

Bashir Ahmad Ansari¹

University of Malaya

Malaysia

Original scientific paper

<https://doi.org/10.54561/prj1601027a>

Date received: December 28, 2020

Date accepted: January 23, 2021

Amer Abdulwahab Murshed²

University of Malaya

Malaysia

GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MUSLIM WORLD: ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

Abstract

After its victory over Greece and the Treaty of Lausanne, the Turkish Republic declared its inability to bear the responsibility for Muslims. For the second time in the history of Islam, the Muslim World found itself without an institution representing them, speaking on their behalf, and defending their causes. This resounding collapse of historic Ottoman Caliphate caused peaceful and violent reactions from time to time, which continues to echo in the horizons of the Muslim World as of today. This paper explores efforts made by the governments of the Muslim majority countries and their peoples through popular and governmental conferences, with the aim of establishing global/ international organizations with legal status that includes representatives of Muslim countries and communities, and work to support Muslim solidarity and unity.

Keywords: Muslim world, caliphate, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Organization

Introduction: The Struggle to Lead the Muslim World

On March 3, 1924, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk announced the abolition of the Caliphate in Turkey. His move caused two types of reactions, the first reaction was by a group that welcomed the fall of the Caliphate and another that tried to revive it again. The political and religious thinkers of the Muslim World, from Indonesia and India to North Africa, made many calls, and held many conferences and meetings to revive the Caliphate, which they considered a religious duty and a political necessity, which would bring Muslims together and ensure their unity and solidarity. The first initiative came from the isolated Ottoman Caliph Abdulmejid II (1868-1944) himself who held a press conference in Switzerland a few days after the Caliphate was abol-

1 Bashir Ahmad Ansari received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Malaya. Besides teaching at various Universities, including the Southern Methodist University in Dallas (TX), Ansari is Director of the "Department of Dialogue" as well as "Voice of Wisdom: Center for Dialogue, Peace and Understanding" at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Contact E-mail: bashir_ansari@hotmail.com

2 Amer Abdulwahab Murshed received his Ph.D. from International Islamic University Malaysia. Currently holds a position of a Senior Lecturer at the Academy of Islamic Studies of the University of Malaya. His most recent work has been published in *Afkar*. Contact E-mail: almurshed_19@yahoo.com

ished, and considered the abolition decision issued by the Turkish Parliament null and void³ - calling on the leaders of the Muslim World and representatives of Islamic societies to organize an international conference to discuss the consequences of the decision to abolish the Caliphate.

The call was meant to organize an international conference that brings together representatives of the Muslim World and from which a new international organization would emerge throughout the Muslim World even before the abolition of the Caliphate.⁴ There were calls in Turkey itself proposing to hold a conference for delegates of the Muslim World in Astana, Turkey, with the aim of looking at the issue of the political unity of Muslims that gains the support of the Muslim World and societies.⁵ Some figures in Turkey were expressing their concerns in the event that if they let the Muslim World establish its institutions and choose its leaders, where this *Maqam* (position) may be taken by a Russian Muslim or an Indian Muslim who could be under Russian or British authority. The *Al-Qibla Newspaper* wrote that if the Turks abandon the leadership of the Muslim World, there are three candidates in the Muslim World who see themselves as worthy of this position, namely: King Amanullah of Afghanistan; King Hussein of Hejaz; King Yusef of Morocco; King Fuad of Egypt, and Imam Yahya of Yemen.⁶ Among the five candidates, Imam Yahya of Yemen had little chance due to his affiliation with the Zaidi Shiite sect, and the state of Afghanistan and Morocco, which are located on the borders of the central Islamic world, was not realistic to assume leadership. If the struggle for the leadership of the Muslim World came to surface out of ambition of Kings and Sultans, then the volatile international relations at the time and the competition of the colonial powers over the Muslim World in the early twentieth century was another element to be considered in this equation, namely the European colonial powers.

Three days after the abolition of the Caliphate, the *Al-Qibla Newspaper*, published in Mecca,⁷ began focusing on the importance of the Arabs in assuming the leadership of Muslims and their unity, and how non-Arabs deprived Arabs and the Qureshis of their ancestors' heritage and their right to rule.⁸ This focus came as a prelude to announcing the pledge of allegiance to the people of the Hejaz, Yemen, Syria, Palestine and Eastern Jordan to the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, the successor of the Muslims' rule.⁹ Bay'ah (pledge) to him took place amid tumultuous celebrations in Mecca, Medina, Jeddah and inside the Grand Mosque.¹⁰

3 İhsanoğlu Ekmeleddin, *The Islamic World and the Challenges of the Twentieth Century*, Dar Al-Shourok, Beirut, 2013, p. 40.

4 *Al-Qibla Newspaper*, 1 December 1923, p. 15.

5 Ibidem.

6 Nurullah Ardic, *Islam and the Politics of Secularism: The Caliphate and Middle Eastern Modernization in the Early 20th Century*, Routledge, New York, 2012, p. 85.

7 *Al Qibla* was the first Arab Hashemite newspaper published in Mecca. It reflects the official position of state of Hijaz and its leader Sharif Hussein, who was known by Sharif of Mecca. This newspaper used to publish the news of Arab Revolt against Ottoman Empire and promote the ambitions of Hussein in order to transfer the caliphate to Arabs and sit on its throne.

