mail: drdogan66@gmail.com

The first four caliphs, Abu Bakr (632–4), ‘Umar (634–44), ‘Uthman (644–56) and ‘Ali (656–61) have been called as ‘the rightly guided caliphs’ (Khulafa Rashidin) by Sunni Muslims (Hinds 1986). The period of the first four caliphs lasted only 29 years (632–661 CE). However, during this period, Islam expanded swiftly, defeating the Sassanid Empire, halving and almost destroying the Byzantine Empire and expanding into South Asia, Central Asia and through North Africa into the Iberian Peninsula (Liebl 2009). The distribution of the period of four Caliphs is 2 years for Abu Bakr, 10 years for ‘Umar, 12 years for ‘Uthman, five years for Ali (out of four, three of them were assassinated) and this period is considered the Golden Age of Islam when the principles of Islam were applied in every aspect of life.

The death of the Prophet caused many social and political problems to be emerged, therefore the first Caliph Abu Bakr had to fight against apostates who did not want to recognize the new ruler and did not want to fulfil their duties towards Islamic State. Abu Bakr successfully handled the problems in his short caliphate time and designated ‘Umar as his successor in his deathbed. Muslims in nascent Islamic community did not oppose his decision and accepted ‘Umar as the second Caliph. After ten years rulership ‘Umar was assassinated by a Persian slave in 644 CE. Before he died, he did not assign a specific person as his successor but he appointed a council which consisted of six people to elect the new ruler. The council chose ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan as third Caliph. Choosing a caliph in the first three personalities (Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman) established three different methods; public election, designation by a previous caliph, assigning a caliph by a council.

The later reign of ‘Uthman experienced serious problems within the Muslim community because of the appointments of people to governmental positions. Because of his old age, Uthman heavily depended on his tribesmen when ruling Islamic state and this attitude aroused considerable opposition within different Muslim cities such as Kūfa, Egypt and Basra. After 12 years of rulership, ‘Uthman’s reign was ended by a group of rebels who demanded reforms in the government but then killed the caliph while he was reading the Qur’an in his house alone.

The assassination of ‘Uthman caused various reactions in the Muslim community; some believed that the murderers must be punished while others argued that those people only defended their rights. In the meantime, Muslim community chose ‘Ali ibn Abu Tālib as the fourth caliph. However, because of circumstances and political tension two prominent Companions of the Prophet -Talha and Zubayr- opposed him immediately. They asked ‘Ali to punish the murderers. But the situation was very sensitive for the rebels almost took over Medina and the attempt to punish them would cause serious problems within Muslim community. Therefore, ‘Ali postponed it. However, Talha, Zubayr and the wife of Prophet, A’isha opposed his decision and went to Iraq to find a support there, but they were not successful. During this chaotic state or environment, Zubayr and A’isha gave up from their opposition to ‘Ali but still a fight named ‘The Battle of the Jamal broke out between two groups and ‘Ali defeated the followers of Talha and Zubayr after a short confrontation.

Although ‘Ali won the battle against his oppositions he had to leave Medina and declared Kufa as the capital of Muslims. The Umayyad, ‘Uthman’s kinsmen demanded Ali to punish the murderers and this demand turned into a battle between Ali and Mu’āwiya. Two armies confronted at a place called Siffin on the Euphrates in Syria. When Ali was about to defeat Mu’āwiya, his followers put the Qur’anic pages to their spears and this caused the followers of Ali to stop fighting in spite they were commanded to fight for it was a trick of war. But at the end, it was agreed that there should be arbitration between the two parties. However, a group called Kharijite (those who departed from main group) rejected the thought of arbitration and accused Ali and Mu’āwiya with disbelief (takfir literally means excommunication). They assassinated Ali in 661 CE when he was going to Mosque to perform early Morning Prayer. After this tragic event Mu’āwiya announced his caliphate and the family of Umayyad stayed in the position of caliphate for 90 years. Throughout Islamic history, the institution of caliphate had been passed on to different Muslim governments and eventually; it was abolished by newly formed Turkish state in 1924.

