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The Hashemite Project for the Caliphate in the First Quarter of the 20th Century

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Abstract

The Hashemites, descendants of the Prophet of Islam, have assumed from medieval to contemporary period the governorship of the holy sites in Mecca and Medina. Their alliance with Great Britain and France during the 1st World War led to the creation of the two Hashemite kingdoms of Transjordan and Iraq. This research proposes to analyze the religious role of the Hashemite family in studying the Hashemite project of trying to assume the caliphate. The period studied was particularly rich in events, notably in 1925 with the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate by the Turks.

The researcher adopted a historical methodology through this research. This study relied specifically on French and English diplomatic documents available in the national archives of these two countries. Moreover, this study shows how one of the most illustrious families of Islam used its religious influence in the service of both its dynastic projects and the unity of the Arab world. In this field, an in-depth study was carried out on the strategies adopted by the Hashemites to achieve their objectives. As the Hashemite project has never been realized due to local and international obstacles, this research discusses the reasons of the failure of this project.

Keywords: Arab world, Britain, Caliphate, France, Ottoman empire, The Hashemites.

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Introduction:

The Hashemites take their name from Hashim, the great-grandfather of the prophet Muhammad. They have long been the guardians of the holy places of Islam of Mecca and Medina. This illustrious genealogy enabled this family to assume, during part of the medieval period and continuing under the Ottoman Empire, the complete domination of the office of governor of the Hejaz¹.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a rising power in the Arabian Peninsula appeared capable of altering the status quo in Hejaz: the Wahhabites. They were followers of a religious reformer of central Arabia, supported by the tribe of Ibn Saud, who occupied Mecca in 1803. Ottoman hegemony was restored in 1819, due largely in part to a military campaign organized by Muhammad Ali, Ottoman viceroy of Egypt. Ottoman politics became more focused in the Hejaz region after this brief moment of political instability².

In his book «The Seven Pillars of Wisdom», T. E. Lawrence writes that Sharif Hussein had taken advantage of his long stay in Istanbul by giving his sons a modern education because he believed it would help them in their future responsibilities as potential emirs and future representatives of the city of Mecca.³

After the continuing loss of territory in Europe, the Ottoman government adopted a new strategy to deal with Western powers, France and Great Britain: Sultan Abdul Hamid adopted the strategy of pan-Islamism, which meant defending the Islamic nation against Western Christian ambitions.

Sharif Hussein's first experience with the British government was in the summer of 1908. It was during this time that he sought the support of the British Ambassador to Constantinople, Sir Augustus Lowther, to help with his bid to the Emirate of Mecca; however, it is unclear whether Hussein's attempt to get closer to the British government helped him later gain that position.⁴

Sharif Hussein was appointed as sharif of Mecca in 1908. It is likely that Sultan Abdul Hamid agreed to appoint Hussein because he found that the prestige and personality of Hussein could protect the power of the Ottoman Empire against internal or external opposition. The internal opposition was Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). During an official visit by a delegation from the CUP to the Hejaz in 1908, Sharif Hussein took the opportunity of the visit to confirm the historical rights of the Hashemite family in Hejaz.⁵

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The caliphate ambitions of the Hashemites

According to Muslim tradition, the Caliph is the representative of the Prophet and is also his emissary to believers of the Islamic faith. Historically, the Caliphs are the successors of the prophet in the government of the entire Muslim state⁶. The first caliph was Abu Bakr, followed by Omar, then Othman, and then Ali cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. These four caliphs, who had ruled for thirty years, are described in the Muslim tradition as «well-directed caliphs». The caliphate then passed to the Umayyads in Damascus from 661 to 749, and then to the Abbasids in Baghdad and Cairo from 749 to 1517⁷.

The idea of an Arab caliphate spread throughout the Arab world from 1902 with the publication of the book by Abdul Rahman al-Kawakiby, Umm al-Qura "The Mother of Cities". According to al-Kawakiby, the caliphate should be restored by the Arabs, but the Caliph was to exercise political power only over the region of Hejaz⁸.

Moreover, the idea of a Hashemite caliphate was also present in Syria at the beginning of the 20th century. In December, 1912, the Consul General of the United States in Beirut informed his government that the religious link between the Muslim elements of the Ottoman Empire, such as those between the Arabs and the Kurds, would remain strong as long as the Ottoman Caliphate was strong. But the Consul General believed the bond had been weakened due to the deposition of Abdul Hamid in 1909 for the benefit of his brother, Muhammad Rashad, and then with the arrival in power of the Young Turks government in 1909. The American diplomat concluded that the only caliph that could be widely recognized by Muslims would be sharif Hussein⁹.

