FRANKFURTER ZEITSCHRIFT
FÜR ISLAMISCH-THEOLOGISCHE STUDIEN

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Geschichte und Geschichtlichkeit

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The Ideological Exploitation of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II in Contemporary Arab-Islamist Narrative

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Abstract

This study will consider the various aspects of the portrayal of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II that were emphasized in the Arab-Islamist revisionist writings about Islamic history. The focus will be especially on the writings of Anwar al-Ǧundī (1917–2002), an Egyptian Islamist writer as it was he who first adopted the process of an "Islamic revision of Islamic history". His main academic output consisted in responding to the "Orientalist attack on Islam", and he wrote a number of books towards this aim as as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd wa l-ḫilāfa al-islāmiyya, al-Islām fī maʿrakat at-taġrīb and al-Istiʿmār wa l-Islām.

This will be followed by an analysis of the ideological exploitation of the historical personality, and the consequences of the contemporary historical Islamist vision for the development of religious thought.

The contemporary Arab-Islamist narrative and the "old-new" themes

On the 3rd of March 1924 the Ottoman caliphate was abolished. The last Ottoman caliph, ʿAbd al-Maǧīd II, was deposed and sent into exile, together with the remaining members of the ruling Ottoman family. With this the Salafi reform movement, whose portrayals of political rule in Islam had never extended beyond the principle of the "Islamic caliphate", appeared to have its hands tied. The qualitative shift in the political system of the new Turkey deprived the Salafist reform thought of one of its most important intellectual paradigms and created an ideological vacuum amongst the intellectuals of the reform movement in the beginning of the twentieth

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century. The discussion of the question of rule in Islam within the move-
ment for reform and renewal had continued for over a century, reaching a
high point with the concept of the pan-Islamic bond associated with Ǧamāl
ad-Dīn al-Afġānī, and the revival of the Caliphate under ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II.[1]
Now it appeared to have reached a dead end.

    With the death of al-Afġānī, the theorist and spiritual father of the
movement, the deposition of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II, and increasing nationalist
sentiment, the popularity of pan-Islamism and an Islamic caliphate receded.
But they were due to return. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II was in exile but the caliphate
itself continued, and the concepts received new support with Muḥammad
Rašīd Riḍā (1865–1935), who followed in the steps of his two teachers and
bound his name firmly to that of *al-Manār*. Under Riḍā the journal acquired
new influence and became an important propaganda machine, with a cir-
culation that transcended national and linguistic borders. He transformed
al-Manār into a mouthpiece for Salafi reform ideas, including his own
responses to the question of rule based on the principle of the caliphate.
Riḍā's arguments continued to revolve around the concept of the caliphate
until the early 1920s; even after the new Turkish government in Ankara
abolished the sultanate on the 1ˢᵗ of November 1923, leaving nothing but
its empty form lacking all political authority, Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā took
up the task of creating a new concept of the caliphate, and of defining the
new tasks to be undertaken by the caliph or the imam of the Muslims.[2] In

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[1] For the sake of consistency, the name of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd in this article will be trans-
     literated according to the Arabic rather than the Turkish or Ottoman transliteration.
     As with ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, I use the Arabic transliteration for names of persons who
     acted in Ottoman history like Salīm, Murād, except for famous terms or names of
     persons who acted in late Ottoman history as well as in modern Turkish history like
     Enver, İttihat ve terakki etc. For Arabic names well known in European languages
     like Nasser, Sadat, Bourguiba… transliteration is only given by first mention of the
     name.

[2] Most studies of Riḍā's writing on the caliphate focus on the book *al-Ḫilāfa aw l-imāma
     al-ʿuẓmā*. However, this book, which was written during a specific phase in Riḍā's life
     and within a particular political context (the abolishment of the sultanate and the
     continuance of the caliphate) only reveals one side of his thought. It is in *al-Manār*,
     which was edited by Riḍā for forty years, these other aspects of his thought are
     revealed. Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā's articles on the caliphate in this journal clearly
     reveal his often apparently contradictory opinions; sometimes he would call for the
     closing of ranks behind ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, at other times his ideas were closer to those
     of the Unionists and at times he would express support for the ambitions of Fayṣal
     and Šarīf Ḥusayn to become king of the Arabs or even caliph, only to turn away from
     them and back to Ibn Saʿūd, or to negotiate himself with the English. Mahmoud
     Haddad analyses all of Riḍā's texts within the temporal context in which they were
     written and concludes that the contradiction is a superficial one. Despite apparant

his book, *The Caliphate or the great Imamate* (*al-Ḫilāfa aw l-imāma al-ʿuẓmā*), published in 1923, and in an article published in his journal in the same year, Riḍā carefully outlined "a higher educational program for the graduation of caliphs and the Islamic intelligentsia (*muǧtahidūn*)"[3] and elucidated the stages and conditions for electing an Imam and Caliph for the *umma* from amongst the graduates of this institution.

Whilst Riḍā was designing a new project to maintain the identity of the caliphate, the government in Ankara had opted for a different solution. With the exile of ʿAbd al-Maǧīd II from the throne, and the abolishment of the institution of the caliphate, the project of the "Islamic caliphate" was confronted with a new reality. The reformist thought of the Salafis was ill-equipped to work with this reality or to offer a viable alternative. Rather, it remained captive to the "caliphate principle", and began a search for a new caliph and an alternative caliphate. After his hopes of establishing an Arab-Turkish confederation akin to the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been disappointed, Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā lost interest in further cooperation with Ankara. However, rather than completely discarding the "caliphate principle" he transferred his interest to an Arab caliphate, and approached the Āl-Saʿūd and the Wahhabi movement with this form of union in mind. It is within this context that his book, *Wahhabism and the Hejaz* (*al-Wahhābiyyūn wa l-ḥiǧāz*) was written in 1925/6. It was around this period that he participated in a series of international Islamic conferences convened in

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differences, he remained loyal to the principle of the unity of the *umma* and loyalty to the caliph, rebuffing arguments questioning the legality of an Ottoman caliphate, and calling for loyalty to the Ottoman caliph. Following the deposition of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd in 1909 Riḍā travelled to Istanbul and approached the Unionist government, with whom he attempted to form a Turkish-Arab confederation along the lines of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His propaganda for this project was mainly aimed at the political elite of the country. His efforts should not be understood as contradicting the principle of the unity of the *umma.* Riḍā was opposed to the authoritarian policy of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's rule, and to the nationalist orientation of the Unionists, but he remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire. This did not alter with his support for Šarīf Ḥusayn; he saw his revolution as a rebellion against colonialism and not against the Ottoman Empire as such. When it became clear to him that the Šarīf was negotiating with the English, without considering the interests of the *umma*, he altered his position and joined the ranks of the Āl Saʿūd. During World War II the project of the confederation was forgotten, and as Riḍā oversaw the end of the Ottoman Empire and with this the fall of the caliphate, his position grew closer to that of the English, in order to – as he saw it – exchange the collapse of one caliphate for the establishment of another, Arabic one. However, he renounced this argument when he became aware of the English designs and their refusal to underwrite any admission of the caliphate. On this see: Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism", p. 118–157.

3   Riḍā, "Namūḏaǧ min an-nuẓum al-wāǧib waḍ'uhā li-l-ḫilāfa", p. 109–111.

Cairo and Mecca in 1926 and in Jerusalem in 1931. The participants only met in order to announce their failure to achieve a revival of the caliphate by means of the conference and concluded that it was the wrong time to establish a caliphate that would be recognized by the sharia. Thus they decided to delay the discussion about the caliphate until a more suitable time, without making more decisive statements regarding the principle of government or the caliphate. The Salafis absorbed themselves in a series of different questions, such as the emancipation of the Islamic lands from colonial oppression or the assimilation of Islam and nationalism. Some argue that Riḍā himself, who continued to maintain the idea of the caliphate even after it had lost all political power by referring to a spiritual caliphate and searching for an Arab alternative after the collapse of the Ottoman model, put the argument of *The Caliphate or the great Imamate* aside and joined the nationalist trajectory.[4] Some have even portrayed him as one of the founders of the Arabic unity movement.[5]

Within a historical context in which the institution of the caliphate had ceased to exist, only the model put forward by ʿAlī ʿAbd ar-Rāziq showed any engagement with the new political reality. In 1925 his famous work *Islam and the Foundations of Governance* (*al-Islām wa uṣūl al-ḥukm*),[6] ʿAbd ar-Rāziq argued that the caliphate is not a religious duty, but rather a product of historical and cultural contingencies. Neither, it claimed, is the caliphate the only foundation on which the state may be based, and the study went on to consider other civil forms of governance. The theory sent shock waves, not only through intellectual and religious circles, but also the political arena, where it threatened King Fuʾād's ambitions for the caliphate. The matter ended with the topic being silenced and the book being banned.

With the exception of this incident, the topic of governance in Islam remained undiscussed until later events created a political and social context that brought the question to the surface. In essence, these were the Arab–Israeli conflict and the emergence of the new Salafism. It was a period in which the Arab world experienced a series of setbacks, primarily the defeat of the Arab coalition in 1948 and the declaration of the State of Israel that caused deep political and social concern.

The bitter defeat of 1948, followed by that of 1967, inflicted a deep wound on the Arab consciousness and an existential shock no less intense

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[4] Schulze, *Geschichte der islamischen Welt*, p. 78.
[5] Tauber, "Three Approaches, One Idea", p. 190–198.
[6] German Translation: Ebert and Hefny, *Der Islam und die Grundlagen der Herrschaft.*

than that experienced by the Islamic world in the wake of the colonial conquests throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In Egypt, the cradle of reform Salafism, this socio-political context provided the background for the spread of the Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in 1928, the movement attracted social forces that had previously been marginalized and that gave it social strength and even political significance.

Classical Salafism had not ended with Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā's departure from his caliphate-based vision or – to use Schulze's expression – his divergence towards the nationalist trajectory, and the ceasing of *al-Manār* after his death in 1935. Rather, the journal *al-Fatḥ*, edited by Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Ḫaṭīb in Cairo from 1926 onwards and no less Salafi in its leanings, remained the main mouthpiece for what became known as the new Salafism until 1948. Ḥasan al-Bannā also attempted to circulate the ideas of Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā by reissuing *al-Manār*, which became the core of the new Salafi thought represented by the Muslim Brotherhood. The movement saw itself as the descendant of the reform Salafism, and celebrated al-Afġānī and Riḍā as the spiritual fathers of the movement.