Caliphate from Theological and Political Perspectives

According to the Arabic lexicon, *khilāfa* (caliphate) literally means taking the position of others in order to perform the legal and religious rights on behalf of them (Al-Isfahānī 1997). It is also used in the meaning of vicegerency in the Qur’an;

“Remember (when) your Lord said to the angels: ‘I am setting on the earth *a caliphate* (vicegerent).’ The angels asked: ‘Will you set therein one who will cause disorder and corruption on it and shed blood, while we glorify You with Your praise and declare that You alone are all-holy and to be worshipped as God and Lord.’ He said: ‘surely I know what you do not know’ (2: 30).

“He (God) it is who has made you *caliphs* (vicegerents) on the earth. So, whoever disbelieves (in ingratitude, rejecting this truth and attributing God’s deeds to others than Him), his unbelief is charged against him” (35:39).

According to these verses, every person in the earth is a caliph of God. In order to honour human kind, God made human beings vicegerent in the earth. The word *Khalifa* (Caliph) is also used to indicate the honourable position of a specific person among the servants of God;

“O David! We have appointed you *a vicegerent* in the land (to rule according to Our commandments); so, judge among people with the truth and do not follow personal inclination, lest it leads you astray from the path of God. Surely, those who wander astray from God’s path – for them there is a severe punishment because they have forgotten the Day of Reckoning” (38:26).

This word is also used in the meaning of successors. According to this definition each generation is *khalif* (caliph, successor) of the previous one.

“He (God) it is who has brought you as *successive generations* to the earth, and has exalted some of you over others in degrees (of intelligence, capacity, and then wealth and status): thus, He tries you in what He has granted you” (6:165)

The word *ikhtilaf* literally means dispute or disagreement is derived from the same word as *khalifa* (caliphate). This word alludes that each person is different than others in regards to thoughts, emotions, characters and worldviews.

“If your Lord had so willed (and withheld from humankind free will), He would have made all humankind one single community (with the same faith, worldview, and life-pattern). But (having free choice) they never cease to differ” (11:118)

In Islam, Prophet Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets (Qur’an, 33:40) and no one can take the place of the Prophet in his position as Messenger of God. However, his position as a ruler can be represented by other Muslims for the Qur’an states; “O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger, and those from among you who are invested with authority” (4:59)

One of the basic principles of Islam is that the job is given to a person who is qualified to fulfil the demands of such job in the best way. Same principle is also true for the selection of caliph. Having all necessary qualifications Abu Bakr was elected by Muslims as the first Caliph (successor of Muhammad) in spite he was not the member of Prophet Muhammad’s immediate family.

In historical context, the two different visions on choosing a leader for Muslim community emerged; Abu Bakr was the best candidate for Caliphate due to his seniority in Islam and being most respected companion of the Prophet. On the other hand, Shiite claims that Ali was the most suitable candidate for he was the closest relative of the Prophet and he was designated as successor by the Prophet. This fact indicates that Muslims supported the differing attitudes to the leadership after the Prophet.

The determination of a title for the new leader was difficult for prophethood would not be used for other Muslims, therefore Muslim community adopted two titles for Muslim rulers after the Prophet; the ruler of believers (amir al-mu’minin) and the deputy of God (Khalifa Allah). From the second term (Khalifa) the English term *caliph* is derived.

Because of the political conditions in Arabian Peninsula, first four caliphs were chosen from the Quraysh clan. First time in political history of Islam, the Kharijite sect who separated from ‘Ali due to the arbitration incident chose their own caliph (Shahristānī 1948). Choosing a caliph from outside of the Quraysh bloodline is a controversial issue among Muslim scholars. There are two views on this matter; according to first view, any person who has necessary qualifications and knows Islamic principles can be a ruler and a caliph (Ibn Hazm 1964).

Kharijites and Mutazilates hold this view. Second group hold that a caliph must be from the clan of Quraysh. This will be discussed in the next subheading for it is against the principles of Islam.

A marginal group in the Kharijite sect holds that Muslims do not need the institution of caliphate, rather they apply the rules of Islam by themselves (Shahristānī 1948). Majority in this group holds that caliphate is necessary for the benefit of Muslims but any Muslim who is qualified to be a ruler can be a caliph (al-Ash'ārī 2005). The prominent Ash'ārī scholar Abd al-Qāhir Baghdadi (1075-1153 CE) agrees with Kharijite on this matter; he argues that any capable Muslim can be chosen as a caliph (Baghdadi 1948).