In the spring of 1912 during his visit to Cairo and during a meeting with British Consul General Lord Kitchener, Emir Abdullah attempted to inquire about the British position on a possible British commitment to support the Hashemites in Hejaz¹⁰.

When hostilities began between the Hashemites and the Ottomans after the Ottoman Empire went entered in war against the Allies in October, 1914, the Hashemites had to change their political plans. In his letter of 31 October 1914 to the emir Abdullah, Lord Kitchener asked the Arab nation for help against the Ottomans and added the following key phrase¹¹: "It may be that an Arab of true race assumes the caliphate in Mecca or Medina." Such a statement by a man like Kitchener probably had an effect on the Hashemite view

of the caliphate. Sharif Hussein might therefore have changed his political strategy at that time and began to think seriously about the possibility of assuming the caliphate.

On August 20, 1915, an Arab officer, Omar al-Farouqy, deserted the Ottoman army at Gallipoli to join The British Forces. After informing British forces that he was a member of a secret Arab society, he was sent to Cairo where he was interrogated by British intelligence services. Omar al-Farouqy confessed to the British authorities that secret Syrian and Iraqi political committees had already pledged allegiance to Sharif Hussein as a caliph and renounced allegiance to the Ottoman Sultan Muhammad Rashad. In a conversation with General Clayton, head of the British intelligence services in Egypt, al-Farouqy added¹²: “The members of the Arab secret committees solemnly swore on the Koran to assert their purpose and establish an Arab caliphate in Arabia, Syria and Mesopotamia at all costs and under all circumstances, attaching to this end all their efforts and property and, if any, their lives”.

In December, 1917, during a series of conversations between Emir Abdullah and Colonel Wilson, British Consul in Jeddah, and Mr. Kinahan Cornwallis of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, the Emir informed Wilson that as long as the Ottoman Sultan was in power, the Arabs would never enjoy true independence¹³.

Conversely, it is important to note that some Muslim groups were not on the side of Sharif Hussein in his plan for a caliphate. On November 2, 1915, on behalf of The Indian Muslims, Agha Khan, the Imam of the Ismaili Muslims in India, protested to Sir E. Grey, British Foreign Minister, against the idea of an Arab caliphate. Agha Khan also called for the British government's stance on the issue of the caliphate to be very clear in all British conversations with the Arabs¹⁴.

Some of the Muslim clergy in Turkey had a different proposal for a possible future caliph. Boris Serafimov, an interpreter at the British Embassy in Constantinople who was expelled from Turkey on 19 June 1915, informed London that Turkish Muslim clerics were considering to withdraw the title of caliph from the Ottoman dynasty at the fall of the Ottoman Empire. These Muslim clerics had proposed the appointment of Naqeeb al-Ashraf¹⁵ as a provisional caliph, with part of Istanbul or Damascus as his residence. They also suggested that Naqeeb al-Ashraf should have independent sovereign rights over a restricted area similar to the Vatican with the intention of organizing a caliphate on the basis of an open election such as the papacy¹⁶. The Foreign Office noted that this plan was

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based on hypothetical events and that no further action had been taken by Muslim clerics in Turkey regarding this proposal¹⁷.

Rashid Rida, Islamic scholar and publisher of Al-Manar newspaper, has initially adopted the idea of supporting the Ottoman Caliphate. However, after the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) seized power in Istanbul and deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid, Al-Manar's position regarding the ottoman caliphate began to take a new turn¹⁸.

Through his articles on the question of the caliphate in Al-Manar newspaper, Rach explained the importance of both Islam and Arabic language. He stressed how dangerous was the project of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) towards Muslims, especially Arabs. In an indirect remark addressed to Hussein, Rashid Rida concluded that the Islamic caliphate should come out of Hejaz¹⁹.

Rashid Rida explained his new position regarding the ottoman caliphate by the following terms²⁰: "...political wisdom requires preserving the Ottoman Empire, but the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) has demolished Arab hopes that the Ottoman Empire would remain the protector of Arabs and Muslims".

When asked about the great Arab revolt led by sharif Hussein against Istanbul, Rida said that this revolt was a direct result of Ottoman policy in the region, and therefore it could not have been avoided²¹.

British policy on the issue of the caliphate

Due to its unrivaled political presence in Egypt and India, as well as its maritime superiority, Britain held a very influential position in the Middle East. As such, British strategy at that time was instrumental in shaping that area of the world.

British policy regarding the Ottoman Empire was based on the idea that the Ottoman caliph exercised spiritual power, at least over Sunni Muslims around the world. In India, London had sought to capitalize on the prestige of the Ottoman caliph in order to guarantee the loyalty of the Muslims of their colonies and especially. In 1799, the British government had asked the Ottoman sultan, Selim III, to give his orders to Tipu Sultan²² to establish friendly relations with the British government²³.