8 According to the traditional political-jurisprudence of Islam, Qurayshite lineage is a mandatory requirement for a Caliphate.

9 *Al-Qibla Newspaper*, 6 March 1924, p. 31.

10 Ibidem.

King Hussein bin Ali Al-Hashimi, who was ruling the Hejaz, declared himself the leader of Muslims under the pretext that it is not permissible for Muslims to remain without a Caliph for more than three days. News of his appointment spread in the Muslim World. This announcement did not bring about any reaction implications for two reasons: Muslims considered him an arm of the Britain's policy in the Hejaz, and that the British themselves betrayed and abandoned him. By that the most vocal and ambitious candidate who emerged from the ranks of contenders for the leadership of the Muslim World was knocked out of the Caliphate's competition circuit.¹¹

The second candidate was King Fuad of Egypt, where the question of leadership of the Muslim World and the whole East, turned into an important issue in Egypt between 1924 and 1939. King Fuad was trying to take advantage of his influence over Al-Azhar and Egypt's civilizational position on one side, and his relations with the British on the other; The status of Egypt and its geographical, political and cultural position was unique among Muslim countries in addition of having large number of religious scholars in the country; King Fuad aspired to exploit this position to enhance his local prestige and heighten Egypt's international status.

Less than a month after the abolition of the Caliphate (on March 25, 1924), Sheikh Al-Azhar issued a statement to Muslims informing them that Egypt would hold a conference that would bring together representatives of Muslim countries and communities to Cairo to discuss the issue of Muslim unity and choose a successor to the Caliph for them. In this regard, the New York Times published a report entitled "Talk of Fuad as Caliph" and stated that something was being cooked-up in Egypt.¹² In March 1926, Muhammad Rashid Rida¹³ wrote about Egypt's initiative to call for a conference about the Caliphate and to send the invitation for it with the signature of the president of the conference, Sheikh Al-Azhar Mosque who serves as the head of Religious Institutions in Egypt, to the heads of Islamic governments including kings, sultans, princes, heads of communities, and intellectual leaders, Muslim scholars in different countries, the scholars of the four Sunni Muslim doctrines, the Salafists of Najd, the people of Hadith in India, and the people of the Muslim Direction (Qiblah). The meeting aimed at uniting Muslims, the organizers claimed. It is worth noting that this call faced the opposition of Hussein bin Ali in Mecca, who began attacking the Sheikhs of Al-Azhar and those standing behind the conference under the pretext that they were ignoring the *fait accompli*.

The invitation for the conference was sent out in February 1926, signed by Muhammad Abu al-Fadl, Sheikh of Al-Azhar Mosque and President of the General Islamic Conference on the Caliphate, to all Islamic nations to consider the matter of their unity from a religious point of view, reminding them of the decision of the

11 In June 1929, the Afghan candidate of Caliphate, King Amanullah Lhan, was forced to leave the country due to the popular revolution on the one hand and the British conspiracy on the other. Within a year of that, other candidate of the Caliphate, the king of Morocco died.

12 *New York Times*, 22 March 1924, p. 4.

13 Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) was an early most influential reformist in Egypt. In 1898, he launched the journal of *al-Manar*, and wrote a series of articles on the issue of Caliphate.

major Islamic religious scholarly body in the Egyptian lands that was issued on Tuesday 19 Shaban, 1342 H, (March 25, 1924) in this regard, and that the conference will be headed by the Sheikh of Al-Azhar Mosque himself. The invitation stated that this gathering is the first general Islamic conference in which Muslims meet in May 1926. In order to fulfill the obligation to consider their most important religious affairs, and that the unity of Muslims is of importance that nothing else could alter it because it promotes religion and its people, and encourages solidarity among Muslims, and links them by a strong and solid bond. He added that the duty of Muslims is to consider this matter and lay its foundations on rules that are consistent with the rulings of the Islam, and do not ignore the Islamic systems that Muslims have accepted as the foundation for their rule.¹⁴

The conference was held in Cairo in 1926, between May 13 and 19, with the participation of delegations from British India, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Poland, South Africa, Yemen, Hejaz (Saudi Arabia), Palestine and Egypt. Since most of the Muslim World was under British colonial control, the delegates attended in their personal capacity. It is worth noting that no delegate from independent Islamic countries at the time, such as Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, Russia, and what is known by Saudi Arabia today, participated in this conference.