By sending large numbers of volunteers to the war in Palestine in 1948, and embracing the Palestinian cause, the Muslim Brotherhood was able to widen its popularity both within Egypt and outside its borders. It established a popular basis in Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon. However, even with the wave of popular support for the movement, which reached a high point after the war of 1948, the movement failed to play a decisive political role. Its relations with the political powers in Egypt ebbed and flowed, and its leaders alternated between close proximity and bitter conflict with the political authorities.

After the defeat of 1948, the Brotherhood accused the Prime Minister an-Naqrāšī of betrayal. The order to dissolve the Muslim Brotherhood followed in December 1948 and resulted in a series of assassinations, which claimed the lives of both an-Naqrāšī and Ḥasan al-Bannā, the leader of the Brotherhood. However, the Brotherhood returned, and cooperated with the Free Officers, proving to be their greatest support in the 1952 July Revolution, which ended the monarchial rule. The Free Officers subsequently took power. Despite the law prohibiting political organizations, they regarded the Muslim Brotherhood as a non-political organization and allowed the continuation of its activities. However, in 1954 the Brotherhood was accused of conspiring to assassinate Ǧamāl ʿAbd an-Nāṣir (henceforth Nasser). The organization was prohibited and a number of its members were arrested. In 1965 the situation escalated further and the Muslim Brotherhood was

accused of planning a revolution against Nasser. Several members were arrested and after a couple of court case lasting months, a number were executed, including the Islamist intellectual and author of the famous work *Signposts on the Road* (*Maʿālim fī ṭ-ṭarīq*), Sayyid Quṭb. Relations improved somewhat under as-Sādāt (henceforth Sadat), particularly during the war of October 1973, and the operation to recover Sinai. But this was followed by increasing hostility after the Camp David Treaty with Israel in 1977, which met with widespread opposition. The deterioration of relations culminated with the assassination of Sadat in October 1981.

During this period in the history of the Middle East which culminated in the proclamation of the state of Israel, Arabs in general and the Islamist movement in particular viewed themselves as locked in a new conflict. The nature of this conflict was not only military, for part of the Arab socie-ties were still suffering from European colonialism and its injustices, whilst another part was affected by memories and after-effects of the trauma. The conflict was also seen as an intellectual confrontation and a cultural attack that inflicted a deep identity crisis. This necessitated the creation of a new identity. The Islamist movement, which had won decisive social signifi-cance, and whose influence now extended outside the Egyptian borders due to its adoption of the Palestinian cause and its problematization of Jewish emigration to these lands, was able to put its Islamist mark onto the identity-building process. Against this background the Islamist movement became especially attractive and certain issues like pan-Islamism and the question of the caliphate resurfaced again, gaining new importance with recent political and social changes.

The conceptual changes that these terms (*al-ittiḥād al-islāmī, al-ḫilāfa*) have undergone have been researched in depth by Daniel Kinitz[7] and Flo-rian Zemmin.[8] Through an analysis of the texts of *al-Manār* they follow the development of specific concepts that took place during what they describe as the "Arab saddle time" between 1860 and 1940. Their studies attempt to apply the "Sattelzeittheorie" developed by the German historian Rein-hart Koselleck to the "Arab transitional period". In his "Sattelzeittheorie", Koselleck argues that the meaning of basic terms used in contemporary political thought underwent radical conceptual change during the period of European history between roughly 1750 and 1870 corresponding to

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[7]   He presented his results in a paper given at the DOT (Deutscher Orientalistentag) in Germany, from the 18th to the 22nd of September 2017. Kinitz, "al-Manar and the Digital Humanities".

[8]   Zemmin, "Modernity without Society?"; Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition.*

surrounding political and social developments. He includes terms such as state, citizen, family and society within his analysis. By applying this theory to what they term the "Arab saddle time", Kinitz and Zemmin analyze the modern trajectory of meaning of key words and concepts in the contemporary social and political Arab thought, including *umma, ḫilāfa, imāma* and *islām.* Kinitz makes a statistical study of the terms *ḫilāfa* and *imāma* and concludes that they more frequently occur in the *al-Manār* texts throughout the twenties and the thirties than in the preceding decades, due to the political and the social changes summarized as the "crisis of the Caliphate". Florian Zemmin's research concentrates on the changes in the concept of society at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, through an analysis of the writings in the *al-Manār* journal. He concludes that the term "society" (*al-muǧtamaʿ*) and "the social body" (*al-hayʾa al-iǧtimāʿiyya*) only appeared in those articles that were reprinted from liberal newspapers or in texts translated from European writers. The writers who wrote for *al-Manār* avoided these two terms when referring to the contemporary concept of society. Instead they, particularly Rašīd Riḍā, incorporated the most important aspects of the concept within the term *umma*. Zemmin refers to the fact that Riḍā never used the term *umma* as a synonym for the European concept of society. He derived his understanding for the concept from Islamic heritage and used this to create an alternative concept of "contemporary Islamic society".

The new political and intellectual climate was directly affected by three Arab-Israeli wars extending over almost three decades (1948, 1967, and 1976), and by the turbulent relation between the Muslim Brotherhood and the political power in Egypt. This relation was characterized alternately by temporary rapprochement and ensuing mutual hostility; a hostility including both physical and ideological conflicts, particularly between the nationalist and the Islamist factions.

It was this context that formed the background for the beginnings of what is referred to here as the Islamist revisionist history,[9] in the Arab world and in particular in Egypt, the cradle of classical Salafism and the playground of the new Salafi movement. This revisionist project, which arose in a time overshadowed by the Arab-Israeli conflict, and which developed within a public discourse that focused on the Palestinian cause, provided a means for attaining two goals. The first of these was the defeat

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[9] For the sake of simplicity this term will be abbreviated to the Islamist narrative throughout this article.

of rival political ideologies (nationalism, socialism and liberalism), which had reached a high point after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, when they led the emancipatory struggle against Western colonialism. They had then monopolized the political stage during the subsequent period of independence. The Islamist movements portrayed these movements as incapable of maintaining the national independence, and of becoming embroiled in betrayal. The Islamist project portrayed the various Arabic ideologies as failing in their response to the case of Palestine. The second aim of the Islamist revisionist history was the establishment of a new collective identity for which Islam provided the central component.

The Islamist movement undertook the task of revising Islamic history in order to purify it from the "lies" and "distortions" to which colonialists, orientalists and their lackies in the Arab world had allegedly subjected it, or as one of the protagonists put it:

> "(…) after it became clear to the scholars and researchers that the image currently in the hands of our youth and the students of our schools and universities, formed in the shadow of colonialism (….) is not a true representation, for it developed in the shade of the occupation, after the separation from the mother country, the Ottoman Empire…this representation was either incapable of, or deliberately avoided, conveying the truth that this country, or this state, is nothing but a small part of the larger Islamic land and the entire Islamic state (…) And that the ties between the part and the whole cannot be broken, for they are the ties of faith and language and law and history (…) [This] makes a rewriting of the Islamic history necessary, as the history that is written today is the reality of the orientalists, whose colonial background leads them to ignore the relevance of Islam." [10]

It is interesting that in the majority of texts the reassessment of Islamic history undertaken by the Islamist movement has incorporated Ottoman history with a particular focus on the rule and the person of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II. Some have connected this to the success of the Turkish Islamist movement in Turkey in obtaining political influence in the Arabic region.[11]

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[10]   Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, p. 7–9, 13.
[11]   Al-Ǧamīl, *al-ʿAṯmana al-ǧadīda*. The author offers a historical and ideological contextualization of the Turkish islamist intellectual Kisakürek and his ideas, within the context of "the new Ottomanism".

The choice of the late Ottoman period and the person of the Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd was not a random one. Rather, it was a choice with deep symbolic significance. For in addition to the Palestinian question and the Zionist movement, the roots of which extended into the rule of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, further questions, such as emigration, identity, the relations between different social groups and the cohabitation of different religions, cultures, languages and nationalities had acquired a new, pressing signif-icance under his rule. It is important to remember that the deposition of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd coincided with a shrinking of the Empire's territories, which were accompanied by heavy losses in human and natural resources.[12] Thus Salafi thought at the time of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's abdication developed along-side a deep sense of loss, or what a historian refers to as the experience of an "amputation trauma". The abdication represented a turning point from the period of pan-Islamism and a view of one *umma* under the guardianship of the caliph, both of which were embodied in the person of the Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, to an age of nationalist disintegration and dependency – at least from the Islamist perspective. With the Arab-Israeli wars and the repeated Arab defeat, the ideas of the Union and the caliphate acquired a new actu-ality. Thus the Islamist movement found in the Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd a religious Islamic symbol, whilst the historical personality of the Sultan rep-resented a central starting point from which it tried to restore part of the unifying Islamic identity and find a connection with the historical period in which the twin ideas of pan-Islamism and the Islamic caliphate had been revived. The connections that they made paved the way for a new vision of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's epoch, and their efforts were focused on a revision-ist reading, and a rewriting, of the pages of Hamidian history.

This study will consider the various aspects of the portrayal of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II that were emphasized in these revisionist writings about Islamic history.[13] The focus will be especially on the writings of Anwar al-Ǧundī, as it was he who first adopted the process of an "Islamic revi-sion of Islamic history". This will be followed by an analysis of the ideo-logical exploitation of the historical personality, and the consequences of the contemporary historical Islamist vision for the development of religious thought.

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[12] For further details see Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, especially the introduction.
[13] For exemple: Ḥallāq, *Dawr al-yahūd*; Ḥarb, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd aṯ-ṯānī*; an-Naʿīmī, *al-Yahūd wa-ʾd-dawla al-ʿuṯmāniyya*.

ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd as the defender of Palestine

The contemporary relevance of the Arab-Israeli conflict meant that the question of Palestine and Jewish immigration into the country occupied a central role in this revision. The Islamist narrative located the roots of the issue in the Hamidian period and in the "plans of global Zionism, which focused on the Ottoman Empire as a means of obtaining Palestine and realizing their dream of building the temple of Solomon."[14]

The Islamist narrative's attribution of Jewish emigration to Palestine to the time of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's rule served to heighten the significance of this period and the personality of the Sultan within its reassessment of history. Anwar al-Ǧundī focuses on ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's rigid position regarding Jewish emigration to Palestine and his refusal of Theodore Herzl's request that Jews be permitted to settle in the land. This brings us to one of the most significant aspects of the portrayal of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd in the Islamist narrative; that of the caliph as the defender of Palestine.