The Sultan Abdul Majeed made no secret of his approval of the close relationships that the Ottoman Empire had with Great Britain. In 1857, he declared that the evidence

of Anglo-Ottoman friendship lay in the fact that the British had supported the Empire during the Crimean War. Taking advantage of this declaration in order to ensure the safety of its citizens and its various missions in the Muslim colonies, the British government asked the Ottoman sultan to issue a decree confirming friendship between the British and Muslim worlds. The British demand was approved and a decree stating this was issued on 19 March 1858²⁴.

After Sultan Abdul Hameed came to power in 1876, the British were no longer able to follow the same policy. As soon as London realized that it could no longer continue to exploit the caliphate, it changed its policy and began its efforts to weaken the power of the Ottoman caliphate.

In a meeting with sharif Hussein in 1915, Lawrence of Arabia discussed the possibility of assuming the caliphate by his interlocutor. Hussein is said to have reminded Lawrence of the fact that he did not enjoy full political sovereignty in Hejaz. Hussein explained that he would have to be recognized by all the rulers and nobles of the Muslim world to be able to assume the caliphate²⁵. In the meantime, and in the midst of the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in November 1916, Hussein had claimed the title of «King of the Arabs» and not that of Caliph of the Muslims.

On October 31, 1914, Lord Kitchener, British Minister of War, had considered the idea of an Arab counter-caliphate that could launch a revolt against the Ottoman Empire²⁶. Although Kitchener's statement was vague and circumspect, Sharif Hussein had no reason not to believe that he was the subject of that statement. From the beginning of his correspondence with McMahon, Hussein evoked the problem of the Arab caliphate. In the first letter of this correspondence, Sharif Hussein asked Great Britain to approve the proclamation of an Arab caliph. It seems that Hussein was not only encouraged by Kitchener's statement but was also stimulated by his own ambitions for the position.

In his letter of reply to Hussein, Sir McMahon stated that His Majesty's government would welcome the resumption of the caliphate by a true Arab born of the blessed race of the Prophet, an implicit reference to the sharif Hussein²⁷.

It is observed that by April, 1915, British policy on the issue of the caliphate had completely changed. In a telegram from the Foreign Office to Sir Henri McMahon, London sent the following instructions to its representative in Egypt²⁸: "His Majesty's Government considers the question of the caliphate to be an issue that must be resolved

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by the Muslims themselves, without the intervention of non-Muslim powers. If Muslims opted for an Arab caliphate, this decision would naturally be respected by Britain, but this decision must be taken by Muslims.”

The report of the Arab Office of Cairo to the British Foreign Office, dated 15 July 1915, refers to a meeting between the British diplomat, Sir Mark Sykes, and Rasheed Rida, a pan-Arab and a pan-Islamic leader. The latter had stressed the need to establish an Arab Empire based in Hejaz, Syria, and Iraq, with sharif Hussein as caliph²⁹.

On 17 November 1915, the Foreign Office telegraphed the following instructions to McMahon³⁰: “you will of course keep in mind the need to avoid any possibility of being involved in any issue relating to the caliphate.”

In a verbal message to Sir McMahon from emir Abdullah on 18 February 1916, the latter indicated that he intended to establish a powerful Islamic committee of the Arab provinces that could offer the caliphate to his father, the sharif Hussein. Abdullah asked the British government for 3,000 British pounds for his project. In a move that could only greatly increase the hope of the Hashemites at the caliphate, Sir McMahon sent the money³¹.

Another example of the British government's opposition to any direct negotiations with Hussein on the issue of the caliphate, is the Foreign Office's response to the proposal made by Izzet Pasha, one of the Ottoman politicians exiled to in Europe. During a visit to the Foreign Office in London in January 1915, Izzet Pasha had advised the British government to encourage the disruptive elements of the Ottoman Empire by creating an Arab caliphate under the authority of sharif Hussein. As a result, this proposal was rejected by the Foreign Office³².

Finally, the Foreign Office ordered the British High Commissioner in Egypt not to encourage the Hashemites concerning their plan to assume the caliphate and asserted that British politics were strongly opposed to any interference in that religious question³³.

In August 1919, when the name of Hussein was mentioned as a caliph during prayers in mosques in Syria, the practice was promptly banned by the French in Beirut. Commenting on this news, the British intelligence service in Cairo wrote³⁴: “Our policy has always been to discourage the aspirations of Hussein to the caliphate, and he has always claimed that he is well aware that only the Muslim world can decide who the caliph will be and that he has no desire to usurp this high function. However, there is no doubt that he and his

family secretly wish to transfer the caliphate from Constantinople to Mecca.”

