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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Worldmaking in the Hijaz: Muslims between South Asian and Soviet Visions of Managing Difference, 1919–1926

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Abstract

Between the end of World War I and the Mecca World Muslim Congress of 1926, Soviet officials and Indian Muslim thinkers imagined the possibilities of a post-imperial world through the Hijaz. The All-India Khilafat Committee (AIKC; established 1919), an organization led by prominent Indian Muslim thinkers, and the Soviet Union promoted competing projects to protect the Hijaz, home to some of Islam's holiest shrines, against European imperialism. Yet, far from limiting themselves to the question of who should rule the Hijaz, the AIKC and the Soviet state engaged in broader debates about religious and social difference, sovereignty, and minority rights. Whereas the AIKC imagined the Hijaz as an international Muslim republic and a place of refuge for Muslims worldwide, Soviet officials contended that the political future of Muslims should only be settled within the framework of ethno-territorial nation-states. Ironically, the programs of both the AIKC and the Soviet state denied the right of self-determination to Hijazis themselves, leaving the region's inhabitants to choose between two forms of external oversight: a Soviet-supported Saudi ethno-territorialism or limited domestic autonomy under the management and inspection of an international Muslim Council. With very few exceptions, past scholarship on the Hijaz in this period has analyzed the region's political fortunes through Saudi statecraft or European colonial influence. However, Soviet and Indian Muslim experimental engagement with the Hijaz ultimately proved just as crucial to the consolidation of Saudi governance over the region. The article arrives at these novel insights by bringing rare Soviet archival documents together with the Urdu proceedings of the AIKC's delegation to the Hijaz, as well as Arabic sources from the period in question.

Keywords: Hijaz; Soviet Union; Mecca; All-India Khilafat Committee; Saudi Arabia; minority rights; worldmaking; post-Ottoman Middle East; colonial South Asia; global intellectual history

In 1924–1925, the forces of ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ʿAbd al-Rahman Al Saʿud (1875–1936; Ibn Saʿud), the Sultan of Najd, seized the Hijaz from the forces of the Hashimite King Husayn (r. 1916–1924) and his successor, King ʿAli (r. 1924–1925). Amidst these

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events, the Indian Muslim scholar and historian Sulayman Nadvi (1884–1953) headed a delegation of the All-India Khilafat Committee (established 1919; henceforth AIKC) to the Hijaz. The AIKC was an Indian Muslim organization that aimed to prevent the disintegration of the Ottoman Caliphate (abolished in 1924) and impede both formal and informal European colonial control over former Ottoman territories. Simultaneously, the AIKC activists, "the Khilafists," tied their mass campaigns to anti-colonial and trans-religious activism, most notably the Gandhi-led Noncooperation Movement (1919–1922) and its struggle for Indian "Home Rule."

To end the bloodshed in Islam's sacred region, where the holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located, the AIKC delegation aspired to topple the Hashimite dynasty, which the Khilafists blamed for destroying the Ottoman Caliphate's sovereignty over the Hijaz. Yet the AIKC did not seek to replace a Hashimite kingship with a Saudi one. Claiming to represent South Asia's Muslims, simultaneously a "minority" in the subcontinent and the "world's largest Muslim population," the Khilafists envisioned the Hijaz as a republic that would be managed internally by the region's inhabitants and externally by an international Muslim council.[1]

Seeking international support for their activism, the Khilafists visited the Soviet Ambassador in the Hijaz, Karim Abdraufovich Hakimov (1890–1938). Hakimov, a Tatar Muslim from the Ufa region, dismissed the ideas of his South Asian visitors. Expressing support for Saudi sovereignty, he called the Khilafists' program "useless," asking "why the Moslems [*sic*] of the U.S.S.R … (one third of the Moslems of the world) had not been consulted [in this matter]."[2] In the summer of 1926, the Soviet government reiterated its objection to the AIKC's plans, sending a Muslim delegation from the U.S.S.R. to an international Muslim congress held in Mecca, where they supported Saudi sovereignty on the basis of the latter's linguistic unity and territorial integrity.

Why did the Soviet government object to the AIKC's plans and advocate for the creation of an ethno-territorial nation state in the Hijaz? And what do such competing visions of sovereignty reveal about the role of the Hijaz in the making of the post-World War I international order? I suggest that the Soviet-AIKC clash was more than a reflection of intra-Muslim divisions over the Caliphate[3] or Ibn Saʿud's attempt to gain international legitimacy,[4] and that it reflected important international conversations about sovereignty, social and religious difference, and minority rights.