All of the texts analyzed for this article repeat the answer that is attributed to ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd:

> "I am not prepared to relinquish one inch of this land to anyone else. The country does not belong to me, but to my people, who have watered its soil with their blood. I am not prepared to go down in history as the one who sold Jerusalem to the Jews and betrayed the trust that the Muslims placed in me for its protection (…) Let the Jews keep their millions. If the Empire is divided, the Jewish people will obtain Palestine without a struggle (…)"[15]

The text takes care to depict the heroic stance of the Sultan,

> "(…) who did not submit to the Jewish enticements of great wealth, despite the fact that the coffers of the Ottoman state were in great need of the money. He also refused their offer to strengthen the defense of the Empire, and to build a whole new fleet to protect its territories. And none of the intermediaries that they sent, including Emperor William IV,

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[14]   Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd,* p. 78.
[15]   Ibid., p. 87, 104.

Duke of Luxembourg, and the German Chancellor Bismarck, were of any avail."[16]

Anwar al-Ǧundī argues that what he refers to as global Zionism began a smear campaign against ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd in 1902 as a result of his uncompromising stance regarding the emigration of Jews to Palestine. The campaign egged on the forces that were hostile to the Sultan, encouraging them to remove him from the leadership of the Ottoman Empire. "And by engineering the downfall of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd the Jews and the colonizers really did obtain all that they had been hoping for."[17] Anwar al-Ǧundī sees ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd as a savior of Islamic identity and "the last of the fortresses by which Islam defended its global existence. His demise represented the culmination of the conspiracies of the west and its Zionist offspring."[18]

The relevance of the Palestinian question and its connection with the person of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd is not limited to historical writers, but is also evident in written media (newspapers) and visual media (television series and films).[19] The new potential that these media offered for discussion increased the popularity of the topic further. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's answer to Herzl on the Palestinian question is amongst the "realities" conveyed by these series and films, which use the most advanced visual and sound techniques to increase the dramatic impact of the "great and heroic stance" of the shrewd, just and pious Sultan, the defender of Palestine. Thus the Sultan is elevated to the status of a saint and surrounded with a ritual or symbolic halo.

The Islamist retrospective narrative ignores at this point a number of historical facts, possibly because they would enable conclusions that contradict its own vision. Thus it adopts a one-sided historical narrative and treated it as historical truth. The meeting between Herzl and Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd in 1896, which is repeated in the historical accounts and in which the refusal was given, was only the first of five such meetings between Herzl and the Sultan between 1896 and 1902, two of which were financed

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16   Ibid., p. 87.
17   Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, p. 89.
18   Ibid., p. 84.
19   For example: TV-Series "as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II" see especially https://www.you-tube.com/watch?v=hLemZK8Qi_I, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBP-2PNx-rmw, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFqDKcSyGE0 and TV-Talk "ḥattā lā takūna Andalus uḫrā" see especially https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erGp-2Mqs7M8.

by the Sultan himself.[20] How are we to understand the repeated meetings between the Sultan and Herzl, if the Sultan's decision in the first meeting was his definitive answer? Some argue that his position represents a softening in his stance towards Herzl and the question of the settlements. Others attribute the repeated meetings to the hesitation of the Sultan, who was known for his delay in decision-making. Furthermore, it is argued that the Sultan consciously followed a more ambiguous policy, in which he limited himself to a spoken denial of the request and a refusal to release a formal edict, whilst further developments on the ground indicate that he was turning a blind eye to settlement and Jewish immigration rather than confronting it with the necessary rigor and decisiveness (the number of Jews in Palestine doubled under the rule of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, and by 1908 Jews constituted 11% of the population,[21] as a result of the partial edicts benefitting the Jews and the permission to buy tracts of Palestinian land, even if these were limited). Thus he accepted in practice what he refused in his oral communication. Furthermore, the spoken refusal referred to and extolled by the narratives of the Islamist movements does not mean that this constituted a sufficient or an effective measure, or that he followed it with other practical measures. Other studies, using written sources, also indicate the role and the effort extended by ʿIzzat al-ʿĀbid to influence the Sultan and convince him to refuse Herzl's offer.[22]

The Islamist revisionist narrative exaggerates the stance of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd regarding the Palestinian question and frequently separates it from the historical context, transforming his position into a normative stance, and using it to establish an ideological rhetoric specific to him. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd is transformed into a historical reference point (ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, the pious caliph of the Muslims, who did not err in the Palestinian question and who functioned as a reference for the Islamists) through which their own policy is legitimized. The Islamist movement equates its own position with that of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, the only player in the political realm who in their narrative did not bow to the dictates of external powers and who remained staunch with regard to Palestine, unlike the other movements (this reflects the accusation against an-Naqrāšī and his government of betrayal in the 1948 war, the view that he was a lackey for Israel and the

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20 Patai, *The Complete Diaries*, Vol. I, p. 345–346; Öke, "The Ottoman Empire", p. 339–341.
21 Naṣīrāt, "as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd aṯ-ṯānī", here especially p. 43–46, 49, see for further details her Book with the same title: Naṣīrāt, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd aṯ-ṯānī*.
22 Ende, "Abu l-Huda", p. 1143–1155.

accusation against Sadat of selling Palestine by signing the Treaty of Camp David for peace with Israel in 1977).

Jewish-Christian conspiracies and ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd as shrewd politician

Another relevant element of the Islamist narrative is the analysis of events through the lens of a Jewish-Christian conspiracy theory. The aim of the conspiracy was understood to be the creation of a Jewish state and the elimination of the Islamic Empire embodied in the Ottoman Empire and the person of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. The German historian Maurus Reinkowski argues that the conspiracy theory, which became a focal point for a number of contemporary nationalist historical studies from the Arab, Turkish and Israeli perspectives, frequently obfuscated the historical analysis. The historians examined events from a perspective imbued with this view of the relation between the Ottoman state and the Zionist movement in Palestine, which is then utilized for the writing of a nationalist historical narrative. Two elements can be distinguished within the Turkish historical narrative; on the one hand the inherited vision of the Ottoman Empire as a tolerant protector of its non-Muslim minorities and on the other, the portrayal of a nationalist Turkish state that emerged out of a bitter struggle with Western colonialist forces and their supporters within its own borders. The Arab historical narrative sees the Zionist movement as an agent of Western colonialism and, depending on its ideological orientation, champions either Arab nationalism or the Islamic religion as a means of defending the Palestinian identity and resisting western and Zionist occupation. The Israeli-Zionist narrative attempts to ignore the Arab inhabitants of the land and the reduction of the historical extent of the Ottoman State, whilst portraying Jewish emigration to Palestine and the attempts of the Ottoman State to limit this as part of the "struggle" for the establishment of a national Israeli state.[23]

One of the most important historical stages that the Islamist narrative analyses from the point of view of the conspiracy theory is the revolution of 1908, the subsequent counter-revolution known as "the Incident of 31st March" and the deposition of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd that followed.

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[23] Reinkowski, "Zionismus, Palästina und Osmanisches Reich", p. 93–104.

The sparks of the 1908 revolution, which is attributed to the *ittihat ve terakki* (Committee for Union and Progress),[24] were ignited in Rumelia following Enver Bey and Niyazi's declaration of non-obedience and forti-fication in the mountains of the region. They were joined by one military faction after another,[25] and events eventually led to the renewed declara-tion of the Constitution on the 24th of July 1908, and the opening of a Par-liament headed by Aḥmad Riḍā. This was followed by the incident of 31st March or "the recovery movement" led by the Sheikh of Bektashi-Order Derviş Vahdeti (Ottoman Translation: Vahdetī), the founder of the *ittihad-ı Muhammadi cemiyetii*,[26] which headed a group of religious students. The chain of events that led to the deposition of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd in the summer of 1909 are given great value in the Islamist narrative, where they

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[24] The *ittihat ve terakki* was a political movement that played a decisive role in the history of the Ottoman Empire, from the beginning of the 1908 revolution until its dissolution in 1918. Its intellectual roots can be attributed to the Young Turks and their followers within and outside the Ottoman Empire. The military – and to a lesser extent the administration – played an effective role in the founding of the organization, as their position enabled them to move between different regions and manage important communication networks. In 1907 the Committee of Thessaloniki contacted the Young Turks in their exile in Europe. The return of Doctor Nāẓim, a prominent member of Aḥmad Riḍā's faction in Paris, to Thessaloniki enabled the two groups to unite into a new society that took the old-new name *ittihat ve terakki*. The Young Turks hoped that this step would allow them a more effective participation in the political authority that the organization had acquired after the revolution of 1908, but *ittihat ve terakki* prevented them from playing any prominent role, pre-ferring to maintain the power that it had acquired for itself. See Ahmed, "Ittiḥād ve Teraḳḳī Djemʿiyyeti", p. 284–286. Also: Ahmed, *The Young Turks*; Ramsaur, *The Young Turks*; Şakir, "İttihat ve Terakki"; Tunaya, *Türkiye'de siyasî partiler.*

[25] Kreiser and Neumann argue that the revolution began independently of the *ittihat ve terakki* and that this movement became involved, and then took over, at a later date. See Kreiser and Neumann, *Kleine Geschichte*, p. 354.

[26] In Turkish, *ittihad-ı Muhammadi cemiyetii* is a religious movement credited with the support for the 31st March (corresponding to the 13th April 1909). Its beginning was officially announced on the 5th April 1909 and its spiritual father was Derviş Vahdeti. The organization edited a journal, entitled the Volkan Journal, and the journal was sent to participants in *tekkeler* which appear to have been based outside Istanbul. The newspaper describes the period of constitutional rule as *şeyṭanlar devri* (here exceptionally Ottoman transcription) or "the rule of the Satans". The Union also used to publish articles in opposition newspapers, such as "*Serbesṭi*" (here also exceptionally Ottoman transcription) and the "*Levant Herald*" which was financed by the British Embassy. See: Ahmad, "Ittiḥād-ı Muḥammedī Djemʿiyyeti", p. 283–284; Düzdağ, "Volkan", p. 123–125.