Around this time, the British noticed that the newspaper al-Qibla, the official newspaper of the Hashemite government in Hejaz, attributed the title of «caliph» to Hussein in its articles. On 8 August 1919, the British agent in Jeddah informed Hussein that it was an error of judgment that he was given that title. He explained to Sharif Hussein that linking his name to the caliphate would negatively affect the Hashemite cause since the issue of the caliphate could only be resolved by the consensus of all Muslims³⁵.

As a result, on August 21, 1919, Sharif Hussein reacted with the following statement published in the newspaper al-Qibla³⁶: “Wanting to express their good will, many personalities addressed me with our lord and our illustrious King, under the title of Prince of the Believers. As this title is equivalent to that of Caliph, we ask all our brothers not to use any title other than that of King of the Arabs.” From then on, the question of the caliphate was no longer debated by the Hashemites until 1924, when the Caliphate was abolished by the Turks.

French policy on the issue of the caliphate

Between 1895 and 1914, French capital accounted for 65.93% of foreign capital invested in Ottoman public funds: 1.15 billion francs out of a total of 1.95 billion francs. Friendly relations between France and the Ottoman Empire led to a trade agreement in 1913 by which France obtained the administration of the Dar'a-Haifa railway in Palestine and priority over the future black sea network. In exchange, France granted a new loan of 500 million francs to the Ottoman Empire³⁷.

On 19 June 1913, Albert Defrance, Minister of France in Cairo, wrote to Mr. S. Pichon, French Minister of Foreign Affairs³⁸: “What I think is desirable for our interests is the maintaining of the Ottoman Empire in Asia. This can be only possible by serious and profound reforms, supported by us and, if possible, carried out if not by us, at least with our assistance. We must ensure that the Syrian people feel that the benefits they can get in terms of political changes, administrative reforms and economic improvements would come from France, from our influence and from our action. Our goal is therefore to maintain the integrity of the Empire.”

In 1914, after the entry into war by the Ottoman Empire alongside Germany against the Allies, another political and religious dimension was brought to Franco-Ottoman

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relations. The proclamation of the sacred war by the Ottoman sultan against the Allies directly concerned France because of the large Muslim population in its colonies. In order to reach a better understanding of the Muslim world and the issue of the caliphate, an inter-ministerial commission on Muslim affairs was formed by the French government in 1914. This commission consisted of the governors of the French colonies that were Muslim, French diplomats in those colonies, and consular agents from the region.

In the first meeting held in Bordeaux at the colonial institute on 14 November 1914, the commission concluded that the Muslim population of the French colonies should understand that France was engaged in a struggle against the Ottoman government and not against the Muslims; moreover, that the war between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire was by no means a religious issue. This commission suggested that it was necessary to make the Muslim world understand that the Caliph was no longer independent, but instead a prisoner of the Germans; therefore, it was the duty of every Muslim to restore the office of the Caliphate by joining the side of the Allies³⁹.

At the second meeting dated 1 December 1914, the commission specified that Moroccans would admit no other spiritual sovereignty than that of the Sultan of Morocco since he was a direct descendant of the Prophet. On the other hand, the commission stressed that sharif Hussein of Mecca had all the attributes of the Caliph according to Islamic doctrine. moreover, the commission pointed out that if France took the side of the Sultan of Morocco in this religious debate, it could run counter to the leanings of its ally, Great Britain. Finally, this session ended with the conclusion that a French intervention in favor of one of the two candidates would be immediately suspected by all Muslims⁴⁰.

On 6 July 1915, the commission concluded that the assumption of the caliphate by the sharif Hussein was not in the best interests of France. This commission stressed that if the re-establishment of the caliphate of the Sultan of Morocco raised too many difficulties, the status quo. the maintaining of the Ottoman caliphate in Constantinople or in Syria, would be much preferable to the assumption of the caliphate by Hussein⁴¹.

A note on the issue of the caliphate, which was discussed at the tenth meeting of the French inter-ministerial commission on 5 August 1915, reads⁴²: "France, a Muslim power, has no interest in promoting the reconstruction of the spiritual power of the sharif Hussein. This Hashemite power, if independent, would be the home where our Muslim populations would re-soak their fanaticism; if it were under English influence, we would

be exposed to serious conflicts in the future.”

However, after the Arab revolt of Hussein in 1916, it was natural that the threat of a Hashemite caliphate subjected to London steered French politics in the Levant in a new direction. This new French policy led to the sending of a political and military mission to Hejaz to work with the sharif Hussein in September, 1916, in which the Moroccan Si Kaddur B. Ghabri was appointed to lead the political portion of the mission. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave the following instructions to the head of this mission⁴³: “You are instructed, on behalf of the President of the Republic, and not on behalf of the Muslim rulers we protect, to establish contact with the sharif of Mecca not as a religious figure, but as the political leader of the Arab tribes who rebelled against the Turks.”