Historians have shown that the Hijaz drew the interest of European imperial powers and transregional Muslim movements long before the interwar period.

[1] Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi, Shaukat ʿAli, Muhammad ʿAli, Shuʿaib Quraishi, *Masala-i Hijaz: riport wafd-i Khilafat 1926* (Bombay: Khilafat Press, 1926), 17.

[2] See E 883/10/91, "Report for the Period January 9–19, 1925," in Robert L. Jarman, ed. and introduction, *The Jedda Diaries*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Archive Editions, 1990), 279.

[3] Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 106–22. For the Mecca Congress' published proceedings (translated from Arabic to French), see Achille Sékaly, *Les deux Congrès Musulmans de 1926* (Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux, 1926), 125–219.

[4] Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Saqi Books, 2000), 266–67; Askar H. Al-Enazy, *The Creation of Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud and British Imperial Policy, 1914–1927* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 128–61; Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 44.

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They have highlighted the importance of the *hajj* annual pilgrimage to Mecca to trans-imperial politics[5] and the global proliferation of debates over the future of the Caliphate from the late 1800s.[6] In addition, Michael Christopher Low and Lâle Can have shown that between the late nineteenth century to the end of Ottoman rule (1916) the Hijaz constituted an experimental laboratory for competing models of international legal regimes.[7]

Though it was part of a longer history, the Soviet-AIKC clash was distinct since it reflected new international realities and commitments that emerged at a moment when self-determination became a key principle of international politics. This principle justified not only anti-colonial liberation but also the idea that cultural, religious, and linguistic differences could be managed by the creation of ethno-territorial and religious-majoritarian states—that is, polities with clearly defined territorial boundaries and a majority population defined by a common ethnic and religious identity.[8] In this context, "minority rights" became internationally institutionalized with the League of Nations (est. 1919) and its regime of "minority protections," shaping the politics of emerging Eastern European and post-Ottoman nation-states alongside colonies and metropoles alike.[9]

Under the guise of the "Wilsonian moment" of self-determination,[10] these new international conditions made possible the expansion of Anglo-French colonialism through the mandate system and other schemes but also provided an opportunity for various state and non-state actors to invoke alternative visions of world order against these expansions. Such alternative visions can be understood as what Adom Getachew has termed "worldmaking": programs that tied the transformation

[5]Eileen Kane, *The Russian Hajj: Empire and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); John Slight, *The British Empire and the Hajj 1865–1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Eric Tagliacozzo, *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[6]Jakob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan Islam: Ideology and Organization* (New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University, 1990); Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain 1877–1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of The Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Mona Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[7]Michael Christopher Low, *Imperial Mecca: The Ottoman Hijaz and the Indian Ocean Hajj* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020); Lâle Can, *Spiritual Subjects: Central Asian Pilgrims and the Ottoman Hajj at the End of Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

[8]Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East, 1914–1923* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[9]Mark Mazower, "Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe," *Daedalus* 126, 2 (1997): 47–63; Laura Robson, "Capitulations Redux: The Imperial Genealogy of the Post–World War I 'Minority' Regimes," *American Historical Review* 126, 3 (2021): 978–1000; and *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Anupama Rao, "Minority and Modernity: B. R. Ambedkar and Dalit Politics," in Saurabh Dube, ed., *Handbook of Modernity in South Asia: Modern Makeovers* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 93–109; Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

[10]Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). For a critique of this term, see Eric D, Weitz, "Self-Determination: How a German Enlightenment Idea Became the Slogan of National Liberation and a Human Right," *American Historical Review* 120, 2 (2015): 485–86.

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of local politics to broader international (and often anti-imperial) concerns and vice-versa.[11]

The AIKC and its vision for the Hijaz demonstrated such politics. While earlier historiographical frameworks have placed it within the realms of "Indian nationalism"[12] or "pan-Islamism,"[13] John M. Willis and Faisal Devji have shown that the AIKC offered a de-territorial model of governance and emancipation, seeking to make the Hijaz an international Muslim republic. The ramification of Willis and Devi's arguments is immense. The Khilafists did not place their hopes in the League of Nations or the British imperial legal system, though they did engage with both. Rather, amidst the looming minoritization of Muslims in a future postcolonial Hindu majoritarian state, they imagined the Hijaz as the site of universal emancipation and egalitarian politics that would protect Muslims from the implications of ethno-territorial and majoritarian nation states.[14]

However, the AIKC's utopian vision of a de-territorialized community that Devji and Willis have highlighted did not only conflict with the ethno-territorial politics of both the Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz and its Saudi successor; it also competed with the emerging "worldmaking politics" of the Soviet state, which imagined the future of Muslims within the framework of ethno-territorial nation states.