Despite Egypt's Royal Palace's support for the conference, a low number attended and The King Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia who had promised to attend, did not show up, and the invitation to the conference faced opposition from some Egyptian parties and personalities and newspapers such as the *Egyptian* of Saadi Wafid Party, and *Al-Siyasa* Newspaper affiliated with the Constitutional Party under the pretext that the call for such a conference is not within the mandate of religious scholars and that it is one of the rights of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and that the conference harms and does not benefit Egypt's regional leadership. Some prominent Sufi leaders also launched a campaign against this conference, led by Sheikh Muhammad Ma i Abu al-Aza'im,¹⁵ who called for choosing an independent country which is not under foreigner control to be a center to this institution to protect it from political whims and colonial domination and aggression. Sheikh Abu al-Aza'im played a prominent role in convincing the public opinion that Egypt at the time was not fit to be the headquarters of this institution.¹⁶

In addition to the internal opposition in Egypt, some representatives of Muslim societies rejected the idea of representing the King of Egypt at the conference, where the British army flags were raised, and opposition escalated within the conference against King Fuad. The Cairo conference failed to achieve its goals and the matter ended with the necessity to hold another Islamic conference in which Muslim peoples are better represented. The Cairo conference confined itself to calling on Muslims not to ignore the issue of unity of Muslims and representation of all Mus-

14 Muhammad Rashid Rida, "The Caliphate Conference", *Al-Manar Magazine*, 10 March 1926, p. 53.

15 Madi Abulazayem (1869-1937) was an Egyptian religious leader and Sufi figure who stood up with Ottoman camp against British during the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

16 Muhammad Rashid Rida, "The Caliphate Conference"...

lim *Ummah* in a country of their choice in order to discuss the measures that will be taken to establish the Caliphate.

To get out of the embarrassment caused by the failure of the Cairo conference, Sheikh Muhammad al-Zawahiri, who later took over the position of Sheikh of Al-Azhar and opposed the Cairo conference, suggested that "electing a Muslim leader through a subsequent conference will fulfill all the requirements of Sharia, on the condition that the representation of Islamic countries at that conference increases as electing that leader should be by agreed upon among Muslims".¹⁷

The third candidate to lead the Muslim World was King Abdulaziz Al Saud, who took control of the Hejaz and became the legitimate king in January 1926. As it was mentioned earlier, one month after his inauguration, he received an invitation in February 1926 to attend the Islamic conference in Cairo, which was scheduled to be held on May 13, 1926, through which Al-Azhar was seeking to inaugurate King Fuad as leader of Muslims, so King Abdulaziz took a wary stance against the conference and did not attend after initially accepting the invitation.

After the failure of the Cairo conference, King Abdulaziz found an opportunity to organize another Islamic conference to be held in the Mecca. On June 19 of the same year, and shortly after the Cairo conference, King Abdul Aziz organized an international Islamic conference of his own entitled "Islamic Conference" in Mecca, attended by dozens of delegates from Java, Najd, Lebanon, Egypt, the Indian Caliphate Association, the Association of People Al-Hadith Al-Hindi, the delegation of Asir, the delegation of Syria, the delegation of Egypt¹⁸, the delegation of Russia and Turkestan, the Hejaz delegation, the Caliphate Association in the Nile Valley, the Indian Association of Scholars, the delegation of Palestine, the delegation of Sudan, Turkey and Afghanistan. This conference caused an international uproar due to being held in the most important holy land in the Muslim World, in Mecca, and during the most important annual event in the Islamic calendar, the Hajj (pilgrimage). Therefore, some Western newspapers described the Mecca conference as a "League of Islamic Nations".¹⁹ Among the topics discussed at the conference was the decision to set up a foundational framework through a permanent organization called the "Islamic World Conference" to meet on a regular basis every year. King Abdulaziz invited eighteen kings and presidents, some of whom accepted the invitation and others rejected it, like the Shah of Iran who rejected King Abdulaziz's invitation due to the destruction of Shia shrines and rejected their sanctity by *Salafis* of King's supporters.²⁰

The difference between the Cairo conferences and the Mecca conference, and perhaps the reason for the success of the latter and the failure of the former is that

17 İhsanoğlu Ekmeleddin, *The Islamic World and the Challenges of the Twentieth Century*. . . p. 42.

18 It is striking that Egypt participated in the conference despite the failure of its conference one month before the Mecca conference, and the representative of Egypt, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ahmad Al-Zawahiri, Sheikh of Al-Azhar, was present. This explains that Sheikh Al-Zawahiri himself was opposed to the conference that was held in Cairo.

19 Albert Howe Lybyer, *A Moslem League of Nations*, *Current History*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1926, p. 278.

20 Ibidem, p. 280.

the discussions of the Mecca Conference took place on the basis of general Muslim affairs and ways to unify their positions on social and religious affairs. The conference discussed their various issues rather than revolving around the Caliphate, unlike the Cairo conference, which was aimed at the political unity of Muslims and inaugurating the king of Egypt as their leader.