The sharif Hussein and the abolition of the ottoman caliphate

In Hejaz, as the negotiations between sharif Hussein and the British government regarding post-war arrangements had not resulted in an agreement, Hussein was increasingly hostile towards Great Britain. As a result, the Foreign Office claimed that the Hejaz would be poorly governed and that the pilgrims would be mistreated by the Hashemites, whether or not a treaty was ratified by Hussein⁴⁴.

Another warning by the Foreign Office stated that similar grievances may soon be seen in India against the British government by the Indian Caliphate Committee, and by the Indian Islamic and Nationalist press. This precedent presented political risk for Britain⁴⁵.

According to the British agent in Jeddah, the attitude of Hussein was becoming anti-European and uninterested in what was not related to his project of Arab independence and unity, especially to his caliphate ambitions. He added that sharif Hussein knew that the strong protests of the British agency in Jeddah against his new political attitude, if not accompanied by actions, would be all bark and no bite, a fact sharif Hussein would exploit. The British agent wondered how the British government could mobilize public opinion against a potentate for whom it was so directly responsible: “By confessing to the world that we are disappointed with him, explained the British agent, the British government would win for him the sympathies of the Arabs who were opposed to British policies in the Middle East.” The British agent in Jeddah concluded by suggesting to the

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Foreign Office that the best solution was to remove Hussein from his position as king of Hejaz and to implement real reforms in this region⁴⁶.

The main stumbling block between the British and the sharif Hussein was the question of Palestine. Hussein demanded the full independence of this country and refused to recognize Jewish claims to establish their national home there. Sharif Hussein sent a telegram to Musa Kazim al-Husayni, chairman of the Arab High Committee of the Palestinian Congress, in which he said⁴⁷: "I am fully engaged in finding a solution for the question of Palestine. It's an engagement which we live for and die before it. Be confident that we will make every effort to achieve this honorable goal by which we only want to serve our people and future generations."

In the Hejaz, sharif Hussein was extremely displeased to learn that his son, Emir Faisal, had accepted the Iraqi throne in exchange for the recognition of the British mandate on that country. Hussein became even more furious when Faisal decided in 1922, to start border agreement negotiations with Ibn Saud, Hussein's traditional political rival. Sharif Hussein was not also satisfied with the concessions made by his other son, Emir Abdullah, to Great Britain. Hussein strongly denounced his acceptance of the British conditions for governing Transjordan.

It was in this troubled political climate that sharif Hussein arrived in Transjordan in January, 1924. Kamal Salibi, author of «The Modern History of Jordan», wrote that the sharif Hussein had accused Abdullah of having adhered to the terms of the British mandate concerning the Palestinian territory⁴⁸.

Sharif Hussein finally set up his camp in the Jordan Valley where he took over the control of Transjordan's affairs, challenging the authority of emir Abdullah and his British advisers. The British even feared that the emir Abdullah would withdraw in favor of his father and deliver the control of the country to his father.

During the period of sharif Hussein's stay in Transjordan, a major political change occurred regarding the issue of the caliphate. Led by Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish National Assembly passed a law that abolished the caliphate on March 3, 1924. Sharif Hussein, motivated by the emir Abdullah, estimated that he should take advantage of this political opportunity by assuming the caliphate, which he had long dreamed of leading. The day after the abolition of the caliphate by the Turkish authorities, sharif Hussein proclaimed himself as caliph. On March 5, 1924, in the Jordan Valley, Hussein began to receive

delegations from Transjordan, Palestine, and Iraq to pledge allegiance to him as caliph.

Emir Abdallah sent Sir Herbert Samuel, British High Commissioner to Palestine, the following telegram⁴⁹: “As a result of the abolition of the caliphate by the Turkish government, many Muslim religious leaders were forced to reach a decision on the caliphate. Many telegrams of allegiance to the sharif Hussein were received from all Arab countries universally recognizing him as a caliph. The sharif therefore accepted the position of Caliph.”

During the visit of a Palestinian delegation to Hejaz, presided by Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Muzaffar, the plan to convene a congress of Hejaz, Syria and Palestine was drawn up by sharif Hussein and the Palestinian nationalist leaders. From the Palestinian point of view, this project was intended to prevent relations between the Hashemites and the British from developing without guarantees as to the future of an Arab Palestine. Due to the historical links between Hussein and most political and religious figures from Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Hejaz, these leaders supported the accession of sharif Hussein to the caliphate.