Imam Māturīdī (d. 944 CE) who is Sunni imam in Islamic creed holds that a caliph must be pious, capable to rule Muslim community in the best way and wise person who has the best decisions in political matters. He states that choosing a caliph must be in line with Islamic principles (Nasafi 1993). Ash'ari scholar Baqillānī (950-1013 CE) argues that since designation of a caliph is not determined by religious text it is left for Muslims to choose (Baqillānī 1957). Ibn Hazm (994-1064 CE), the founder of Zāhirī School (the sect that understands religious texts literally) holds that caliph must be from the bloodline of Quraysh for there is a consensus on this matter (Ibn Hazm 1964). However, he contradicts himself by stating that if a person can lead Muslims in prayer, he can also lead them in political matters (Ibn Hazm 1964). The prominent scholar imam Ghazālī (1058-1111 CE) has the same view as Ibn Hazm for he maintains that caliph must be from the bloodline of Quraysh (Ghazālī 1983). Ḥanafīte scholar Sadr al-Sharia (d. 1346 CE) disagrees with them. He holds that being from the bloodline of Quraysh to be elected as caliph is abolished after the first four caliphs, therefore any qualified Muslim can be elected for this position.

It is worth mentioning the opinions of the famous Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun (1334-1406 CE) for he has unique opinions on the matter of caliphate. He argues that the issue of politics and caliphate is related to representing God's justice among His servants, therefore whoever is capable to provide justice when ruling Muslims, he can be elected as a caliph (Ibn Khaldun 1967). In order to claim the rulership of Muslims, a person must possess certain qualifications according to Ibn Khaldun and these prerequisites can be summarized as follows; (Ibn Khaldun 1967, pp. 158-159)

- The ruler or the caliph must be knowledgeable regarding Islamic Law and be capable of independent decision making.
- The caliph must be just, upright and honest person.
- The caliph must possess a strong character to carry out his political duties. He is expected to understand political affairs and maintain the welfare of the public even during the times of war.
- The caliph is expected to be healthy in all senses and limbs. He should be free from any disabilities.
- The caliph must be of Qurayshi (preferably of Hashemite) descent.

When examining these conditions, it is clear that caliphate is understood as political rulership and a person can be a caliph if he/she has necessary qualifications to rule Muslims.

Ibn Khaldun analysed the history of caliphate and argued that at the beginning of Islam, caliphs were chosen from the bloodline of Quraysh and they all tried to provide justice for all the citizens in the state, then it became a kingdom where obeying a caliph was accepted as one of the pillars of Islamic creed (Ibn Khaldun 1967). He argues that God did not choose a specific group or race or nations to convey His message, rather it is incumbent upon all Muslims. Caliph is responsible to take care of political affairs, therefore only an eligible person is assigned for this position (Ibn Khaldun 1967). With this view he maintains that if the Quraysh cannot fulfil the conditions of caliphate they are not assigned for this job. However, most of the Sunni scholars held the view that a caliph must be from the bloodline of the Quraysh on the basis of a specific prophetic tradition. In order to clarify the topic more from theological perspective this hadith will be analysed now.

Discussion over if a Caliph Must be from the Bloodline of the Quraysh

When the Prophet passed away, he did not assign any person as a ruler in his position therefore the residents of Medina (*Ansār* literally means helpers) gathered together in a place called Thaqifatu Bani Saīda to choose a ruler for the Muslim community. The other main group in Muslim community was the people of Quraysh who immigrated from Makkah to Medina together with the Prophet, therefore they were called *mubajirun* (emigrants). Abu Bakr and 'Umar the people of *mubajirun* (emigrants) quickly went Thaqifatu Bani Saīda where Abu Bakr made his long speech including the prophetic tradition which states that caliph (ruler) must be from the bloodline of the Quraysh;