Members of the *ittihad-ı Muhammadi cemiyetii* were prohibited from participating in political activity. On this, see the article of Ahmad cited above and the view of Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā, in their words, that "Islam is not a religion of politics": Riḍā, "ad-Dīn al-islāmī dīn siyāsa am lā?", p. 129–130.

constitute a turning point in the history of the Ottoman State and its relation with Muslim history. Anwar al-Ǧundī states that,

> "in truth, we must distinguish between two periods in the history of our relations with the Ottoman state: the period of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd which ended in 1908 with the accession to power of the party *ittihat ve terakki*, the Masons and the Dönme, and the following period, which lasted until 1918 and which represents the darkest pages of the relations between the Arabs and the Turks. This (darkness) is not due to the Turkish Islamic rule. Rather, it is an advanced stage of the enslavement to global Zionism and its supporters."[27]

The Islamist narrative experiences this event as the result of conspiracies organized by internal (*ittihat ve terakki*, the Dönme[28] and the Jews) and external enemies, particularly Britain, to end the Ottoman state and thus destroy the Islamic religion. It is noteworthy here that the decisive role is attributed to internal enemies, embodied by the Masons and the leaders of the Dönme. This "Jewish conspiracy" was the result of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's obstruction to Jewish acquisition of Palestine, which gave rise to a vicious campaign against him. He was subjected to several assassination attempts and conspiracies, culminating in the revolution of 1908 and his subsequent deposition. This was the first step in the execution of "the terrible crime"[29] of the destruction of the Islamic caliphate. The Islamist narrative attributes the origins of the Jewish conspiracy to an early period in the history of the Ottoman state, when the Dönme, who were "the Spanish Jews who converted to Islam as a form of dissimulation, settled together in Thessaloniki. They subsequently established Masonic gatherings with the aim of creating a plan to destroy the Ottoman Empire."[30] The Islamist narrative argues emphatically to prove the Dönme's involvement in the *ittihat ve terakki* and the participation of the latter's members in the Masonic order. François Georgeon does not regard attendance at a Masonic assembly or meeting as unequivocal proof of membership or enthusiasm for their

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[27] Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd,* p. 94–95.

[28] The Arabic sources regard the Dönme as Jews who professed Islam as a disguise for their continued adherence to Judaism. However, in a relatively recent study Baer brings a number of proofs to show that the Dönme should not be regarded as Jews or Muslims. Rather, by analyzing the changes in its historical development, he concludes that the thought of the Dönme is specific to this group. See Baer, *The Dönme.*

[29] Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd,* p. 89.

[30] Ibid.*,* p. 76.

teaching; prior to his accession Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd himself, together with his brother Murād, attended one of their meetings, in which the deposition of Sultan ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and his replacement with Murād was discussed.[31] Bernard Lewis also argues that during this period these gatherings tended to be little more than a venue in which other secret societies were able to meet in a safe atmosphere, without their meeting or their revolutionary activities becoming publicly known, and without direct Masonic influence on their activities.

The Islamist narrative[32] argues that the Jews, who tend to be portrayed in parallel with the Masons, or as two sides of the same coin,[33] were the main force behind all the conspiracies that led to the deposition of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and the downfall of the Ottoman State. The two events coincide in this narrative, for it was with the deposition of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd that the Ottoman State collapsed, whilst those "leaders" who followed him were little more than puppets in the hands of the Masons.

The Islamist narrative also regards the Jews as the instigators of the Incident of 31st March:

> "They managed to bribe some of the religious figures and to entice them out to the streets to call for the application of Islamic law, in what is now known as the *irtiǧāʿ* movement. The aim of this was to humiliate the Sultan after the declaration of the constitution and to pressure the unionists to revolt against him later on… [Furthermore] Following their attempt to lure ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd with money and weapons, their recourse to European politicians, such as William IV and Bismarck, as intermediaries, the instigation of religious and the nationalist movements against him and the failure of assassination attempts accompanied by an international smear campaign, the Jews changed their tactic to include the Unionists. This conspiracy ended with the deposition of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and the sovereignty of the Unionists, who then opened the path for the Jews to Palestine and handed West Tripoli over to Italy."[34]

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[31]   Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, p. 39.
[32]   See an-Naʿīmī, *al-Yahūd,* p. 157; Ḥallāq, *Dawr al-yahūd*, p. 59.
[33]   The Ottoman writer Abū aḍ-Ḍiyāʾ Tawfīq is the first to make a link, in 1911, between the Masonic societies and the designs of the Jews. However, he is eager to exonerate the recourse of the *ittihat ve terakki* to the Masons, arguing that this was only for the purpose of maintaining secrecy. See Lewis, *The Emergence*, p. 212.
[34]   Al-Ġundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd,* p. 108.

This analysis is noteworthy and could be described as an exclusively Arabic-Islamic analysis. The perspectives regarding this event differ depending on the sources used by the historians, their affiliations and their degree of objectivity. However, this perspective is the only one that directly and exclusively attributes the incident to the Jews, using it as a wide-reaching proof for the Jewish conspiracy on which the Arab-Islamist narrative focuses.

The Turkish-Islamist narrative, which has a more similar orientation to the Arabic-Islamist approach than any other movement, attributes the incident to the English, arguing that the political relationship between Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and England had been marred by coolness after the revolution of 1908. England was aware that their influence over the Ottoman state was decreasing during the reign of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and that his declaration of the Second Constitution would end this influence entirely, as well as helping to contain the *ittihat ve terakki* – England's right-hand man – in attaining its colonialist aspirations. Thus the two parties – England and the *ittihat ve terakki* – cooperated to bring about the incident of 31st March so as to guarantee the sovereignty of the *ittihat ve terakki* (and the English), on the internal political stage, and to ensure the deposition of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd.[35]

The composition of the *Haraket Ordusu (*activist army-unit*)* that interceded to end the Incident of 31st March, leading to the deposition of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, nourished the theory of a Jewish conspiracy against Islam in the Islamist narrative. The group's membership was mixed and included Jews from Thessaloniki regarded as being on the side of the military. The participation of Chief Rabbi Chaim Nahum from the Jewish minority in Istanbul in the negotiations of the Lausanne conference in July 1923 seemed to confirm these suspicions. It was said that İsmet İnönü followed Nahum's advice in promising Lord Curzon that he would eliminate the Islamic institutions in the modern state, in return for geographical concessions.[36]

Bernard Lewis denies the significant role that some studies attribute to the Jews in these events. He argues that the Jews – it is worth noting here that Lewis does not regard the Dönme as real Jews[37] – did not play any prominent role in the revolution of 1908 or in the process of deposing ʿAbd

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[35] Kleinert, *Die Revision*, p. 107.
[36] Kreiser, *Atatürk,* p. 59 and 178.
[37] "Cavid, who did play a role of great importance, was a dönme (a Judaeo-Islamic syncretist sect founded in the seventeenth century) and not a real Jew…" in: Lewis, *The Emergence*, p. 212.

al-Ḥamīd. Rather, he argues that the forces of the alliance, particularly the British circles, followed a policy of propaganda against the Turkish enemy in the war, working towards destroying the image of the *ittihat ve terakki* and portraying it as a mixture of non-Muslims and non-Turks. This was in order to obstruct the success of the "Ottoman union" and "Turkish union" policy followed by the government of the *ittihat ve terakki*. Lewis sees the book of Seton-Watson *Rise of Nationality in the Balkans* (1917)[38] as a living witness to this smear campaign, and a reference for the image of the *ittihat ve terakki* as it was later employed in the conspiracy-theory reading of history. Some later studies also show the committee as a mixture of religions, including Jews, Masons and the Dönme, and refer to the "hidden hands" that allegedly had directed it.[39]

The Islamist narrative also analyses the process of deposing ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd which followed the events of 31st March from the vantage point of a Jewish-Christian conspiracy to which ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, and through him the institution of the caliphate and the Islamic religion, was subjected. The incident is treated at length in the Islamist narrative, which tends to focus its attention on the ethnic composition of the body that arranged the deposition. This consisted of "a paid up Muslim and a hateful Jew and a Christian instigator. They handed him the document for abdicating from the throne and the Sultan accepted in order to spare bloodshed."[40]

The Islamist narrative reduces the many factors that had led to the dethronement to betrayal and servitude to the English and the Masons, and their hostile stance to Islamic religion. It ignores the role played by the policy of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd himself, which aroused the opposition against him. The Young Turks[41] were basically the political opposition to the autocratic rule

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[38]   Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 135–136.
[39]   Lewis, *The Emergence,* p. 211–212.
[40]   Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, p. 108.
[41]   In a relatively recent study the Turkish historian Hasan Kayalı proves the ethnic diversity of what called "the Young Turks"; an appellation that correlates with the academic perspective confining the opposition to the Turkish community, without outside involvement. In his study Kayalı shows that the Young Turks were a movement that comprised Arabs, Jews, Armenians and Greeks, as well as Turks. In particular, Kayalı illustrates the important role that the Arabs played in the movement. See Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*. The two German historians Kreiser and Neumann also refer to the ethnic diversity of the Ottoman Union. See the historical considerations on the establishment of this seed-organization, which led to the formation and development of the *ittihat ve terakki*. See also the detailed information provided about the main actors in the organization (Ibrāhīm Tīmū, ʿAbd Allāh Ǧawdat, Isḥāq Sukūtī

of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and to his policies, including his censorship of the press, the dissolution of the Parliament and the cancelling of the constitution, his ransoming of state property, such as the Port of Haidar Pasha as a result of the visit of the German emperor William II and the agreements concerning the railway project in 1898. The latter angered the Young Turks in Geneva so much that they wrote that "nothing remains, but the air which the people breathe and if he found a means, he would ransom this too."[42] When the Sultan succumbed to European pressures, ordering the withdrawal from the island of Crete and leaving the fate of its Muslims in the hands of the Greeks, the reaction of the Young Turks was manifested in a number of caricatures, some of which were published by Kieser in his study of the activities of the Young Turks in Switzerland.[43]

The revolutionaries of the Balkans were more directly motivated. Their location in the Balkans/Macedonia meant that they bore the immediate consequences of the meeting between the British King Edward VII and the Russian Emperor Nicholas II in Tallin, and the resulting agreement to divide the lands of the Balkans between themselves. In addition to the imminent danger and the meeting between the two monarchs, the miserable situation in the Balkans also played a role (the *Salyane*[44]-Lists of 1905 clearly reflects the declining interest in these provinces, which are the last to be mentioned in the lists), as did the fear resulting from the fall of the Crimea and the annexation of Hungary. These factors pushed some military leaders, including Niyazi Bey, to meet in Resen (in the province of Monastir) and to study the risks that were threatening the Balkans. It is no coincidence that the revolution began at this conjuncture in particular, and neither is it a coincidence that it was led by Niyazi Bey, a native of this region. He writes in his diary of this period that his fear regarding the fate of his home (the Balkans) prevented him from sleeping for three days and three nights.[45]

The outbreak of the revolution in the Balkans does not mean that the opposition was limited to this geographical region. The Islamist narrative concentrates on Thessaloniki – a City with a numerical Jewish minority –, but the Anatolian army's refusal to obey the Sultan's orders to stand against

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and Aḥmad Riḍā), the roles that they played, and their intellectual orientation. See Kreiser and Neumann, *Kleine Geschichte*, p. 351–355.