Since sharif Hussein was in Transjordan, the mufti of Hejaz declared that the Muslim clerics and delegates of Hejaz could appear before the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers of the Hashemite Kingdom of Hejaz, who had been appointed by Hussein as his deputy during his absence in all religious and administrative matters. The Hejazians expressed themselves in these terms⁵⁰: “We take the oath of obedience to Hussein to govern us.”

In Hejaz, the newspapers devoted articles exclusively to the proclamation of sharif Hussein as caliph. In a feature article, the newspaper al-Qibla stressed that the only people qualified to hold the caliphate was the Arab people, recalling that sharif Hussein had only risen up against the Ottoman caliph because Ottoman policy was increasingly departing from religious rules and posed a great danger to Islamic doctrine⁵¹.

Al-Qibla tried to politicize the issue of the caliphate in order to obtain the support of the Arabs of Syria and Palestine in favor of Hussein. Al-Qibla wrote⁵²: “The sharif Hussein is the only king ruling a country not only sacred but also absolutely independent. The glory of Islam lies in the glory of the Arabs and the sharif Hussein is the only leader who defends the holy places of Islam and strives to save the rest of the Arab countries from foreign powers.”

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A telegram from the news agency Reuters announced the publication of an official statement from Transjordan announcing that sharif Hussein had accepted the caliphate only for Iraq, Hejaz and Transjordan. He declared that he expected to receive the declarations of obedience from other Arab countries very shortly. The French consul in Jeddah informed the French Foreign Minister that Hussein had acted wisely when he was proclaimed as caliph. Indeed, he had merely proclaimed his caliphate authority over Iraq, Transjordan and Hejaz and had not dared to proclaim himself caliph of the entire Arab and Muslim world⁵³.

In order to gain popular support in Syria and Lebanon for the decision taken by sharif Hussein, Emir Abdullah contacted Arab nationalists loyal to the Hashemites in order to give the necessary publicity to this declaration in the two countries. Abdullah even went as far as to have the proclamation of the sharif Hussein as caliph announced in the official Trans-Jordanian newspaper, « al- Sharq al-Arabi ».

Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Muzaffar is a prime example of the Palestinian nationalists approached by Abdullah. The telegrams sent by Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Muzaffar from Amman to Damascus in support of the proclamation of sharif Hussein to the Syrian newspaper “Alif-Ba” and the newspaper “al-Moufid” urged Muslims of Syria to proclaim Hussein as a caliph. According to al-Muzaffar, the restoration of Arab glory and unity depended on this proclamation⁵⁴.

In Syria, the British consul in Damascus reported that these telegrams had a great echo among the Muslim inhabitants of Damascus who overwhelmingly approved of Hussein's proclamation as caliph. The Muslim support increased when the Turks had cancelled the Ottoman caliphate and ordered the Caliph and all the members of the royal family to leave Constantinople. The British consul in Damascus added that the name of sharif Hussein was mentioned as caliph in Friday prayers at the Umayyad Mosque and in three other mosques in Damascus⁵⁵.

The Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Khateeb, Imam of the Great Mosque of Damascus, tried to go to Transjordan to swear an oath to sharif Hussein, but the French authorities refused to give him a passport to go to Amman. On March 8, 1924, the newspaper Alif-Ba wrote that the Sheikh al-Khateeb gave a speech after Friday prayers at the Great Mosque of Damascus in front of more than 30,000 people and that he and them had paid tribute to Hussein as a caliph⁵⁶.

On March 11, 1923, chief of Muslim clerics in Damascus and the nobles of the city signed a declaration stipulating their allegiance to the sharif Hussein as caliph. They declared that they had found no person more worthy of legal caliph than Hussein⁵⁷. However, French authorities in Syria were hostile towards the proclamation of the sharif Hussein as a caliph. The mufti of Damascus, upon the request of the French governor of the city, gave instructions to the imams of all the mosques in Damascus prohibiting them from mentioning Hussein's name in Friday prayers and threatening them for any violation of this order. The French governor of Damascus summoned the Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Khateeb, who had proclaimed the Hashemite caliphate at the Great Mosque of Damascus, and urged him to avoid any disobedience to the orders of the French authorities. The French governor also summoned the chief of Muslim clerics and ordered him either to withdraw the declaration he had signed or to resign from his post. When the latter refused, the governor abolished the post of the chief of Muslim clerics after consulting the French High Commissioner for Syria⁵⁸.