Umar reports; “After the death of the Prophet we were informed that the Ansār (Helpers referring to the residents of Medina) disagreed with us and gathered in the shed of Bani Sa’ida. I said to Abu Bakr, Let us go there and dispute the matter with them... the speaker from Ansar said, ‘None has the right to be worshipped but God, we are God’s helpers and the majority of the Muslim army, while you, the emigrants, are a small group and some people among you came with the intention of preventing us from practicing this matter (of caliphate) and depriving us of it.’ When the speaker had finished, I intended to speak but Abu Bakr said, ‘wait’ then Abu Bakr himself gave a speech, ‘O Ansār! You deserve all (the qualities that you have attributed to yourselves), but this question of caliphate is only for the Quraysh as they are the best of the Arabs as regards descent and home, and I am pleased to suggest that you choose either of these two men, ‘Umar and Abu ‘Ubayda b. al-Jarrah... And then one of the Ansār said, ‘... There should be one ruler from us and one from you.’ Then there was a hue and cry among the gathering and their voices rose. ‘Umar said, ‘O Abu Bakr! Hold your hand out and I pledged allegiance to you, and then all the emigrants gave the pledge of allegiance and so did the Ansār afterwards (so Abu Bakr was chosen as the first Caliph of Muslims). (Bukhari 1997: hudud 57)

When examining the report, it is clear that choosing a caliph or a ruler is a matter of politics. The problematic part in it is the expression ‘caliphate is only for the Quraysh as they are the best of the Arabs as regards descent and home’. Unfortunately, most of the Sunni scholars understood this expression as a prerequisite of caliphate and with this attitude, they opposed the principles of Islam for racism is abolished by the Prophet and there are many evidences in the Qur’an and Sunna to prove it. God declares people equal in the Qur’an and explains their honour in piety;

“O humankind! Surely, We have created you from a single (pair of) male and female, and made you into tribes and families so that you may know one another (and so build mutuality and co-operative relationships, not so that you may take pride in your differences of race or social rank, or breed enmities). Surely the noblest, most honourable of you in God’s sight is the one best in piety, righteousness, and reverence for God. Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Aware” (49:13).

The Prophet abolished racism with his practises and words. For example he said, “All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action” (Ahmad b Hanbal 1993, vol.5 p. 441) and “If a black Abyssinian Muslim is to rule over Muslims, he should be obeyed.” (Muslim 1996: imara 37)

The Prophet appointed the right people to do the right job, simply based on his prophetic judgment of them, given their skills, abilities and limitations (Dogan 2014). It was not just through his words but also through his actions that enabled Prophet Muhammad to remove racism and discrimination so successfully and effectively. An example of this is the words of ‘Umar (who was from the bloodline of the Quraysh): ‘Bilal (a black slave) is our master, and was emancipated by our master Abu Bakr’ (Ibn Hajar 1970, vol.1 p. 65). Zayd ibn Haritha was a black slave emancipated by the Prophet and assigned as the commander of the Muslim army when such leading and experienced Companions as Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, Ja’far b. Abū Tālib, and Khalid b. Walid (all from the bloodline of the Quraysh) were among the soldiers.

From religious perspective it is unacceptable that a caliph must be from the bloodline of the Quraysh and people from other races, cultures and nationalities cannot be assigned for this job. Now it is imperative to explain the politic value of such statement; ‘caliphate is only for the Quraysh as they are the best of the Arabs as regards descent and home’.

Makkah was the centre of Arabian Peninsula and the Quraysh was highly praised clan among Arabs. Ka’ba located in Makkah gave this privilege to the Quraysh for Arabs used to make their annual pilgrimage to the house of God. Even in pre-Islamic time, some rulers -such as Abraha a governor of San’a in Yemen, tried to change the direction of pilgrimage but did not succeed it (Ibn Kathir 2000).

From political perspective there was a public benefit to choose a caliph from the bloodline of the Quraysh. Knowing this fact, Abu Bakr wanted to minimize the conflict and disputes by his statement regarding the caliphate from the bloodline of the Quraysh.

In order to protect the unity of nascent Muslim community, the first caliph was chosen from the Quraysh so other Arab tribes would not dispute it. The task of rulership after the Prophet was not easy task. As a matter of fact, many Arab tribes opposed the new ruler and did not want to pay *zakat* (almsgiving). However, Abu Bakr successfully defeated them and established his caliphate on strong foundations. During the time of the Prophet and four caliphs the Quraysh did not have any religious privilege. The first election in caliphate was political and Muslims choice Abu Bakr to prevent conflicts in Muslim society. The following incident shows the mentality of Muslims in that time. A group from Yemen came to Medina upon hearing the death of the Prophet. When they visited Abu Bakr they said, "O Quraysh, you do not have any privilege against other Arabs for God did not send His last messenger for the benefit of a specific group" (Ibn Hajar 1970, vol. 5 p. 91).