The historiography on the Soviet government's engagement with Hijaz has focused on how Soviet officials attempted to establish close ties with the Saudi state to enhance anti-imperial alliances and promote socialism. This growing body of scholarship has revealed that Soviet involvement in the region was multifaceted and included participation in the geopolitics and political economy of the *hajj*, as well as in international Muslim debates, such as the 1926 Mecca Congress.[15] Yet, this

[11]Getachew employed this term to define enterprises of pan-African thinkers across the Black Atlantic who tied self-determination to a variety of anti-imperialist projects during the twentieth century. See Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). Getachew's work can be situated within a broader literature about the remaking of the global political order during the interwar period. See, for example, Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), ch. 6. For a take on "worldmaking" from the Middle Eastern context, see Jonathan Wyrtzen, *Worldmaking in the Long Great War: How Local and Colonial Struggles Shaped the Modern Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

[12]For example, see Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

[13]For instance, see Naeem M. Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[14]Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), esp. ch. 3; John M. Willis, "Debating the Caliphate: Islam and Nation in the Work of Rashid Rida and Abul Kalam Azad," *International History Review* 32, 4 (2010): 711–32; and "Burying Muhammad ʿAli Jauhar: The Life and Death of the Meccan Republic," *Arabian Humanities* 17 (2023), accessed August 23, 2023, http://journals.openedition.org/cy/9806; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/cy.9806.

[15]Norihiro Naganawa, "'Bozhi gosti' i antiimperializm Sovetskiĭ Khadzh 1920-kh gg," in *Islam v Rossii i i v Evroazii XVI–XXI vv: pami͡ati Dmitrii͡a I͡Urʹevicha Arapova* (St. Petersburg: Aleteĭi͡a, 2021), 561–82; J. N. Guseva, "Diskurs otechestvennykh spet͡ssluzhb o 'khalifatskom voprose' 1920-kh godov: Musa Bigiev, Vostochnyĭ otdel OGPU i politicheskoe edinstvo islamskovo mira," *Minbar, Islamic Studies* 12, 2 (2019): 421–37; Marsil N. Farkhshatov, "Diplomaticheskai͡a missii͡a Sovetskoĭ delegat͡sii na vsemirnom kongresse Musulʹman 1926 g," *Problemy Vostokovedenii͡a* 86, 4 (2019): 19–26; I. A. Nurimanov, "Mekkanskiĭ kongress i Khadzhzh 1926 goda: Po motivam putevykh zapisok Abdrakhmana Umerova," Islam v sovermennom mire 1 (2021): 139–57; V. V. Naumkin, "Sovetskie muftii na Vcemusulʹmanskom kongresse: Rabota nad

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historiography has largely overlooked the ideological affinities that made this Saudi-Soviet rapprochement possible.

Viewing ethno-territorial nationalism as an alternative to the AIKC de-territorial model, Soviet officials ultimately rejected Islam as a unifying criterion for defining a nation. They did so by justifying Ibn Saʿud's sovereignty in ethno-territorial and economic terms, viewing him as an anti-colonial leader who strived for both political and economic independence. Such a policy meant that Moscow had to make ideological compromises. Soviet officials defended homogenizing Saudi religious policies that attacked the longstanding religious diversity of the Hijaz. Moreover, they overlooked the stark historical and regional differences between Najd, the center of the Saudi polity, and the Hijaz. Rather than defining Ibn Saʿud as a Najdi leader, Moscow viewed him as an Arab national leader who was unanimously accepted by the people of the Hijaz.[16]

Their competing visions notwithstanding, the AIKC and the Soviet state did have something in common. I argue that both envisioned, albeit differently, a world without "minority" and "majority" as political categories of difference. While the Soviet state imagined the Hijaz as a homogenous Arab nation-state, the AIKC believed that by making the Hijaz into an international site of Muslim sovereignty, Muslim minorities would not be subjected to the whims of majoritarian politics. By highlighting such positions, though, both the Soviet and AIKC delegates eventually denied the right of the Hijazis themselves to self-determination.