On the other hand, the Algerian emir residing in Damascus, Saïd Abdul Qadir, insisting on the seriousness of the appointment of sharif Hussein as caliph, proposed to the French High Commissioner in Syria to lead a campaign in Syria to demonstrate to the Muslim population the need to stand against the illegal proclamation of Hussein. Emir Abdul Qadir also proposed to convene in Damascus an assembly of representatives of the religious communities of Islam to proceed, if necessary, with the regular appointment of a caliph.

General Maxime Weygand, the French High Commissioner to Syria, accepted the Emir Abdul Qadir's proposal, because he believed that supporting a candidate other than Hussein for the post of Caliph would at least protect the interests of France in the Levant from Hussein's interference if he should officially become caliph. General Weygand asked Raymond Poincaré, President of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs, for permission to adopt this strategy in Syria with regard to the issue of the caliphate⁵⁹.

The plan of General Maxime was not approved by Raymond Poincaré, because Paris considered that the opposition to sharif Hussein had to come from the Muslims themselves and not from France. Poincaré explained to General Weygand that France had no interest in attempting to unify the Muslim World under a caliph, a unification that could only have negative consequences on France. The French foreign minister added that any support the Paris would give to a candidate for the caliphate would likely result in

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discrediting him in the eyes of his co-religionists. Nevertheless, Mr. Raymond Poincaré ordered General Maxime to prevent, as much as possible, Friday prayers be said in the name of sharif Hussein⁶⁰.

Palestine, the mufti of Jerusalem and the Supreme Islamic Council decided not to rush to recognize sharif Hussein as caliph, and decided to go to Cairo where a conference of Muslim clerics was to be held to make a decision on the issue of the caliphate. Moreover, Musa Kazim al-Husayny, head of the Arab High Committee of the Palestinian Congress, who was inclined to recognize Hussein as a caliph, had received strong protests from the members of that committee and had therefore decided to travel to Cairo to participate in the conference⁶¹. The Muslim clerics and the educated class of Palestine had not recognized Hussein's claims to the caliphate. It appeared that sharif Hussein, who had proclaimed in his caliphate declaration that he was the protector of the holy sites of Hejaz as well as of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, had claimed an authority that was not yet determined – certainly not for the conference attendees.

The French ambassador in London shared with Paris some intelligence that he had gathered concerning the British position, vis-à-vis Sharif Hussein: that the British government had become frustrated by Sharif Hussein's political attitude. On the issue of the caliphate, the British government had taken an attitude of neutrality. If they took sides in this matter, the British government risked creating new difficulties in some of its colonies or in regions under its control, which London wanted above all to avoid⁶².

Finally, there was no Arab consensus on the proclamation of sharif Hussein as a caliph: the Algerian emir, Sa'ïd Abdul Qadir, was hostile towards Hussein. He therefore founded an association of the caliphate in Damascus, which rejected the candidacy of Hussein and supported the Egyptian initiative to convene a congress in Cairo in order to choose a new caliph. Additionally, there were political rivals on the Arabian Peninsula itself; the Imam Yahya of Yemen and Ibn Saud of Nejd, both formidable political adversaries who did not recognize sharif Hussein as caliph. Hussein finally clashed with Egyptian ambitions to control the caliphate.

After repeated remarks by the British government that sharif Hussein's stay in Transjordan was no longer desirable, he returned to Hejaz with the intention of continuing his ambitions of being caliph. In Mecca, Hussein found that his kingdom was collapsing in front of the forces of Ibn Saud. In September, 1924, sharif Hussein was forced to

relinquish his throne of Hejaz and abdicate in favor of his eldest son, the Emir Ali, after the Wahhabis, led by Ibn Saud, invaded Hejaz. Hussein resided temporarily in Aqaba and was then exiled to Cyprus in June, 1925, by the British authorities. The Hashemite project to restore the caliphate failed and was never discussed again.

Conclusion

The position of Sharif Hussein at the head of the political and religious authority in Hejaz and more particularly in Mecca strengthened his position and earned him the respect and appreciation of all Muslims, particularly as he belonged to the descendants of the prophet Muhammad. We can believe that the religious and political weight of Hussein was not only taken into account by the Sultan of Constantinople, but also by the decision-makers in London and Paris who planned to weaken the Ottoman Empire and share its Arab provinces in the Levant.

The quest for the caliphate by the Hashemites can be considered as the main religious strategy used by them to impose their control over the Arab-Muslim world and thus achieve the independence and unity of the Arab countries under their aegis. The fall of the Ottoman Empire, then the abolition of the caliphate by the Turks, were the origin of a new political competition in the Middle East, this time among the Arabs themselves. The question of the caliphate had created a political conflict between the two main regional powers of the time, Hejaz and Egypt.