[42] Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, p. 348.

[43] Kieser, *Vorkämpfer der ‚Neuen Türkei'*, p. 44.

[44] The *salyane* were the annual tax lists that were sent from specific regions to Istanbul. On these lists see Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, p. 184–190.

[45] Ibid., *Abdulhamid II*, p. 398.

the revolutionaries[46] is a clear indication that the revolution was not limited to a specific military faction or to the region of Thessaloniki.

The Islamist narrative argues that the conspiracy did not end with the
removal of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, but paved the way for the destruction of the
Islamic caliphate.[47] However, it is worth noting here that the end of the
caliphate was a topic that was not debated during this period. Discussing
it within the context of the deposition of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd is a (deliberate?)
departure from the historical frame. Despite the strength of their opposition to Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and the influence of the French Revolution,
the majority of the Young Turks were well aware of the significance of the
ruling Ottoman family and the role of the religion and institutions of the
caliphate in particular, in the continuance of the Ottoman Empire. Aḥmad
Riḍā argued that if the Ottoman family abdicated the Bulgarians, Greeks
and Armenians would attack the Turks.[48] ʿAbd Allāh Ǧawdat was the most
radical voice and the only one who demanded the abdication of the Ottoman ruling family and the proclamation of a republic. With the exception
of his somewhat singular view, the idea had not yet developed within the
circles of the Young Turks during this period. Their aims were focused on
the departure of the autocratic ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd from the throne, and the
renewed declaration of the constitution.

The connection between the deposition of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and
the ending of the caliphate within the Arab-Islamist narrative can be contextualized within his portrayal as the last of the great caliphs, to use the
expression of Muḥammad Ḥarb,[49] and from this to the institution of the
caliphate. The Islamist narrative regards all the Sultans who followed him
as puppets in the hands of the governments of the *ittihat ve terakki* and
lacking any real authority. Thus ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd represents the historical
turning point through which the Islamist narrative attempts to find a link
to the present. The period that followed his deposition and in which the
government was constituted by the *ittihat ve terakki* "cannot be attributed to
the history of the Islamic Ottoman Empire", to use the expression of Anwar
al-Ǧundī.[50]

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[46]   Ibid., *Abdulhamid II*, p. 400.
[47]   Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd,* p. 77.
[48]   Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution,* p. 38; Kieser, *Vorkämpfer der ‚Neuen Türkei',*
       p. 42; Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, p. 396.
[49]   This is how Muḥammad Ḥarb describes him in the title of his book, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd
       al-Ḥamīd aṯ-ṯānī, āḫir as-salāṭīn al-ʿuṯmāniyīn al-kibār.*
[50]   Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd,* p. 94.

In the continuous connecting line drawn by the Islamist narrative the starting point is represented in the person of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, who also personifies the caliphate, pan-Islamism and the strength of the Islamic Empire. The Islamist movement constitutes the link between this historic starting point and the lived present. The pages of history which were turned since ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's deposition and until the Islamic movement took up the banner, are regarded as dark pages that are best forgotten. To borrow a term from psychology: One could say that the Islamist consciousness is still suffering from the trauma of the transition period from the Ottoman Empire, taking refuge in forgetting as a means of self-defense.

This practice of historical revision, with its formative background of the Arab-Israeli conflict, defined the characteristics of the Jewish enemy within the general Arab political opinion as one of the perpetrators, or even the most significant agent, in the plans of the colonizing forces, who continued to work for the fulfillment of these plans up until the present day.[51] If it is analyzed within the historical context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the retrospective Islamist narrative reflects this portrayal of the Jewish enemy, and through its search for parallels between the Hamidian period and the present day (from the temporal starting point of the narrative) reaches the conclusion that the Jews were the enemies of the Islamic Empire in the period of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and have continued to be so until the present day, when they have stolen Islamic lands and declared their own state.

According to this narrative, the character of the Jewish enemy was revealed in all clarity with the declaration of the state of Israel and the Arab entry into direct conflict with the emerging state. Prior to this, however, and throughout the first decade of the twentieth century rife with social, political and ideological changes, the image of the Jewish enemy had not crystallized in the Arab-Islamic consciousness. Rather, it co-existed alongside other images of the Jews, as Hans Goldenbaum shows in his study, the results of which he presented at the conference of the German Orientalists (DOT) in September 2017.[52] In the discussion about the identity of the Jewish Arabs and their place in the Arab society during the emergence of Arab nationalism in the first decades of the twentieth century and before the outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli war, some of the Arabic nationalist views

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[51] Ibid., p 75.
[52] In his study Hans Goldenbaum follows the different portrayals in the Arabic newspapers in Lebanon and Syria throughout the French dependency. Goldenbaum, "Fateful years".

distinguished between the Jews of Europe and the Arab Jews, while argu-
ing that the latter were a part of the Arab nationalist being.

Parallel to its portrayal of the caliph as the defender of Palestine and
its protector against the Jewish threat, the Islamist narrative also portrays
ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd as a sophisticated politician, easily able to defeat his ene-
my's machinations. In the Islamist narrative the Sultan, possessed with
sharp intelligence and a fine political sense, capable of running state affairs
single-handedly, is also skilled in balancing international affairs due to his
knowledge of the weaknesses and internal conflicts of the western powers.
By exploiting these, he was able to play his enemies off against each other
and to extract his Empire from their designs. The Islamist narrative also
portrays the Sultan as triumphant in his pan-Islamist policy and the revival
of the caliphate is also portrayed as unambiguously successful.

The evidence reflecting ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's skill as a politician is by
no means negligible. François Georgeon describes the last decade of the
nineteenth century as the period of strength and political success of ʿAbd
al-Ḥamīd, in which he was able to transcend the hardships of 1894–1896
without the country falling into the hands of the larger powers.[53] The idea
of carving up the Ottoman state disappeared from the agenda of the great
powers, who had become preoccupied with other wars (the Spanish-Amer-
ican war of 1898, the Boer War in South Africa, 1899–1902, and the Boxer
Uprising in China, 1900–1901). These triumphs were crowned by his vic-
tory in the Greco-Turkish war of 1897 and the maintenance of Crete within
the Ottoman borders – at least for the time being. This last success had
particular symbolic significance, restoring the honor and prestige of the
Sultan that had been shaken by the defeat in the Ottoman-Russian war. The
relevance of the attribute of ġāzī, an honorific title that had been applied
during the Ottoman-Russian war, but which had lost its meaning follow-
ing the defeat, was now restored. The Sultan exploited his symbolic sig-
nificance to firm up his political authority. He turned his attention to the
increased opposition of the Young Turks within and beyond the Empire's
borders, where his approach was also relatively successful.[54] And in terms
of his foreign policy, the month-long visit of the German Kaiser Wilhelm II
and his wife as guests of the Sultan in autumn 1898, and the project of the

[53]   Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, p. 335.
[54]   Kieser, *Vorkämpfer der ‚Neuen Türkei'*, p. 47.

Baghdad Railway that arose from this, represented a further, albeit short-lived, triumph for the Sultan.[55]

 If we examine the policy of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd over the thirty three years of his rule, we find aspects that undermine the portrait drawn by the Islamist narrative. There is no doubt that ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's policy of playing his enemies off against each other was a successful one, as the Islamist narrative claims, but the success of this policy did not – as Georgeon shows in his analysis – continue throughout his rule. Indeed, it was a tactic that was beginning to wear, and it broke down definitively in the first decade of the twentieth century, as the policies of the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian Empire towards the Balkan question brought these states closer to each other, while pragmatic factors led to a rapprochement between Italy and France and between the latter and England and Russia.

 This historical period witnessed a radical change in the policies of the great powers, moving from a period of rivalry between themselves to one of political and economic rapprochement. It is clear here that Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd had overplayed his hand and that the policy that had succeeded during the period of rivalry was now doomed to failure in the face of the political transformations that were currently taking place. In other words, the approach of balancing powers, or playing enemies off against each other, in which ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd had been so accomplished and which had served him so well during an earlier period of his rule, was no longer a relevant tactic and it lost its effectiveness as the western powers developed closer political relationships.[56]

ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd as initiator of pan-Islamism and defender of the caliphate

The larger political success that the Islamist narrative awards to ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd is that of pan-Islamism and the revival of the caliphate. Here

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[55] He summarizes this triumph with the words, "…La guerre contre la Grèce a été gagnée sur le terrain, certes, mais il s'agit d'une victoire à la Pyrrhus, car la Crète est pratiquement perdue. Les Jeunes Turcs ont été mis au pas, mais les opposants existent toujours: à prevue la fuite de Damad Mahmud Celâleddin pacha à la fin de 1899. Triomphe diplomatique avec l'appui allemande? Sans doute, mais le regime se lie de plus en plus étroitement à l'Allemange, ce qui n'est pas sans risque à une époque de recomposition des alliances en Europe…". See Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, p. 354–355.

[56] Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, p. 360.

the Islamist narrative develops another important aspect in its portrayal of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's character, namely, that of the caliph who revived the caliphate and established a bond between all Muslims of the world. The defining elements of this portrayal are linked with a number of old-new motifs, the most significant of which is that of pan-Islamism and the Islamic caliphate. This was one of the important topics, which continued to receive much attention in the Islamist historical retrospective.