This denial revealed a tension between self-determination and anti-imperialism, reflecting Nelson Goodman's idea that, "Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is remaking."[17] Whereas the Soviet and AIKC worldmaking politics sanctified self-determination and non-domination to counter the Euro-American postwar order, they sacrificed the Hijaz's political future for the sake of broader ideological and geopolitical goals. The Soviet and AIKC worldmaking politics thus failed to evade the same context both sought to demolish, and their visions for the Hijaz came to be haunted by the same majoritarian politics they worked to dismantle. Though hostile to the League of Nations and its Mandate system, the Soviet state and the AIKC eventually contributed—intentionally or unintentionally—to the demise of self-determination in a major region of the Middle East.

The main evidence for this argument is drawn from Urdu writings on the Hijaz by several key AIKC activists, including the Mecca-born Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958), the above-mentioned Sulayman Nadvi, and the Rampur-born Muhammad ʿAli Jauhar (1878–1931). I also consult writings by some of the AIKC's lesser-known activists, most notably ʿAbdur Razzaq Malihabadi (1895–1959) from the small North-Indian town of Malihabad, who, during World War I, experienced firsthand the political and religious transformation of the Hijaz. As for the Soviet

dogovorom," *Minbar. Islamic Studies* 12, 2 (2019): 337–63; and *Nesostoi͡avsheesi͡a partnerstvo: Sovetskai͡a diplomatii͡a v Saudovskoĭ Aravii mezhdu mirovymi voĭnami* (Moscow: Institut Vostokovedenii͡a RAN, 2018). See also Kane, *Russian Hajj, 157–82*; Jon Jacobson, *When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 179–82.

[16]While the AIKC and Soviet officials invoked the categories of "Arab" and "Indians," this article does not espouse a single definition for these categories. Instead, it considers them as categories of identity that different regional and international actors constantly redefined and contested during the period in question.

[17]Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978), 6.

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part of the story, this article mainly draws on the Russian proceedings of the Soviet Muslim delegation to Mecca in 1926 and its correspondence with Soviet diplomats and officials. The proceedings, overlooked in the English-language historiography, are important because they show the importance the Soviet government attributed to the formation of the Saudi regime in the Hijaz as well as the direct link between Moscow's policies of management of difference and its vision concerning the region in particular and international Muslim politics in general. Accompanying the AIKC and Soviet materials are sources in Arabic (mainly governmental correspondences and newspaper articles) that echo regional responses to these debates.

I begin by examining how the AIKC's emergence was entangled with the changing conceptions of difference in the late Ottoman Hijaz, climaxing in the post-World War I arrangements that enabled the creation of the Hashimite state (and its Saudi successor) in the Hijaz. I then shift to the Soviet model and explore its distinctive enterprise of managing difference and how the Soviets attempted to apply it to Muslim societies. I then turn to the 1926 Mecca Congress, where the Soviet-AIKC debate reached its climax. Finally, I highlight how these competing visions tied the future political organization of the Hijaz to broader questions of diversity, minority, and sovereignty.

Redefining Belonging: The Precarious Condition of Indian Muslims in Late Ottoman Hijaz

For centuries the Hijaz has been home to various Muslim communities comprising merchants, religious scholars, and pilgrims, as well as longstanding residents of Mecca and Medina (*mücavirin*). Governed by the Ottoman Empire since the early sixteenth century, the Hijaz experienced in the nineteenth century unprecedented flows of goods, peoples, and ideas.[18] This condition, which resulted from increased colonial interventions and steamship travels, intensified connections between the region and the wider world, but also created new forms of restrictions on religious and social mobility.[19]

Though the Ottoman Empire was acknowledged as a member of the Concert of Europe following the Crimean War (1853–1856), European colonial powers were constantly endeavoring to weaken the Sultan's sovereignty over its regions. As part of its broad administrative reforms of the Tanzimat ("reorganization"; 1839–1876), Ottoman officials meant to secure Islam's sacred region from European colonial expansions. The Porte made the region into *Eyalat-ı mümtaze* (privileged province), a status entailing a form of autonomy that granted the Hashimite family the responsibility for the local administration of Mecca and Medina via the institution of the Sharifate. Simultaneously, the region remained under the Sultan's sovereignty with an Ottoman governor in charge, a status guaranteed under international treaties and imperial edicts. During the 1860s and 1870s the Porte further limited the

[18] See, for example, Rosie Bsheer, "Another Arabia," *History of the Present* 13, no. 1 (2023): 101–121.