Sharif Hussein's ambitions to assume the caliphate were therefore influenced by three factors: first, there was the general idea, current at least in Muslim circles, that the Sharif of Mecca was the legitimate candidate for the caliphate. Second, his relations with Arab nationalists and the British after his accession to power as Sharif of Mecca in 1908 increased his caliphal ambitions to the extent that he believed that this project was actually feasible. Third, Arab nationalists and the British induced Hussein to believe that he had their full support for his ambition to install Hashemite territorial sovereignty over much of the Arab world.

London took particular interest in the Hashemites with the aim of instigating an Arab uprising against the Turks. Great Britain's policy towards the Muslim world has always attempted to dominate this vast geographical space located on the route to India, by controlling its leaders. After the Ottomans had entered the war on the side of the Germans

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in 1914, the British felt that they should end the Ottoman caliphate by handing this function over to the Arabs. Sharif Hussein's position and genealogy made him the most influential personality in the Arab-Muslim world and therefore the strongest candidate for this caliphal office. Hussein's increasing hostility towards London because of the post-war arrangements in 1919 and the question of Palestine were among the main reasons why Great Britain did not support him in his caliphal project.

According to its policy towards the Muslim populations of its empire, Paris considered that neither an Ottoman caliph who could call Muslims to revolt against France, nor an Arab caliph under British influence could serve its interests in the Arab world.

Regarding the position of the Arab-Muslim world, the candidacy of Sharif Hussein for the post of caliph clashed with the ambitions of other Arab leaders and personalities such as the Egyptian ruler and the Algerian emir, Sa'id Abdul Qadir, which weakened Hussein's chances of reaching this prestigious position. Furthermore, the consequences of the Hashemite alliance with the British and French governments during World War I, including the unwillingness of the Allies to fulfill their commitments to Sharif Hussein were among the main factors responsible for the failure of the Hashemite caliphal project.

المشروع الهاشمي للخلافة في القرن العشرين

فيصل صلاح الرفاعي، باحث، إربد، الأردن.

ملخص

تولى الهاشميون، المنحدرون من سلالة نبي الاسلام محمد، منذ صدر الدولة الإسلامية وحتى العصر الحديث ولاية الأماكن المقدسة في مكة المكرمة والمدينة المنورة. أدى تحالف الهاشميين لاحقاً مع بريطانيا العظمى وفرنسا خلال الحرب العالمية الأولى إلى إنشاء المملكتين الهاشميتين في شرق الأردن والعراق. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل الدور الديني للأسرة الهاشمية في المشرق العربي من خلال دراسة المشروع الهاشمي للسعي لتولي الخلافة في مطلع القرن العشرين. تعدّ الفترة التاريخية التي تمت دراستها غنية بالأحداث المهمة، لا سيما إلغاء الخلافة العثمانية على يد مصطفى كمال أتاتورك في عام 1925.

تبنى الباحث المنهجية التاريخية خلال إعداد هذه الدراسة. واعتمد فيها بشكل خاص على الوثائق الدبلوماسية الفرنسية والإنجليزية المتوفرة في الأرشيف الوطني في هاتين الدولتين. توضح هذه الدراسة كيف استخدمت إحدى أبرز الأسر الإسلامية نفوذها الديني من أجل استمرارية الحكم الهاشمي ووحدة العالم العربي في الوقت نفسه. وفي هذا السياق تمّ إجراء دراسة معمقة حول الإستراتيجيات التي اعتمدها الهاشميون لتحقيق هذه الأهداف. وبما أن المشروع الهاشمي للخلافة لم يبصر النور بسبب العوائق المحلية والدولية، فإن هذا البحث يناقش أسباب فشل هذا المشروع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهاشميون، الخلافة، الشريف حسين، بريطانيا، فرنسا، الدولة العثمانية، العرب.

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notes

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14. FO 684111/24/2/, Memorandum from the Under-Secretary of State for British Foreign Affairs to the British Consul in Damascus, 29 march 1924, p. 2.
15. naqīb al-Ašraf was a governmental post in various Muslim empires denoting the head or supervisor of the descendants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

16. FO 1412/587/, Telegram n° 411 from Foreign Office to the British General Consul in Egypt, 5 July 1915.
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18. AL-MANAR, n° 1315, vol.2, 29 August 1916, p.124.
19. A. Mahmoud, News of Great Arab revolt in Egyptian press 1916-1918-, Markaz Alwathaeq wa al-Makhtotat wa Derasat Bilad al-Sham, Amman, 2018, p.115.
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21. Ibid, p.196.
22. Tipu Sultan was Sultan of Mysore from 1782 and one of the main opponents of the establishment of British power in India
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35. FO 68411/24/2/, Letter from the British agent in Jeddah to the sharif Hussein, 8 August 1919, p. 4.
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