The Islamic Conference and the birth of the notion of Islamic organizations

King Abdulaziz Al Saud inaugurated the Mecca Conference with a speech to the delegates thanking them for attending and considered the meeting “the first meeting in the history of Islam”. He expressed hope that this good year would be repeated every year, indicating that in the past times there was no value to what is called in the modern era by the local public opinion, so that rulers refer to it to decide what should be reformed in Islam, and the impact it leaves on people. He added that when things got sorted out in the Hejaz, and the people who are in charge of Muslims told him to trust in God, and go on, he held an Islamic conference which he had promised to hold before. When the war in the Hejaz ended by handing him the reins of the country, the majority of the people in the Hejaz saw that it is not in their interest to wait for an Islamic conference because they are not sure of holding it, nor are they confident that who is going to attend it. The invitation to hold the conference was not an excuse that would allow him to disagree with these people, and that if he disagreed with them without a legitimate excuse, they would not obey him. He said that delegates are free in their conference, and the government of the country does not restrict them to anything beyond their commitment to its rulings by their religion, except for one issue, which is not to engage in international politics, and the disagreement between Muslim nations and their governments. He mentioned that Muslims had been decimated by the division of sects, so they started to unite and cooperate for their common interests, and to prevent the difference of sects and races from being a cause of enmity between Muslims.²¹ It seems that King Abdulaziz knew the sensitivity of the issue of the Caliphate in international relations and was good at dealing with balance of power in international and regional relations. Therefore, most of the issues discussed were related to Hajj, Umrah, the Two Holy Mosques, and doctrinal matters related to rituals and Islamic solidarity in general. At the end of the conference, a final document was issued that was not signed by some delegations, such as the Egyptian, Turkish and Afghan delegations,

21 Muhammad Rashid Rida, “The Caliphate Conference”... p. 59.

on the grounds of the need to consult with their governments. But the real reason behind not signing the documents was statements made by King Abdulaziz referring to some issues such as the annexation of Aqaba and Ma'an²² to the Kingdom of Hejaz, which was considered by the delegations of the three countries international issues that fall outside their mandate, demanding sufficient time to discuss the issue with their governments. At the end, the statement was announced and the participants agreed that the conference would be held periodically during the Hajj season every year.²³

In Ankara, in spite of all the changes that took place, from abolishing the Caliphate to changing laws, the president of the republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, one year after this conference, responded positively to its proposals. In October 1927, Mustafa Kemal suggested that when the Muslim communities in Europe, Asia and Africa obtain their independence, then the representatives of these countries could meet and establish an organization for a joint action. His opinion was in line with the opinion of the Indian Muslim philosopher Muhammad Iqbal. Ataturk said that it is not reasonable to assign the process of confronting the problems and challenges of the Muslim World and managing them to one person or one country.²⁴

The conference ended without deciding anything about the leadership of Muslims, and it was not held again during the Hajj season, as the conferees decided to, but it continued to be held until the 1960s at other times. After its first meeting in Mecca in 1926, its second meeting was held in Jerusalem in 1931 at the invitation of the Grand Mufti of Palestine Muhammad Amin Al-Husseini, and its third meeting was held in 1949. The fourth meeting was held in 1951 in Karachi at the invitation of the Pakistani Muslim Brotherhood Association.²⁵ The fifth session was in Baghdad in 1962, when the conference system and its permanent constitution were approved, and its organizational bodies and regional offices were formed in the Muslim World, and the sixth meeting was held in Mogadishu in 1964, and the seventh meeting was held in Amman in 1967.

After the Al-Buraq Revolution in 1929,²⁶ Muslim politicians such as Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Palestine and others began to feel the need to consult with Islamic leaders inside and outside Palestine to hold an Islamic conference in Jerusalem. In July 1931, Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti and Chairman of the Supreme Islamic Council

22 The two cities of Aqaba and Ma'an are located at the border of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and they were part of the Kingdom of Hejaz (1916–1925). In May 1925, Ibn Saud gave up the Aqaba and Ma'an districts of the Hejaz and it became part of British Emirate of Transjordan. In 1965, Saudi Arabia and Jordan agreed to finalize the Jordan–Saudi Arabia border.

23 Albert Howe Lybyer, *A Moslem League of Nations* . . . p. 282.

24 İhsanoğlu Ekmeleddin, *The Islamic World and the Challenges of the Twentieth Century* . . . p. 44.

25 This association is deferent than Muslim brotherhood of Egypt.

26 Al-Buraq is the western wall of the Noble Sanctuary, for it represents for the Jews the last remnants of the Temple of Suliman, for which Jews pray since the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD and dispersed its worshipers in every direction, and it is the place on which the Messenger of Islam, peace and blessings of God be upon him, ascended to Al-Buraq which carried him from Mecca to Jerusalem and from there to Heaven. The claim of ownership by the Jews was a cause of tension that resulted in violent disturbances in August of 1929 between Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem and in many parts of Palestine, which was known as "Al-Buraq Revolution".

in Palestine, called for an Islamic conference in Jerusalem to consult regarding the situation of the Muslim World, especially the Palestinian issue. The conference was held in Jerusalem in the month of Rajab (December), and the organizers chose the appropriate time and place. The place is the city of Jerusalem, and the time was Rajab 27, as they corresponded with the anniversary of Isra and Mi'raj, in order to win the support of Muslims.