[19] Lâle Can, "The Protection Question: Central Asian and Extraterritoriality in the Late Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48, 4 (2016): 679–99, 692; James L. Gelvin and Nile Green, eds., *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Ulrike Freitag, *A History of Jeddah: The Gate to Mecca in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

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Sharifate's autonomy and moved the seat of the Ottoman governor from Jeddah to Mecca.[20]

Sultan Abdülhamid (r. 1876–1909) intensified these policies after losing additional territories following the 1878 Berlin Congress. Fearing British support for the creation of an ethnonationalist Arab Caliphate in the Hijaz,[21] the Porte launched infrastructural projects there, including the construction of telegraph lines, railroads, military outposts, and desalination systems.[22]

To further strengthen Ottoman sovereignty, the Porte also sought to prevent the extension of the system of Capitulations (dating to the sixteenth century) to the region. This system had given subjects of European states, mainly Christians, various extraterritorial legal and financial privileges. Yet, with regard to the Hijaz, Ottoman officials had other fears in mind. Their main cause of concern was the communities of Muslims from British India and the Dutch East Indies, whom they feared could become agents of extraterritorial claims for the British and Dutch empires.[23] Thus, even before the Hamidian period, the Porte sought to redefine the premises of Ottoman belonging. In 1869 it passed the Law of Nationality, which concluded that "anyone living in Ottoman territory would be considered an Ottoman subject until documentary proof of foreign nationality was produced."[24] Using the term "foreigners" (*ecanib*, sing. *ecnebi*) to define Muslims and non-Muslims alike, the law reflected the idea of "Ottomanism" (*Osmanlılık*), in which the Porte wanted to create "universal loyalty to the dynasty and equality under the law for non-Muslims."[25]

This changing terrain of Ottoman belonging endangered Muslim diasporic communities in the Hijaz, particularly Indian and Jawi Muslims (the latter from Southeast Asia), by implying they had to choose between Ottoman nationality or declaring their allegiance to a foreign state. In the late nineteenth century, in some instances, Ottoman officials suspected Indian Muslims in the Hijaz of being spies. In 1889, the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of the Legal Consul even prohibited non-Ottoman Muslims from acquiring immovable property, although the Ottoman authorities did, on a case-by-case basis, extend Ottoman nationality to "foreign Muslims."[26]

These new conditions were only a preface for Indian Muslim communities in the Hijaz amidst the growing politicization of religious difference and the rise of ethno-territorial politics that gave rise to the AIKC's worldmaking vision.

[20] Lâle Can and Aimee M. Genell, "On Empire and Exception: Genealogies of Sovereignty in the Ottoman World," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 40, 3 (2020): 468–69.

[21] Low, *Imperial Mecca*, 85–86.

[22] Can and Genell, "Empire and Exception," 469. See also Mustafa Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and Hijaz* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), chs. 6 and 7; Michael Christopher Low, "Ottoman Infrastructures of the Saudi Hydro-State: The Technopolitics of Pilgrimage and Potable Water in the Hijaz," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, 4 (2015): 942–74; and William Ochesnwald, *The Hejaz Railroad* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).

[23] Low, *Imperial Mecca*, 85–89.

[24] Ibid., 90; Will Hanley, "What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3, 2 (2016): 277–98.

[25] Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 61.

[26] Freitag, *A History of Jeddah*, 314–15; Low, *Imperial Mecca,* 90, 97, 109–10.

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The Ethnicization of the Hijaz and the Emergence of the AIKC

Constituting approximately one-third of Mecca's population on the eve of World War I,[27] Indian Muslim communities in Hijaz and its adjacent Ottoman Arab territories saw the rise of ethno-territorial nationalisms in the 1910s that exacerbated their political predicaments. These conditions ultimately stood at the center of the AIKC's worldmaking politics and strengthened the place of Mecca within them. ʿAbdur Razzaq Malihabadi (1895–1959), one of the AIKC's founders, exemplifies this moment of transformation. Malihabadi was a graduate of Lucknow's Nadwat al-ʿUlamaʾ (est. 1894), an Islamic seminary that promoted the study of secular and religious topics alongside advanced Arabic training, with the goal of uniting Muslims amid the challenges of colonial modernity.[28]