However, nationalistic tendencies under the privilege of Quraysh emerged after the four caliphs and being from the bloodline of the Quraysh became a prerequisite of caliphate. Although the Prophet did not praise himself on the basis of his clan, later generations did so to keep the caliphate in the hands of Quraysh. In Islam, a job is given to its proper recipient who is qualified and can do it in the best way. However, then it was determined according to racist approach. Indeed, the Prophet sees such attitude as a sign of Doomsday. He said, "When the power of authority is given to unfit persons, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday)." (Bukhari 1997: ilm 2)

Caliphate in Modern Time and the Efforts of Revitalizing It

After the abolishment of the caliphate in Turkey, some groups including terrorist organizations attempted to restore this institution in modern time. Mustafa Sabri Efendi (1869-1954) the last Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam (the head of religious affairs) holds that caliphate is religious and political leadership, and caliph is a person who represents the Prophet (Mustafa Sabri 1992). Scholars in his line of thought argue that the institution of caliphate has an honourable place among Muslims and without such institution Islamic world would be considered a community without head.

Mehmed Seyyid Bey (1873-1925) a member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey between 1923, 1925 agrees with Mustafa Sabri in the definition of caliphate but he argues that the institution of caliphate came to an end after Ali ibn Abu Tālib the fourth caliph of Islam (Mehmed Seyyid 2011). He bases his argument on a prophetic tradition; "The caliphate will last thirty years then it will turn into kingdom (Abu Dāwud 2008: Sunnah 9)." He believes that the caliphate has a wise purpose, but it follows the requirements of the time, therefore it is the issue of administration and politics. He maintains that when the Prophet died, he did not mention anything about caliphate to his Companions, nor was it mentioned in the Qur'an (Mehmed Seyyid 2011). Therefore, caliphate or rulership is social and political phenomena and its nature or practise is determined according to the conditions of time.

Similarly, Islam does not have specific legal system, rather it has general principles, high objectives and guidelines. They are interpreted and applied according to needs of Muslims. In the Qur'an and Sunnah, the statements that regulate the legal aspect of Islam is very limited. This fact indicates that God made human beings His vicegerent and gave them authority to interpret the religious texts (including Sunnah). Therefore, Muslim jurists are required to interpret the primary Islamic sources in line with universal values and human rights. However, this flexibility is abused by some ignorant Muslims, worse than that, terrorist groups have been exploiting it. For example, in mid-2006 Al-Qaeda declared that the Iraqi city of Ramadi was to be the capital of a new Islamic caliphate (Fletcher 2007). First of all, terrorist groups are not considered Muslims according to majority of Muslims today. Secondly, the Prophet never declared any area as Islamic state. Now it is imperative to mention briefly the establishment of Islamic state in its historical context.

Prophet Muhammad immigrated to Medina in 622 C.E. when the unbelievers of Makkah increased their persecution. There were 1500 Muslims, 4000 Jews and 4500 Arab unbelievers when the Prophet arrived Medina. The presence of Jews and other groups living in Medina eventually led to communal tensions within the city. Recognizing the tension and its underlying cause, Prophet Muhammad prepared a pact that ensured the rights of citizenship for all groups in Medina. The Prophet did not discriminate or marginalize people from different backgrounds, faiths and ethnic groups; rather he embraced them all under the common pact (Ibn Kathīr n.d.). It is noteworthy that political scientists today sometimes turn to the Medina constitution as a resource and model in their search for new political administrative models suited to the changing and developing world (Dogon 2015). Because, the Medina constitution is a social structure that managed differences based on an agreement under principles that can be described as 'natural law'; which adhered to justice and equity in determining rights and duties; and which promoted common interests under a pluralist, participatory and unitary political umbrella based on lawfulness and equality before the law (Kurucan 2012).

During ten years in Medina, the Prophet never tried to change religious preferences of people nor he impeded them to practice their Christian or Jewish rituals (Dogan 2015). It is recorded that he visited Jewish synagogues in order to foster understanding and to put an end to the interreligious enmity and hatred (Tabari 1998).