The migration of Jews to Palestine and the establishment of a state for them on its soil imposed itself on the conference sessions. The conference was attended by 145 delegates representing various Muslim countries and societies, some of them were from the top personalities of the Muslim World, including Muhammad Rashid Rida, Imam Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-Ghita, Daa al-Din al-Tabatabai, the former Prime Minister of Iran, Abdulaziz al-Tha'albi, the Tunisian leader, Indian philosopher Muhammad Iqbal and Shawkat Ali from India, Muhammad Ali Allouba from Egypt, Prince Said Al-Jazaery, Saeed Thabet, Bashir Al-Saawi, Shukri Al-Quwatli, Riyy Al-Solh, Omar Al-Daouk, Mustafa Al-Ghalayini, Abdel-Rahman Azzam from Egypt, Sadiq Muhammad Zabara from Yemen, Muhammad Ali-jani from Palestine and Raouf Basha from Ceylon, Sheikh Izzat Darwaza and Amin al-Husseini from Palestine, and others.²⁷

The conferees discussed the appropriate means to preserve the holy sites in Palestine and the establishment of an Islamic University in Jerusalem and the appropriate means to face challenges posed by international powers such as Jewish migration, the mandate system, French policies in North Africa, Russian policies in Central Asia, Italian policies in Libya and others. Jerusalem was chosen as the headquarters for the conference, and the participants agreed to establish a university and hold an international conference every two years and formed an executive council of 25 members: three from Egypt, four from India, four from northwest Africa, one from Persia, one from Java, one from Turkey and one from Bosnia. The founding and organizational bylaws of the conference were drawn up and the president and his deputies were elected. One of the conference's biggest successes was ending the war between Saudi Arabia and Yemen in 1934.²⁸

This meeting was distinguished from the first conference in 1926 by the interest or opposition? it aroused among colonial powers and the Zionist movement. This negative view of the Jerusalem conference was primarily due to the independence of its delegates. Britain asked the Mufti al-Husseini and the Muslim leader Shawkat Ali not to expose the conference to issues that contradict the positions of the great powers, especially the issue of the Caliphate. France showed a lot of reservations and put pressure on the Islamic figures in its colonies so that they do not respond

²⁷ In 1931, the General Islamic Conference convened in the city of Jerusalem: *Dunia Al-Watan Newspaper*, 7 December 2017, p. 5.

²⁸ Masri Nasri, Controversy over the Islamic Conference in Jerusalem in 1931, *Cultural Papers: The Journal of Arts and Human Sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 2020, p. 145.

positively to the invitation to the conference, as it mandated its consul in Jerusalem to meet with the British High Commissioner to inform him of his country's discomfort with the conference. Italy, which had executed the Libyan Muslim hero Omar al-Mukhtar three months before the conference, informed the British government of its position and that it considers every recommendation by the conference about Italian policy in Libya an unfriendly act. As for the Zionist movement, it first tried to push the European powers to prevent the conference from taking place, and when it failed in its attempt, it worked to thwart it by other means to disrupt the conference.²⁹ As for Turkey, its Foreign Minister announced that Britain had given the official guarantee that the issue of succession of the Caliph would not be discussed. The strongest voices against the conference came from Egypt. It is said that there were contacts between Hajj Amin al-Husseini and some of Egypt's officials about the conference, and he denied the issue of the Caliphate was on the agenda. As for King Abdullah in Transjordan, he launched a campaign against the conference, as he began financing Palestinian politicians' opponents of Hajj Amin to hold an opposition conference, which they called the "Muslim *Umma* Conference".³⁰ The *Mir'at al-Sharq* Newspaper devoted its writings throughout the conference to criticize it. As for King Faisal of Iraq, he expressed his objection to the conference by refraining from sending an official Iraqi delegation to participate.³¹

The Jerusalem conference caused a great resonance among Muslims who live in Europe, North America and Latin America, some of whom participated in the conference. In September 1935, on the initiative of Egyptian journalist Muhammad Salem and Lebanese reformer Shakib Arslan, another Islamic conference was held in Geneva that brought together Muslim activists from the edges of Europe, as well as representatives from Russia, Palestine and North Africa. The aim of the conference was to strengthen the bonds of cooperation and solidarity among Muslims. In spite of the impact of these conferences in raising the level of awareness of Muslim societies, it was not able to achieve concrete goals to establish a global body.

The birth of the idea of solidarity

With the end of the colonial era and the emergence of nation-states, the need for Islamic solidarity appeared again, and the Muslim World saw international initiatives for cooperation between the countries of the Islamic World. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu points to several factors that prompted the emergence of this trend, as independent Muslim countries wanted to highlight their sovereignty through cooperation with other independent countries of the world, especially Muslim countries.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Ibidem.

The second factor was independent leaders expressing their patriotism through cooperation with countries that share history, religion and civilization with them.³² The third factor was the need for economic cooperation, especially among Muslim countries. The occupation of Muslim lands and the waging of wars against them fueled feelings of anger, which in turn led to solidarity between these countries and peoples.³³

This tendency for solidarity among modern Muslim nation-states has not received much appreciation and welcoming even within these Muslim countries compared to the issue of the Caliphate, where voices have arisen saying that the mere recognition of modern political entities is considered as an abandonment of the idea of the Caliphate. This trend was expressed by a senior leader of the All-India Muslim League Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman who said: "If Muslims begin to recognize Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan as Islamic countries, then they will be guilty because they contribute to dividing the Islamic nation and by doing so they make any progress towards unifying Islamic countries in any form as an association, federation, impossible.