Malihabadi visited the Hijaz for the first time in 1917, one year after the Ottoman rule over the region ended following the British-supported "Arab revolt." After defeating the Ottoman forces, Sharif Husayn established a kingdom in the Hijaz, an upheaval that constituted a formative moment for the Khilafists. For Malihabadi, the "Arab revolt" reflected a longer process of ethno-territorial nationalism he witnessed during his four years studying in Cairo,[29] where he was a student in Madrasat al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad (School of Propagation and Guidance; 1911–14). Founded by the Ottoman-Syrian Muslim scholar and journalist Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1965), this school sought to produce a generation of reformed Muslim scholars who would preach against Christian missionaries threatening Islam.[30]

Malihabadi and Rida shared a commitment to transregional Muslim solidarity and "regeneration" grounded in what they called "Arabness" (*ʿArabiyya*). For them, *ʿArabiyya* was not a trait conferred by birth but rather an acquired skill. It involved the mastery of Arabic and the cultivation of the Muslim self, as well as a possibility for coexistence with non-Muslims. Still, Malihabadi and Rida derived diverging political ideas from their shared commitment to *ʿArabiyya.*

For Rida, *ʿArabiyya* provided the basis of a new Caliphate that would replace that of the Turkish "atheists" (*malāḥida*) who "espoused ethnic-based rulings and military power as a means for abusing the Arab nation."[31] In pursuit of this vision, Rida negotiated with the British to establish an Arab Caliphate in the Hijaz.[32]

By contrast, Malihabadi placed *ʿArabiyya* in the context of Ottomanism and rejected any connection between sovereignty and ethnicity. In his eyes, the

[27]Ibid., 295.

[28]On the Nadwat, see Jamal Malik, "The Making of a Council: The Nadwat Al-'Ulamâ," *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 144, 1 (1994): 61–91; Muhammad Ishaq Djalis Nadvi [vol. 1] and Shams Tabriz Khan [vol. 2], *Tarikh-i Nadwat al-ʿUlamaʾ*, 2 vols. (Lucknow: Operating Press, 2012 [1983–1984]).

[29]Malihabadi's memoirs were first published in 1960. See ʿAbdur Razzaq Malihabadi, "Aap biti," *Azad Hind* (1960): 166–219.

[30]Umar Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity: A Critical Reading of the Works of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and His Associates (1898–1935)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 163; Muhamamd Qasim Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 9.

[31]Muhammad Rashid Riḍā, "Ayam al-Hajj," *al-Qibla* 1, 17 (1334 AH): 3.

[32]The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), FO 882/15/1, p. 63. See also Adam Mestyan, "From Administrative to Political Order? Global Legal History, the Organic Law, and the Constitution of Mandate Syria, 1925–1930," *Journal of Global History* 17, 2 (2022): 298–99.

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Ottoman attempt to establish a multi-confessional identity that could transcend religious and ethnic differences for the sake of civil cooperation would strengthen Islam. As such, Malihabadi reasoned that multi-confessional alliances were an essential bulwark against British colonial rule.[33] Arguing that Indian Muslims ought to prevent Ottoman internal strife, he blamed them for not publishing enough books in Arabic about British colonial crimes in India,[34] which, he believed, made it easier for Britain to extend its "Indian divide-and-rule policies" to Ottoman domains.

Accordingly, Malihabadi thought that the rise of pan-Turkic and Pan-Arab ideologies among Ottoman elites threatened both Arab-Turkish unity and the sovereignty of the Ottoman Caliphate.[35] In fact, he viewed Ottoman disintegration as a result of an unholy alliance between religious identities and ethno-territorial claims. His visit to the post-Ottoman Hijaz in 1917 confirmed this view.

Though the Hashimite press conveyed the message that Husayn forces served the interests of South Asia's Muslims by removing from the Hijaz the rule of so-called secularist-nationalist Turks and their non-Muslim German supporters,[36] Malihabadi noted that this region's "inhabitants were terrorized" by Husayn's forces.[37] He recounted gatherings in Mecca where Husayn read "extremely acerbic" speeches against so-called "foreign communities" who "have acquired a lot of wealth by exploiting the Hijazis."[38] Malihabadi believed that such speeches directly threatened South Asian Muslims. A Shafiʿi mufti from the Hashimite court told him that Husayn "had learned that the Indians who reside in Mecca [financially] support the Turks" and that therefore Husayn considered "having all of [them] killed on the basis of some credible excuse and having all their wealth and possessions seized."[39] Malihabadi himself fell victim to such hostility toward "non-Arabs" and was arrested and humiliated by Husayn's forces, who suspected he was a Turkish spy. He escaped death only after the British Agent in Jeddah attested that he was a British imperial subject.[40] Malihabadi then returned to India and in 1919 settled in Calcutta, where he joined the AIKC.