The other important issue which refutes the claims of terrorist groups is that the Prophet was very sensitive on human life and applied strict rules to protect it even if it is in the battle field. For example, the following incident took place in a battle field; "In one of the battles, there was a man among the army of polytheists who killed many Muslims. When he met with a Muslim soldier called Usama b. Zayd he fell down and Usama raised his sword to kill him but non-Muslim soldier declared his Islam in that position to be saved. However, Usama killed him thinking he was trying to deceive him. When the Prophet was informed about the incident, he interrogated Usama so harshly. Usama tried to defend himself saying 'he killed such and such Muslims and when I attacked him, he declared his Islam out of fear.' However, the Prophet said repeatedly, 'what would you do when he comes on the Day of Judgment (asks his right of retribution)'" (Muslim 1996: iman 185).

Now we will compare this report with the evil acts of ISIS who kill Muslims and non-Muslims brutally. ISIS, a recent terrorist group declared caliphate in an area straddling Iraq and Syria and announced their leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the caliph (Weaver 2014). Majority of the Muslims in the world deem them as terrorists for they kill people in most heinous way such as beheading, burning in a cage and throwing from cliff. Therefore, their caliphate claim is not taken seriously by the Muslims. The institution of caliphate does not exist since 1924 when the first Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished it. Contemporary scholar Ali Abd al-Raziq justified this act by claiming that there was no basis for the caliphate in either the Qur'an or in prophetic traditions (Liebl 2009). However, it is a fact that many Muslims are looking for a just ruler or a caliph who can unite all Muslims and end all the conflicts among them. Probably the conflicts and wars in the Muslim world caused them to think about the notion of caliphate.

The scholar Abu al-Ala Mawdudi (1903–79) expressed the need of caliphate to revive the way of Islamic life (Mawdudi 1967). However, his call did not attract much attention in the Muslim world for they were struggling with socialism, communism and capitalism. In 1925, Taqiuddin al-Nabhani (1909–79), established the Hizbut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), in Jordan to revitalize the institute of caliphate (McQuaid 2007) but he could not succeed it. Seyyid Qutb (1906–66) Egyptian scholar who spent at least ten years in prison believed that the values of the Qur'an are valid for all humanity all the time and that the world must inevitably submit to Islam under a universal caliphate (Qutb 1975).

In 1996, Mullah Mohammed Omar, leader of Taliban announced himself as the Commander of the believers (Amir al-Mu'minin) and tried to revitalize caliphate in his personality. His attempt was recognized by Usama bin Laden pledging his personal loyalty to him as the legitimate ruler of the state of Afghanistan (Scheuer 2005). In 1998, Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri co-signed a fatwa in the name of the 'World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders' which declared the killing of the Americans and their allies to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem) and the holy mosque (in Mecca) (Liebl 2005).

Zawahiri reportedly once declared that terror attacks would be nothing more than disturbing acts, regardless of their magnitude, unless they led to a caliphate in the heart of the Islamic world (McQuaid 2007). However, none of these terrorist groups succeeded to revitalize the institution of caliphate for they could not receive support from the majority of Muslims. The strong view on caliphate is that it cannot be revitalized because of the establishment of nation states and the development of ideas of independence. Additionally, caliphate has lost its effectiveness, therefore the contemporary prominent scholar Fethullah Gülen holds that the revival of the caliphate would be very difficult and making Muslims accept such a revived caliph would be impossible (Saritoprak 2005).

Conclusion

The Arabic lexicon, *khilāfa* (caliphate) which literally means taking the position of others in order to perform the legal and religious rights behalf on them has become the hot topic again. The caliphate is important concept for Muslims, especially for those who have been experiencing turmoil, disorders and conflicts in their lands. In modern time, some terrorist organizations have attempted to revitalize the caliphate in political sense.

Al-Qaida and ISIS declared certain places in Iraq and Syria as their Islamic state and recognized certain people as their caliphs. While inviting Muslims to the caliphate they emphasize to the notion of “ummah” “Islamic State” and “the Shariah.” But such attempt did not receive much attention from the Muslim world, because, terrorist groups cannot represent Muslims. Nevertheless, the idea of reviving caliphate looks attractive today to Muslims who have been persecuted by internal tyrannical regimes. The appeal of socially conservative religion in an uncertain world and the yearning for spiritual revitalization make the concept attractive for persecuted Muslims.

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