After the end of the Second World War, many leaders of Muslim countries took initiatives to establish an Islamic entity that would help realize the dream of unity and solidarity among the world Muslim community and to face the challenges that faced them. Among the most prominent attempts to establish an international entity on the basis of the civilized identity of Muslims, were attempts by Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Pakistan. Two years after the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, a world Islamic conference was held in February 1949 in Karachi, the then capital of Pakistan, inaugurated by Liaquat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan. In addition to the 1949 and 1951 conferences that were held in Karachi, Pakistan held the first Islamic economic conference by scholars in the early fifties. In addition to this conference, two other conferences were held, an economic conference in Tehran in 1950 and a conference on Islamic unity in 1952 in Karachi, Pakistan.

All these efforts led to the emergence of the General Islamic Conference in 1954, in which Pakistan along with Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia played a fundamental role. The Charter of this institution focused on educational and cultural activities in addition to political goals. A General Secretariat was established in Cairo, but it did not last long, and Pakistan withdrew from it in 1957. Following this, differences in views erupted between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which led to the suspension of the conference in 1958. Soon after, Egypt transformed it into an Egyptian body named the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs.³⁴

32 This trend justified the attempts to establish an "Islamic bloc" in the United Nations since the first months of its founding. Two main issues prompted the unification efforts of Muslim countries, was to welcome the independence of new blocs from colonialism; and to oppose the establishment of the State of Israel. See more in: Abdullah Ahsan, *Organization of the Islamic Conference: A Study of an Islamic Policy Institution*, translated by Abdulaziz Al-Fayez, Al-Farazdaq Commercial Printing Press, Riyadh, 1990, p. 42.

33 İhsanoğlu Ekmeleddin, *The Islamic World and the Challenges of the Twentieth Century*. . . p. 47.

34 Ibidem, p. 49.

The Saudi-Egyptian conflict and the birth of the League

In the 1950s, in the midst of the Cold War that cast a shadow over the Muslim World, the call for Muslim unity took a new turn. At this stage and in the Middle East, which is the heart of the Muslim World, no voice was louder than the voice of Arab nationalism and its hero Gamal Abdel Nasser, as Arab nationalists began to dominate the political power in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Algeria, combining revolutionism, Arabism and socialism. During this period, a dispute arose between the Arabist trend and the Islamic trend, and the Arab world was divided into two camps, one led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and the other led by Faisal bin Abdul Aziz, King of Saudi Arabia. As soon as King Faisal ascended the throne of the kingdom, calling for an Islamic alliance became one of his country's foreign policy priorities.

Given the difficulty of healing the political rift between the two aforementioned currents, King Faisal initiated the call for a new Islamic conference held in Mecca on the fourth day of Eid Al-adha on 18 May 1962, and announced the establishment of the Muslim World League (MWL) by a decision of the Islamic Conference to be subject to Saudi law but it is authorized to work in all Muslim countries. The League Council consisted of sixty personalities representing peoples, societies and Muslim minorities in the world. King Saud inaugurated the Muslim World League conference in Mecca to include representatives from various Muslim countries and to support Muslim solidarity, interests in spreading Islamic thought and support the efforts of Muslim nations for liberation. The aim of establishing the League was to establish an institution that brings together Muslim scholars and represents Muslim nations and communities throughout the world, away from official considerations. It is a global public institution with a legal personality that is concerned with following up the affairs of Muslims around the world, defending their causes, and coordinating collective Islamic efforts at the level of peoples. The League's charter states that it aims to spread the principles of Islam throughout the world, and that there is no peace in the world except by working to achieve justice, competing in the field of charitable work and supporting it, and exerting every effort in unifying the word of Muslims and removing the obstacles that Muslims suffer from, and by using all means to achieve that, and working to reject disagreements, populism, racism, injustice, corruption, and all pre-Islam (ignorant) calls.³⁵

³⁵ Abdulah Bin Abdulmohsen Al-Turki, *The Muslim World League in 25 Years: Achievements and Aspirations 1962-1987*, The League Press, Mecca, 1988, p. 15.

Beyond the League

Although the League was established in 1962 as a cultural-religious organization, the political dimensions and aspirations of political rapprochement between Muslim states still exist despite the failed attempts that preceded the fall of the Caliphate in 1924. In the League's conference during the Hajj season of 1962, King Faisal was tasked with seeking to hold a summit for the Muslim nations for consideration of several matters, including that the Islamic world forms a single bloc linking its parts and peoples with the creed of Islam, that the attacks against Muslim nations necessitate cooperation as a global bloc, that the nation's interest is above loyalty to nationalities, and that documenting political, cultural and social ties is a necessity, and that Islam is an integrated system that differs from socialist systems or capitalist democracy. Thus, Faisal began his journey, which lasted nine months from December 1965 to September 1966, to gain the support and backup of Islamic countries.³⁶

Faisal's invitation faced three forms of reaction: The first came from two non-Arab states, Iran and Somalia, which were supportive of the idea of holding the summit without any reservation. The second came from countries who supported the idea of Islamic solidarity without adhering to the idea of the summit, such as Jordan, Pakistan, Sudan, Morocco, Guinea and Niger. Other countries strongly opposed the whole idea and its course of action, such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Algeria.³⁷ These countries justified their opposition that the summit is a political call against countries that opt socialist ideology, with the aim of forming a pro-Western coalition in the Middle East. Faisal responded to these objections, stressing that the idea of the conference is not new and that its goal is nothing but the unity of the Muslim world.