Pan-Islamism, or Muslim unity, has become known as a political movement working towards the establishment of a political entity uniting Muslims throughout the world on the basis of the religious bond. The movement is related intellectually to the thinker and religious figure Ǧamāl ad-Dīn al-Afġānī (1839–1897), politically to Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II (1842–1918), and historically to western colonial expansion in the Middle East and the Indian Peninsula at the end of the nineteenth century (the Russian-Ottoman war and the crushing defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1877, the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881, and the British occupation of Egypt in 1882). Although this abbreviated definition of the term will be used in this study, this understanding is also based on the deeper and more detailed study of the phenomenon in other contemporary studies.[57] The concepts of pan-Islamism and the revival of the caliphate are directly linked to Ǧamāl ad-Dīn al-Afġānī and after him, Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Riḍā, the spiritual fathers of both classical and new Salafism. Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905) worked alongside al-Afġānī to propagate the idea of pan-Islamism throughout the Islamic world by means of the newspaper that bore the same name as their secret society; *The Firmest Bond (al-ʿUrwa al-wuṯqā)*. The first issue of the journal was released in Paris on 13th March 1884 and its readership consisted not only of the Arabic-speaking Muslims in Egypt or the Ottoman state, but also in India. This was despite the ban placed on its distribution by the British government, which interpreted its message as an incitement to revolution and a threat to its colonial interests. The two men also created more personal relations throughout the Islamic world; at the end of 1884, the same year in which the journal began to be issued, ʿAbduh moved to Tunisia with the aim of founding a branch of *al-ʿUrwa al-wuṯqā*-society,[58]

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[57]   Chaghatai, *Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghāni*; Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*; Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal al-Din 'al-Afghānī'*; Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam*; Salem, "Challenging Authoritarism".

[58]   The scholars of az-Zaytūna encountered ʿAbduh with respect tempered by reserve. Neither was he able, upon his return, in the capacity of Egyptian mufti in 1903, to persuade them in regard to his views about incorporating natural sciences into religious sciences, his censure of the Sufi orders, his rejection of the sanctification of

and in his first trip to Istanbul in 1870 al-Afġānī established contacts with the leaders of the Tanzimat. He returned in 1892 after personal communication with Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II,[59] which some scholars attribute to Sultan's adoption of the plan and his attempt to implement it as such.[60]

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the *awliyāʿ* (pl. of *walīy*), and his repudiation of the concept of *tawakkul*. He clashed with Ṣāliḥ aš-Šarīf, the Shaykh of az-Zaytūna and with groups of the Murabits who received support from the Maliki scholars. In spite of this, the reform ideas of the Salafis found some acceptance among the students of az-Zaytūna, including ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz aṯ-Ṯʿālibī, who came into contact with the ideas during his travels in the East and in Egypt. See Abdelmoula, Le Mouvement Patriotique; Ibn Mīlād and Idrīs, Aš-Šayḫ aṯ-Ṯʿālibī.

[59] The biography of al-Afġānī, which has been transmitted by his students and followers, including ʿAbduh and Riḍā, record that the Sultan invited him to Istanbul. The papers and personal communication of al-Afġānī have been recently published in Iran. Nikki Keddie has studied one of these, dating from 1885, as well as an Ottoman translation of his *Ressalah e Natscheri*a (1881), which al-Afġānī personally presented to the Sultan. The translation contains a foreword praising the Sultan that is not included in the original version. This is in addition to a letter of 1892 published by Landau, in which al-Afġānī offers his services to the Sultan and which confirms his attempts at gaining his confidence. Some historians see this information as indicating that pan-Islamism was a project by al-Afġānī and that it was subsequently adopted by the Sultan. See Afshar and Asghar, *Documents inédits;* Keddie, "The Pan-Islamic Appeal".

[60] Historians' views regarding the Sultan's adoption of pan-Islamism differ. Some European historians, including Barckhausen, argue that ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd turned to pan-Islamism after the English occupied Egypt, as a means of diverting the events of history so that these did not threaten his empire or his throne. However, the Sultan's attempts to use the movement for his own political purposes failed before the expansion of Arabic nationalism. Like Barckhausen, the German historian Josef Matuz argues that the ideas and the movement had existed previously and that ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd did not establish them. An alternative explanation argues that ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd adopted the movement out of fear, supporting this with the enthusiasm with which he accepted the ideas of al-Afġānī. Rudolph Peters argues that ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd contained al-Afġānī so as to prevent him from joining the ranks of the Arabic caliphate and supporting them. Keddie, Lewis and Landau argue that the concept of pan-Islamism did not come from the Sultan or al-Afġānī, since in Keddie's words, al-Afġānī was "a convert to pan-Islam". Rather, pan-Islamism was a religious phenomenon that developed in the regions under English occupation, including India and Central Asia, where Muslims sent many calls for help to the Sultan. Its ideological beginnings can be traced back to 1877, when Namık Kemal oversaw the Cultural Islamic Union. Al-Afġānī acquired the idea while staying for the first time in Istanbul, where he had contacts with the neo-Ottomans and where he actuall grew into the concept of political pan-Islamism. The concept found resonance with ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, who used it as a political tool for reaching his own goals, although with limited success. Lewis argue that pan-Islamism was a new phenomenon in Islamic society and that it was born out of the political circumstances of the nineteenth century. So, the term was defined and impressed with European political consciousness, rather than being Islamic in nature. Lewis argues further that the Allies exaggerated the danger of the policy during the First World War. Other studies suggest that the "politicization" of the

Muḥammad ʿAbduh followed in the steps of his teacher. In 1897, together with Rašīd Riḍā, they launched the journal *al-Manār* in order to continue the message of *al-ʿUrwa al-wuṯqā*. British pressure on the publishers had resulted in an end to this journal's publication after seven months and a total of 18 issues. *Al-Manār* continued its predecessor's call for Islamic union and in 1898 Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā published an article calling for the establishment of an annual Islamic conference in Mecca. It was to be convened under the auspices of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, and to maintain local branches in every Islamic region.[61] *Al-Manār* was destined for longevity; it continued to be issued even after the death of Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā in 1935, when Ḥasan al-Bannā attempted to circulate the same ideas by reissuing *al-Manār.*

The Islamist narrative portrays ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd as beginning this movement in 1879 and following it for the subsequent 30 years of his rule, thus applying a straightforward policy consistent with the concept of pan-Islamism. The success of this politics was reflected in its attainment of its goals and the joining of the Muslim ranks, the Turkish and Arabic nationalists in particular, in the united opposition to the colonialist forces and to the Jews and the Young Turks who supported them within the Empire. In the Arab countries, the Arab Christians who founded the Young Arab Society *(al-Ǧamʿiyya al-ʿarabiyya al-fatāt)*, led by Ǧurǧī Zaydān[62] and Naǧīb Ġāzūrī were lumped together with these supporters. The Islamist narrative focuses on the Christian affiliation of the members of the movement, arguing that their main aim was to create dissens amongst the Muslims rather than their unification beneath the banner of Arabism. It ignores the fact that the leadership of the Young Arab Society included prominent Muslims, such as Emir

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pan-Islamism, caliphate and jihad projects and their adoption by the great powers during this period was part of the struggle between the colonizing forces. See Barckhausen, *Männer und Mächte am Bosporus,* p. 208; Matuz, *Das Osmanische Reich,* p. 241; Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam,* p. 9; Lewis, *The Emergence,* p. 343 and 408; Peters, "Erneuerungsbewegungen", p. 91–131, esp. p. 119.

[61]   Kramer, *Islam Assembled,* p. 27–30.

[62]   Ǧurǧī Zaydān (1861–1914) was born and schooled in Beirut before moving to Egypt, where he died in Cairo. In Egypt he published the journal *al-Hilāl* and a number of historical novels, including *The Ottoman Revolution (al-Inqilāb al-ʿuṯmānī)*, which describes the situation of the Turks at the end of the reign of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. It also describes the conditions of the Free Ottomans and their secret meetings and the suffering that they underwent in the cause of the Constitution. The novel is punctuated by a description of the life of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd in Yıldız, its palaces and gardens, and the roles that spies and secret agents played there. Events in the novel culminate with the victory of the *ittihat ve terakki* and the declaration of the constitution.

Fayṣal b. aš-Šarīf Ḥusayn and Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā himself, the spiritual father of the new Salafis.

The Islamist narrative portrays the politics of pan-Islamism as emerging from a position of strength, and as successful, but this narrative does not place the movement into its general framework. It remains silent about the fact that both the policy and the idea had been developed in a period when the Ottoman Empire was suffering from a severe famine in Anatolia (1873/1874), followed by national bankruptcy (1875). The Ottoman state suffered significant territorial losses following its crushing defeat in the Turkish-Russian war in 1876/77, when it was also faced with waves of Muslim refugees fleeing the Russian danger in the Caucasus and the Crimea. This was in addition to the harsh consequences of the Berlin agreement of 1878. This policy – if we follow the Islamist narrative and argue that it was consciously devised – was –as Georgeon showes – prevented by the economic and military weakness of the state from being applied in any organized fashion, a point that is not addressed in the Islamist narrative.

It is noteworthy that the Islamist narrative's approach to pan-Islamism focuses on the Arab element in the politics, particularly in its demonstration of the significance of the Arab element in building an Islamic union. This is even more so the case in regard to the religious figures and their role in the project of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. The role of other Muslim actors, such as the Muslims of India, tends to be marginalized, as do the Indonesians, the Kurds, and even the Turks themselves.

Anwar al-Ğundī shows that ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd was keen about Arabs carrying the banner of pan-Islamism. In each Arab region, a "referent" was selected. He also established a special Arab faction, which was incorporated into Sultan's guard and surrounded himself with *aʿyān* (notables) from the Arab provinces, including the sons of the Emir ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ğazāʾirī. A school was set up for the sons of the tribal chiefs, in order to educate their Shaykhs' children and to gain their affection.[63] The Sultan also paid particular attention to the holy sites of Islam, such as Mecca and Medina, which were of central significance to all Muslims, but which were situated in Arab lands. The Islamist historical narrative furthermore emphasizes the Sultan's reliance on the men of religion, particularly Ğamāl ad-Dīn al-Afġānī (the narrative mentions al-Afġānī at this point, although he was not Arab) and their being used for creating inner-Islamic bonds. Religious

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63   Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, p. 185; Rogan, "Aşiret Mektebi".

scholars are credited with a central role in this policy, for Ǧamāl ad-Dīn al-Afġānī was employed by the Sultan to end conflicts between the Sunna and the Shiʿa, as well as between the Turks and the Persians, conflicts that had been incited by colonialism in the region. He also enabled a peace agreement with the Persian Shah.