Whether Malihabadi's memoirs accurately reflect Hashimite policies or not, they reveal the ground from which the AIKC emerged. The Khilafists would object to Husayn's kingship not simply because Husayn had ousted a purportedly universal Muslim Caliphate, but also because his kingdom was essentially ethno-territorial. When Husayn declared himself as the Caliph in 1924, a call not widely accepted, the Khilafists rejected his declaration. They argued that the Hashimite Kingdom was premised on the idea of the Hijaz as an exclusively Arab territory, a principle opposed to the religious and ethnic diversity of the region.

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[33]Sanjar Hilal Bharti, *Maulana Malihabadi: mongoraf* (Kolkata: West Bengal Urdu Akedimi, 2014), 126–27.

[34]Malihabadi, "Aap biti," 210.

[35]Ibid., 200.

[36]See, for example, the Mecca-based bi-weekly, *al-Qibla*: Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, "Muslimu al-Hind wa araʾuhum fi ahwal al-Sharq al-Adna," *al-Qibla* 47 (1 Rabiʿ al-Thani, 1335/25, ca. Jan. 1917): 1.

[37]Malihabadi, "Aap biti," 213.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid., 212.

[40]Ibid., 216.

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The 1919 Moment and the AIKC's Worldmaking Vision

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and its model for managing difference led to new political realities that enabled the AIKC's emergence. While the Khilafists lamented the Ottoman collapse, in 1919 they began elaborating a new vision, one that aspired to de-territorialize the postwar politics of difference through the institution of the Caliphate. This vision is laid out in the writings of Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi. Born in Bihar Province (in northeast India), Nadvi was a prolific Muslim scholar and historian. He was also affiliated with Lucknow's Nadwat, where he taught and held different positions over several decades.

During the 1920s, Nadvi challenged the position, popular among British colonial officials, that the Caliphate lacked a historical connection to the subcontinent[41] and was of little importance to Muslims worldwide.[42] Arguing that the Caliphate was important to ordinary Indians as well, he depicted how such ties facilitated inter-Muslim and Hindu-Muslim friendships. For example, he showed how during the ninth century Hindu rulers in Sindh (today's Pakistan) pledged allegiance to the Abbasid Caliphate as a token of respect for their Muslim subjects, recognizing it as a spiritual authority for the latter.[43]

But the relationship between the Caliphate and India was also a contemporary question. Nadvi argued that Muslims worldwide sought to liberate *bilad-i muqaddisa* (the holy lands)—the Arabian Peninsula (*jazirat al-ʿArab*), Iraq, and Palestine.[44] In a 1920 speech, Nadvi asserted that while Ottoman disintegration had caused "great calamity and unexpected evil,"[45] it had also triggered a "wave of freedom, self-determination, and progress … from the Atlantic Ocean to the Nile River."[46]

Nadvi viewed this changing international landscape as enabling cross-sectarian Muslim unity. When discussing the status of holy Shiʿi sites in Iraq with British colonial officials in London in 1920, he and his associates argued that the AIKC's activism was not "according to the opinion of one group, but of all Muslim groups."[47] Moreover, Nadvi contended that the Caliphate mattered because it was tied to anti-colonial struggles worldwide. He claimed that the protection of the Hijaz and other Muslim holy sites would be impossible without Indian independence, adding that World War I compelled Indian Muslims to liberate themselves from enslavement to the colonial state that incited them against their Hindu countrymen. Arguing that that same feeling was [also] evident in "Tunis, Algeria, Java, and the Russian states," he stressed, "What is taking place today in India [i.e., his movement's alliance with Mahatma Gandhi's Indian National Congress] is not an uncommon or strange affair in Islam," hinting at the AIKC's global significance.[48]

For Nadvi, the Caliphate made possible broader anti-colonial alliances and trans-religious cooperation that transcended the boundaries of Muslim politics per se. Abul Kalam Azad, one of the AIKC's leaders, also addressed this matter and

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[41]Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi, *Khilafat aur Hindustan* (Azamgarh: Matbaʿ-i Maʿarif, ca. 1927), 1–2; Shah Muʿayyan ud-Din Ahmd Nadvi, *Hayat-i Sulayman* (Azamgarh: Dar al-Musanifin, 2011[1973]), 179.