In late 1964 and at the beginning of 1965, the sessions of the Islamic World Conference were held in Mogadishu and it was opened by the Somali President, Aden Abdullah Osman, who proposed the idea of establishing an international Islamic

³⁶ Organization of the Islamic Conference, Al Moqatel website, available at:

http://www.moqatel.com/openshare/Behoth/Monzmat3/MotmrIslam/sec01.doc_cvt.htm (accessed: September 10, 2020).

³⁷ Dr. Abdul Satar Sirat, a member of the founding council of the Muslim World League, mentioned to me that when the first foreign ministers conference for Islamic countries was held in 1970 in Saudi Arabia, he was serving as Minister of Justice in Afghanistan and King Muhammad Zahir Shah assigned him to represent Afghanistan in the conference. Dr. Sirat says that when he boarded the plane at Beirut airport heading to Jeddah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt spoke to him during the time of Gamal Abdel Nasser and asked him to help prevent the establishment of this organization because its establishment could cause a rift between Muslims and separate the Arab world, and the Afghan minister replied to him that the organization to be established is not specific to the Arabs who are joined by the League of Arab States, but it is formed to represent Muslims and consolidate relations between them, and the nation is in dire need for such organization. Professor Sirat added that the supporters of the National Socialist movement inside the conference hall had raised an uproar and objection, arguing that the aim of establishing the organization was nothing but to serve imperialism. Then came the turn of Mr. Sirat and he was the second speaker at the conference to rescue the situation with his balanced and neutral speech highlighting the importance of the organization and the need of the Islamic nation for it. All data according to a telephone interview with Professor Abdul Sattar Sirat, held on 27 September, 2020.

organization. In April 1965, a conference of the Muslim World League was held in Mecca. Faisal praised the proposal that the Somali president had expressed at the Mogadishu conference, saying: "We support the call for holding an Islamic summit conference to enable important countries in the Islamic world to discuss Islamic affairs and take decisions that would achieve the interests of Muslim *Ummah*". Faisal sent his delegations that were made up of ministers, scholars and politicians to the countries of the Muslim World and also visited some countries personally. On 2 February 1966, he announced his intention to form a preparatory committee for an Islamic summit, then he visited Sudan, Tunisia, Pakistan, Turkey, Mali, Morocco and Guinea to prepare for this summit, but the outbreak of the 1967 war prevented the implementation of the project.³⁸

Then the initiative came from Southeast Asia when Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra called for an international Islamic meeting with the aim of establishing an "Islamic Commonwealth", an idea that was formulated by the Algerian philosopher Malek Bennabi in the 1950s. Tunku Abdul Rahman, who later became the first Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, called for an international Islamic conference that was held in April 1969 in the city of Kuala Lumpur with the participation of about a hundred personalities representing 23 countries. In addition to discussing acute political issues such as the Palestinian issue and commercial and cultural cooperation among Islamic countries, the participants discussed unifying the stance of Islamic countries with regard to the timing of Islamic holidays and religious occasions.³⁹

In 1967, when the Arab countries were defeated by Israel, Faisal renewed his call for the summit again, and declared that the goal of the conference was the liberation of Jerusalem, but the call for the conference failed. On August 21, 1969, anger exploded in the Islamic world when Muslims woke up to the news of the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque by a Jew of Australian origin. As a result, there were calls for the summit to take place from Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Morocco, Indonesia and Turkey, led by Hajj Amin Al-Husseini, who called for an Islamic summit. Under this pressure, Gamal Abdel Nasser was convinced to hold the Islamic summit and the Arab League supported the idea. A preparatory committee was formed that included the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Malaysia, Iran, Somalia, Pakistan and Niger, and decided to hold the summit in Rabat. As a result, the leaders of 25 Islamic countries, including kings, presidents and heads of governments met

38 Ali Mahafza, *The Arabs and the Contemporary World*, Dar Al Shorouk for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, 2009, pp. 470-471.

39 İhsanoğlu Ekmeleddin, *The Islamic World and the Challenges of the Twentieth Century*. . . p. 49.

from the 22nd to the 25th of September 1969 in Rabat, Morocco, under the patronage of King Faisal and King Hassan II of Morocco, to discuss the issue of Palestine and the rest of Islamic issues such as opting for common positions and cooperation internationally. In addition to the need to liberate Jerusalem and the occupied territories, the summit called for a meeting of the foreign ministers of the member states to discuss the issue of the conference's secretariat. The meeting of representatives from 25 Islamic countries in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, was considered at that time an important development in the political life of Muslim world, and it was the largest meeting of the highest political authority, the leaders of Muslim countries, after the fall of the Caliphate. The atmosphere of the conference was full of tension, and the Cold War cast its shadow on the meeting, and verbal quarrels took place between delegations, but at the end, the conference succeeded and Muslims were able to establish the first international organization to accept ethnic, political and sectarian pluralism.

At the beginning of March 1970, the first Islamic conference of foreign ministers was held in Jeddah, then the Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, resigned from his position to be the organization's first Secretary-General. The charter of the organization was approved at a conference held in Jeddah from February 29 to March 4, 1972, with the participation of 30 Islamic countries, namely: Afghanistan, Algeria, Emirates, Bahrain, Chad, Egypt, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen.