Anwar al-Ǧundī limits his references to the scholarly class and the Emirs in general and ʿAbd al-Qādir and al-Afġānī in particular. Intellectuals and politicians are absent from the Islamist narrative, despite the fact that ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd awarded a number of these figures key positions in the state administration. These include Aḥmad ʿIzzat al-ʿĀbid[64] and Ḫayr ad-Dīn at-Tūnisī, who as Grand Vizier held the highest position in the state, if only for eight months in 1878/9. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd also gathered a number of Shaykhs from the Arab Sufi-groups (*ṭarīqa)* in his court, such as Shaykh Aḥmad Ẓāfir al-Makkī aš-Šāḏilī of the *šāḏiliyya* order, with which the Sultan himself was affiliated; Shaykh Faḍl al-ʿAlawī, who belonged to one of the most influential tribes of Hadramaut, and Abū al-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī, the Shaykh of the *rifāʿiyya* order. The Islamist narrative ignores the Sufi orders and their role in ʿAbd al-Ḥamīds policies. This neglect, one could argue, relates to the negative attitude that classical Salafism increasingly began to take towards Sufism, particularly after developing (through Riḍā) a more positive stance towards Wahhabism and to the contemporary Salafi approach to the Sufi orders. However, I would argue that by erasing the role of the Sufi orders, the Islamist narrative attributes the policy of pan-Islamism exclusively to its own Islamic framework of reference and to the class of religious scholars, including al-Afġānī that it has appropriated. Thus, it denies that intellectuals, Sufi orders and others played a significant role in this policy.

Studies show that indeed neither the *rifāʿiyya* nor the *šāḏiliyya* had played a relevant role in the politics of the pan-Islamists. Lewis argues that the Sufi orders were engrossed in internal power struggles and that they paid little attention to political developments.[65] In his study of Abū al-Hudā

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[64] For more on this figure see Farah, "Arab Supporters of Sultan Abdülhamid II".

[65] Lewis argues that the role attributed to religious figures within the policy of Islamic union has been exaggerated. Neither the Bektashi nor the Mevlevi showed any interest in the topic, whilst the *rifāʿiyya* and the *šāḏiliyya* were – despite the fact that they were represented at the caliphal court – engrossed in internal rivalry, which had negative consequences for the politics of Islamic union. Lewis also argues that the allied powers exaggerated the threat of this political development during the First World War, when the Muslims continued to support the Turks in their struggle for liberation even after the deposition of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. See Lewis, *The Emer-*

aṣ-Ṣayyādī, Thomas Eich shows that aṣ-Ṣayyādī's writings on the political bond are a small component of his larger works, and that he called for caution in supporting this policy.[66] It is also worth noting that both Shaykh Ẓāfir and Abū al-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī had settled in Istanbul before ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ascended the throne. Their position did not depend on the politics of pan-Islamism. Neither was the employment of the Sufi orders in political games the sole prerogative of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. Prior to his rule the Ottoman policy had supported Abū al-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī and his *rifāʿiyya* order as a means of diminishing the influence of the Bektashi order in the Balkans.[67] The same can be said of Arab intellectuals; the majority of contemporary studies, headed by that of Farah, argue alongside Lewis that the relations between the Arabs in the Chancery (*mâbeyn-i hümâyûn*) were not harmonious ones.[68] He also argues that, despite his proximity and loyalty to the Sultan, ʿIzzat al-ʿĀbid was not the guiding force behind pan-Islamism.[69]

Thus the majority of studies, including the Islamist narrative, are unanimous regarding the absence – or the very limited role – of the Sufi orders, the intellectuals and the politicians in the policy of pan-Islamism. If we, however, take into account the fact that al-Afġānī was not an Arab and that the only services that ʿAbduh undeniably offered and provided to the Sultan were limited to the reform of religious education,[70] then it is not possible to accept the argument of the Islamist narrative that attributes a leading role in this policy to the Arab element. Even if we accept that the politics of

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gence, p. 343 and 408. Thomas Eich's recent detailed study examines the theoretical standards that tend to be applied in studies of Abū al-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī. He locates the intellectual roots of these studies within the heritage of the struggle between "Ottomanism" and "Arabic nationalism". It remained hostage to this imbalance between the two ideas and resulted in "a new imbalance" between two parties; one of them represented by the supporters of modernism, including al-Afġānī, al-Kawākibī, ʿAbduh and Riḍā, and the other by its opponents, which were headed by Abū al-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī. Using a philological analysis of the texts of aṣ-Ṣayyādī and the methodology of network analysis, Eich situates aṣ-Ṣayyādī within the Arabic modernization movement. See Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī,* esp. p. 256–262.

66 Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī,* esp. p. 60–62 and 257.
67 Farah, "Arab supporters of Sultan Abdulhamid II", p. 55.
68 Farah, "Arab supporters of Sultan Abdulhamid II", p. 189 and 194.
69 "A careful scrutiny of his role in light of the documentary evidence and the family archives in Damascus, coupled with interviews of family members, left me convinced that far from being a promoter of Islamism ʿIzzet's main concern was to serve the sultan loyally…" Farah, "Arab supporters of Sultan Abdulhamid II", p. 193.
70 Relatively little is known about the relationship between the Sultan and ʿAbduh. However, more information has come to light with the documents of the Ottoman archive presented by İhsan Süreyya Sırma. See Sırma, *2. Abdülhamid'in İslam Birliği Siyaseti.*

the Empire had opened up towards the Arab provinces as part of the pan-Islamic policies, this does not imply the dominant role of Arab religious figures within the policy, and neither does it allow us to regard this process as "a policy of Arabization" as the Islamist narrative means.

A general orientation towards the Arab provinces and the increasing participation of Arabs within the military and administrative realms, or the palace itself, cannot be denied. This was due to the deliberate policy of regularly exchanging the palace guard as a prudente measure and a means of preventing conspiracies. Similarly, there were Arab figures in influential political positions, such as ʿIzzat al-ʿĀbid and a number of "guests" of the Sultan who were staying in Yildiz (possibly as a means of maintaining them under surveillance?). These "guests" included the Šarīf of Mecca and his family and the Shaykhs of the Sufi orders, including Abū al-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī. Despite this, this policy was not, as the Islamist narrative portrays it, a consciously selected one based on a conviction of Arab superiority. The matter should not be regarded as positive discrimination in favor of the Arabs. Rather, it should be understood, on the one hand, within the context of a policy aiming to compensate for the territorial losses in the Balkans and the subsequent loss in natural and human resources, and on the other, as a propaganda tool in the context of a centralized policy aiming to incorporate the Arab "parts" into the "Ottoman whole" and to link them to the central authority whilst confronting the threat of colonialism in the Arab regions at the same time.

The Ottomanism policy had already proved successful in Albania amongst other regions. It was employed in the Arab provinces for the suppression of national separatist movements, and in the border regions, particularly West Tripoli, to prevent the advance of French colonial forces which had already gained control over the province of Tunisia in 1881. The English had also taken Egypt in 1882 and the Italian ambitions over other regions led the central government to engage the local elites as partners in the political and administrative process and to include them in Ottoman society. This was the means by which ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd was able to acquire wide-reaching popularity in the Arab provinces, particularly Syria.

The *salyane*-lists of 1886 completely reset the balance that had been established in 1877.[71] Whereas in 1877 the first places, and the main interest of the government, were dedicated to the provinces of Rumelia, in 1886

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[71]   See these lists in: Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II*, p. 184–190.

the list was headed by the Arab provinces of Syria, the Hejaz, Baghdad, Basra, Yemen and Aleppo. The change of range obviously marks the change in relative significance of the provinces in terms of attention of the government, allotment of finances etc.

Based on a selective reading of primary sources indicating the proximity between the Arabs and the Sultan, the Islamist narrative asserts that the former played a decisive role in the pan-Islamic policy. Al-Ǧundī argues that the relationship of the Arabs to the pan-Islamic policy was one rooted in history and that the Arabs were the basis and the support for this bond. The ties between the past and the present and the call for Islamic unity – led by the Islamist-Arab movement? – may be implicit, but they are clearly visible to al-Ǧundī.

In the light of the Islamist narrative's new portrayal of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, al-Ǧundī calls for a comprehensive review of the relationship between the Arabs and the Turks. The current relationship is suffering from a false interpretation (al-Ǧundī refers to the historian Layla aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ in this context) of certain historical events, such as the court case against prominent Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals and their hanging in 1916, the Arabic revolution in 1916, which attracted a number of followers from the Arab Peninsula, Greater Syria and Egypt, attempted Turkification, and the surrender of the Arabic countries to western colonial forces. Al-Ǧundī argues that one should distinguish between two periods; the age of the Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and the age of the Unionists. In doing so, one should be aware that the differences were between the Arabs and the followers of the Unionists, and not between the Arabs and the Turks. He calls for a review of the history of these relationships in the light of this decisive point. He also calls for a return to the period before the inauguration of government of the Unionists and Kamalist rule, "this period… which cannot be attributed to the Islamic, Ottoman state."[72]

The personality of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd is seductively employed in the revisionist project of the Islamist narrative. In line with the new political reality in Turkey, the return of Islam to the political stage and the new turn taken in Arab-Turkish relations, which is an exciting one for the Islamist narrative, the Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and through him the Islamic caliphate and pan-Islamism are portrayed as the connecting link between the Arabs and the Turks.

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[72]   Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd*, p. 94.

Through this re-reading of his person and the employment of the caliph uniting the *umma*, the Islamist narrative attempts to revive the Islamic identity as a bond between the Muslims, in a time when the sense of an Israeli danger is increasing and the Arab –Turkish rapprochement is at a high point with the advance of the Islamist movement in Turkey. As the last of the great Ottoman sultans,[73] ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd embodies an example that other politicians would do well to follow, and enables Islam to play a greater political role in order to obtain Islamic unity.

> "And the fact is that the call for Islamic unity has not lessened with time and after many years of regional and nationalist movements, Muslims of today have realized that Islamic unity is the most basic foundation and the correct orientation. All indications now show that Muslims are headed on the path of unity that the Jews and the colonialists had destroyed with the deposition of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and the dissolution of the caliphate."[74]

Thus the Islamist narrative does not diverge from the viewpoint of classical Salafism regarding the question of governance in Islam. The idea of Islamic unity carries the same weight in its discourse, although the term caliphate is limited to a historical context.

At this point, it is worth drawing attention to an aspect, which, despite its importance, has been overlooked in the accounts of the caliphate, both by the twentieth century Islamist historical narratives and the various other studies that have been made of the subject. These accounts tend to concentrate on the political dimension and on the role of the institution of the caliphate as the guarantor of the unity of the *umma*, within the bounds of the political project entitled "Pan-Islamism". Thus they overlook the fact that this institution was deeply rooted in Muslim consciousness as a religious necessity. The choice of a caliph (follower) of the Prophet was not only relevant for the administration of political affairs for the developing *umma* and for its unity in the early history of the Muslim community; it was also linked in a practical sense to urgent religious questions such as the leadership of the prayer, and the administration of the taxes of *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa*.

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[73]   Ḥarb, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd aṯ-ṯānī*.
[74]   Al-Ǧundī, *as-Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd,* p. 91.

Al-Māwardī, who lived and wrote under Abbasid rule from the end of the tenth until the middle of the eleventh century AD, was an eye-witness to the fundamental political developments taking place in this period and giving rise to the weakness of the institution of the caliphate and the establishment of what he called "the authority of conquest and dominion". The institution of the caliphate seemed on the verge of collapse, and on the periphery of the Empire anyone possessing the necessary military means was able to seize power and become the de facto ruler. Al-Māwardī's description of political power offers a religious justification for the situation around him. It describes a political system in which the institution of the caliphate coexists with the "authority of conquest" and in which the caliph is forced to concede some of his authority. In al-Māwardī's portrayal the caliphal institution, or the caliph, remains the source of legitimacy for the ruler. Thus he is an essential political sanction for the de facto leader. The caliph allows the leader to remain in his position as a local ruler, partly for the unity of the *umma*, but also so that the religious duties are upheld. That is, so that the "deputized leader" may lead his subjects in their religion, as their imam in prayer or as the collector of *zakāt* taxes. Here al-Māwardī regards the caliphate as a fundamental religious necessity.

With the spread of colonialism at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of Ottoman provinces fell to the colonial powers and became European, Christian protectorates. In the light of this new political reality (which in many ways corresponded to the fate of the Abbasid Empire at the end of its epoch, when it broke up into a number of smaller statelets and eventually collapsed in the face of the Mongol conquest) new religious questions became relevant. If these lands were not regarded as part of the Ottoman Empire then what was the situation of the Muslims who lived in these regions, which had become isolated from the *dār al-Islām*? What was the ruling about the validity of the Muslim's prayer, in a region that was now subject to a ruler that was neither Muslim, nor gained his legitimacy from the Muslim caliph? What was the ruling regarding the *zakāt and ṣadaqa*? It was not a coincidence that the question of reviving the caliphate[75] arose in this context in particular. This led to the focus on the religious, spiritual aspect of the position of the caliph during

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[75]   It is noteworthy here that Ottoman Sultans did not use the title *Ḫalīfa* or the title *Amīr al-Muʾ miūn* until the end of the eighteenth century, when a legend began to circulate saying that the last caliph of the Abbasid dynasty al-Mutawakkil who then resided in Cairo, transferred the title *Ḫalīfa* to the Ottoman Sultan Salīm, when he conquered Egypt in 1517. See: Şener, "The Four Pillars", p. 15.

the reign of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II, who referred to himself as the caliph of the Muslims in the Ottoman-Russian treaty Küçük Kaynarca of 1774, and who styled himself a religious authority for the Muslim minority in Russia. His legitimacy was not limited to the – undeniably important – political aspect, but also represented a response to the bewilderment and confusion that had overtaken the Muslim subjects and was widespread in the new political situation.

In the light of the ending of the Sultanate, and the continuance of the institution of the caliphate in 1923, Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā responded to the changed circumstances by looking towards a form of spiritual caliphate. Thus he reacted to the political changes that had occurred and searched for a way out of the state of bewilderment by regarding the caliphate as a religious necessity. The situation changed completely in 1924, when the caliphate was abolished. In the absence of the central spiritual institution from which all other institutions, religious and political, drew their legitimation, religious thought found itself at a dead end.

ʿAlī ʿAbd ar-Rāziq showed that the institution of the caliphate did not rest on a religious text, but was historically inherited. Also the Contemporary Islamic thought would prove incapable of handling the roots of the matter as long as the conviction of the caliphate as religious necessity was maintained.

Conclusion

The Islamist narrative's portrayal of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd can be summarized as bearing three main characteristics. The first is the caliph as the defender of Palestine, which serves as an ideological instrument in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The second is the shrewd politician who emerges victorious from the variety of plots for his downfall, particularly that of the Jews. This aspect plays an important ideological role in a conflict in which the Western and Jewish-Zionist forces symbolize the forces of evil and the Islamic countries, whether of the past in their embodiment in the Ottoman state or the present, chiefly represented by Palestine, constitute the innocent victims. The third is the caliph who created the caliphate and pan-Islamism. The examples referred to in this article show that the historical review adopted by the Islamist narrative has resulted in an idealized portrayal in which the Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd is sanctified even mythologized. The portrayal is by necessity a static one, which does not take account of the social and polit-

ical changes which occurred within and outside the state. Neither does it do justice to the person of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, which influenced his policy and which, if we take it into account, would render a dynamic, active portrayal rather than a static one.

Corresponding to this idealistic portrayal of ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, the rhetoric of the Islamist narrative regarding his person is a defensive one, merging with a defensive rhetoric about Islam itself. This aspect dominates the written production of what is called the historical review that the Islamist movement, whether Turkish – Kleinert refers to this phenomenon frequently in her book[76] – or Arab, has adopted. But what is its source?

It is my personal view that the defensive rhetoric concerning Islam is not born out of the Turkish historical retrospective which reached its height with Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's writings in the 1960's,[77] nor is it a product of the Arab historical retrospective which reached its apogee in the 1970s and 1980s.

A close examination of the arguments of the Islamist narrative of the nineteenth century brings us to the roots of the defensive rhetoric about Islam. And with this we return to the topic from the beginning of this article; classical Salafism, the person of al-Afġānī, and the two events that clearly demonstrate the new defensive mode of discussing Islam that the Islamist narrative, or more precisely, the Salafi rhetoric, had acquired during the nineteenth century. The first one is a lecture given by al-Afġānī in Istanbul in 1870, at the invitation of Ḥasan al-Ḥusaynī, the Dean of the Dār al-Funūn. The lecture reflects the defensive position that al-Afġānī adopts towards Islam, in the face of its characterization as the cause of Muslim underdevelopment. Al-Afġānī argues that the backward state of the Muslims is purely the result of its prohibition of philosophy and indifference to sciences. The second is his correspondence[78] with the French intellectual Ernst Renan following his lecture *L'lslamisme et la Science* that he gave at

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[76] Kleinert, *Die Revision.*

[77] Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1905–1983) was a Turkish poet, novelist and dramatist. In 1935 he began what he described as a religious and artistic struggle, in which he published a number of articles and studies discussing religious and political subjects. The journal *Büyük Doğu* was one of his most important publications. His literary career culminated with the book *Ulu Hakan II Abdülhamid Han.* Muḥammad Ḥarb translated his play *Bir Adam Yaratmak* into Arabic, thus enabling the Arabic readers to learn about his work and thought.

[78] After reading its contents ʿAbduh – and the Islamists after him – refused to allow the publication of a translation of this, out of concern that the scholars of al-Azhar would confront him with the charge of heresy. See: Ende, "Waren Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Afġānī und Muḥammad ʿAbduh Agnostiker?", p. 653–655; Hildebrandt, "Waren Ǧamāl

the Sorbonne on 29th March 1883. The French thinker argued that Muslim regression is caused neither by academic underdevelopment, military backwardness, or anything resembling this. Rather, he attributes the state of the Muslim world to the religion and faith of Islam, thus accusing Islam directly. Here again, al-Afġānī champions rational interpretation as the solution, whilst defending what has now become a whole entity "Islam" against accusations of being irrational and anti-philosophical.

Renan's lecture resulted in a qualitative change in the Orientalist discourse about Islam, and this in turn resulted in a qualitative change in Islamic intellectual discourse.

The statistics of Daniel Kinitz's study of the language of *al-Manār* mentioned at the beginning of this article reflect the fundamental effect of this argument on the thought of the intellectuals; he shows that the term *dīn* which prevails in the editions of *al-Manār* at the end of the nineteenth century is replaced by the term *islām* in the first decade of the twentieth century, which is a direct indication of a new use of the term. Thus, in addition to the social and political changes, Ḥasan al-Bannā following Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā as editor-in-chief of *al-Manār* played a role in the choice and selection of terms used in the texts and more generally in the later writings of the Islamist movement.

Gradually, the intellectual Salafi discourse changed to become a rhetoric defending "Islam under attack", the "defense" consisting largely of historical arguments. Thus the historical retrospective began a selective process of rewriting or reimagining specific events and persons, in which these served to vindicate Islam from the accusations directed at it by the European discourse. This new relevance becomes especially clear in the modern Islamist historiographical narratives, in which the defensive position is most apparent. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, the defender of Palestine, the victorious politician, the caliph reviving the caliphate and the creator of pan-Islamism, is used here – as in the Turkish texts – as a historical argument in the defensive rhetoric about Islam. In this rhetoric, the retrospective text makes recourse to history or Islamic heritage, selecting persons and events from

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al-Dīn al-Afġānī und Muḥammad ʿAbduh Neo-Muʿtaziliten?", p. 207–262; Keddie, "The Pan-Islamic Appeal", p. 28–43.

This response was published, as Ende noticed in his article, in the appendix to the French translation of "*Ressalah e Natscheri*a" in 1942. See: Goichon, *Réfutation*.

But a translation into Arabic had to wait until 1997, when the Tunisian al-Ḥaddād published, "An-naṣṣ al-ḥaqīqī", in: https://sirajmonir.wordpress.com/2013/08/09.

it and rewriting their context to employ them as historical argument in the apologetics of Islam.

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