The rise of the League of Nations and the United Nations led Muslims to the conviction that there is no room for restoring the Caliphate after its collapse, [why? the logic of it?] and that there is no room for them but to form their own international organization that embodies the idea of solidarity in the Muslim. As the League of Nations emerged as a result of the work of philosophers such as the "Project for Permanent Peace in Europe" that was developed by Charles Erne Castel in 1713, the "European Court" project published by Bernier in 1781, and the "European Unity" project that Henry Dawson Simon put in place in 1814 to achieve a union between the European states, theses of Muslim philosophers such as Al-Sanhuri, Bennabi and Muhammad Iqbal, and political figures such as King Faisal, played an important role in the emergence of the idea of international organizations and global bodies for Muslims.

Conclusion

What we have today, in terms of global institutions and international and regional Islamic bodies, were not a mere luck but were based on official and popular efforts that took many years to be realized. Official and popular conferences have played a central role in preparing for the establishment of these organizations, and naming of the major Islamic international organization such as the "Organization of Islamic Conference". That is, for the period of nearly forty years multiple efforts, great and small, culminated in establishing these organizations. The battle of conferences that began in 1924, lead the Islamic world through formation of various international organizations and bodies, between Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan and Morocco, ended with the establishment of the Muslim World League, and after that the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Saudis won, and the leadership of Faisal, King of Saudi Arabia, played a decisive role in this battle.

The strategy that the Saudis followed was based on supporting Islamic causes on the one hand and avoiding conflicts with the Western world on the other hand. Since the first conference held by King Abdulaziz, founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1926, who refused to delve into the issue of the Caliphate, which was considered the talk of the hour at the time, Saudi politicians have been avoiding it because it raises the concerns of world major powers on the one hand, and the sensitivity of the Muslim nation-states that appeared after the departure of Western colonialism on the other hand.

The political discourse of these organizations witnessed a remarkable transformation throughout the last two decades. For example, during the Cold War period, the leaders of the international Islamic movements like Maududi in Pakistan, Nadawi in India, Muhammad Bashir al-Ibrahim in Algeria, Muhammad Mahmud al-Sawwaf in Iraq etc., played an important role in its activities. In this period, the efforts of the Muslim World League focused on the Islamization of life, government, politics, economics, arts and literature, and the call for the application of Islamic law and to respond to communism and nationalism was the motto of League in this period (1962-2001).

In the post-September 11 era, the League's discourse evolved to start playing a soft music that pleases the ear of Western nations, calling for issues such as dialogue among religions and cultures, combating extremism and terrorism, promoting understanding, rapprochement and coexistence between the people, sympathy with the victims of the Jewish Holocaust etc.

References

Ahsan Abdullah, *Organization of the Islamic Conference: A Study of an Islamic Policy Institution*, translated by Abdulaziz Al-Fayez, Al-Farazdaq Commercial Printing Press, Riyadh, 1990.

Al-Qibla Newspaper, 1 December, 1923.

Al-Qibla Newspaper, 6 March 1924.

Al-Turki Abdulah Bin Abdulmohsen, *The Muslim World League in 25 Years: Achievements and Aspirations 1962-1987*, The League Press, Mecca, 1988.

Ardıç Nurullah, *Islam and the Politics of Secularism: The Caliphate and Middle Eastern Modernization in the Early 20th Century*, Routledge, New York, 2012.

Dunia Al-Watan Newspaper, 7 December 2017.

Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, *The Islamic World and the Challenges of the Twentieth Century*, Dar Al-Shourok, Beirut, 2013.

Lybyer Howe Albert, *A Moslem League of Nations, Current History*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1926.

Mahafza Ali, *The Arabs and the Contemporary World*, Dar Al Shorouk for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, 2009.

Nasri Masri, *Controversy over the Islamic Conference in Jerusalem in 1931, Cultural Papers: The Journal of Arts and Human Sciences*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 2020.

New York Times, 22 March 1924.

Organization of the Islamic Conference, Al Moqatel website, available at: http://www.moqatel.com/openshare/Behoth/Monzmat3/MotmrlIslam/sec01.doc_cvt.htm (accessed: September 10, 2020).

Rida Rashid Muhammad, "The Caliphate Conference", *Al-Manar Magazine*, 10 March 1926.

Башир Ахмад Ансари, Амер Абдулвахаб Муршед

ГЛОБАЛНЕ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈЕ У МУСЛИМАНСКОМ СВЕТУ: ПОРЕКЛО И ЕВОЛУЦИЈА

Сажетак

Након победе над Грчком и потписивања мира у Лозани, Турска република објављује да није у стању да снови одговорност за муслимане. По други пут у историји ислама, муслимани су се нашли без свог институционалног представника, који говори у њихово име, и који брани њихове интересе. Колапс Османског царства изазивао је и мирне и насилне реакције, чији ехо се и данас чује дилем муслиманског света. Овај рад истражује напоре муслиманских држава да кроз владине и невладине конференције успоставе глобалне/међународне организације које би укључивале представнике свих муслиманских земаља и заједница, и које би подржавале муслиманску солидарност и јединство.

Кључне речи: муслимански свет, халифат, Турска, Саудијска Арабија, организација