[42]Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi, *Dunya-i Islam aur Masala-i Khilafat* (Bombay: Khilafat Press, 1922), 1–2.

[43]Ibid., 6–7.

[44]Nadvi, *Hayat-i Sulayman*, 150–51.

[45]Nadvi, *Dunya-i Islam*, 3.

[46]Ibid., 2.

[47]Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi, *Barid-i farhang* (Karachi: Shakil Printing Press, 1997), 36.

[48]Nadvi, *Dunya-i Islam*, 50.

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tied it to the Hijaz question. Born in Mecca to an Arab mother and Indian father, Azad embodied the transregional reality of the sacred city. Fluent in Urdu and Arabic, he was one of South Asia's best-known Muslim thinkers, and a prominent figure in the Indian National Congress who served as post-partition India's first Minister of Education. His use of the Urdu press to promote anti-colonial activism and support for the Ottoman Caliphate led the British government to arrest him during World War I.[49]

A few months after his release from wartime imprisonment in 1920, Azad delivered a speech to the participants of the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Conference, which he developed into a treatise entitled *Masala-i Khilafat* (The Caliphate question). Drawing on various sources, including the Qur'an, *hadith*, and Islamic histories,[50] Azad connected the liberation of the subcontinent to the expulsion of the Hashimite state from the Hijaz and its adjacent territories.[51] To attain this goal, he offered a theory of difference predicated on a division of non-Muslims into two types:

> One type is the non-Muslims who do not fight against Muslims, do not attack them, and do not want to seize their places of inhabitance. The second type is of non-Muslims who … fight, attack, and seek to occupy Muslim countries or have already done so. The verdict of Islam is that Muslims should treat the non-Muslims of the first type with goodness, love, and every kind of good deeds and well-wishing. Islam never prevented such treatment. Of course, however, no permission is given to Muslims to establish any sort of relationship with non-Muslims of the second type.[52]

For Azad, the question of non-Muslims' alignment with Muslims was not dependent on their religion; that is, whether they were among the "people of the Book," an Islamic legal term referring to religions that were exposed to revelations before the emergence of Islam, mainly Judaism and Christianity. Hindus, he believed, had shown good faith toward Muslims in the Gandhi-led Noncooperation campaign (*tark-i mawalat*; also translated as the "abandonment of friendship"), and therefore Muslims could coexist with them.[53]

Azad's vision of inter-confessional coexistence had its limits. He argued that, based on the Prophet Muhammad's conduct, the Hijaz should be restricted only to Muslims. Despite his historical reasoning, Azad's position was ultimately rooted in contemporary contexts. Acknowledging his coreligionists' fears that a postcolonial

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[49]For further biographical information on Azad, see Ian Henderson Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography*, Gail Minault, and Christian W. Troll, eds. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[50]Abul Kalam Azad, *Masala-i Khilafat* (Lahore: Maktabah-i Jamal, 2006 [1920]). For its official English translation, see Abul Kalam Azad, *Translation of Khilafat and Jaziratul-Arab: The Address of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Delivered at the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Conference 28th February, 1920*, Mirza Abdul Qadir Beg, trans. (Bombay: Central Khilafat Committee India, 1920). I thank John M. Willis for sharing his copy.

[51]Abul Kalam Azad, "Khutbah-i sadarat majlis Khilafat," in Malik Ram, ed., *Khutubat-i Azad*, (New Delhi, Sahitya Akedimi, 2017[1967]), 49.

[52]Azad, *Masala*, 196.

[53]Ibid., 197. See also John M. Willis, "Azad's Mecca," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, 3 (2014): 574–81.

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India would become a Hindu majoritarian state, he himself assumed that Hindu-Muslim civil rapprochement would not be immediate and would only be constituted when the political arena was governed by republican principles.[54] He thus sought to make the Hijaz a space of "refuge" where Muslims could always freely perform their religious duties. As a temporary "solution," he believed Muslim control over the Arabian Peninsula would enable a just international system and safeguard the rights of Muslim minorities wherever they were. This form of "Muslim minority protection" was the first step toward Azad's ultimate goal of making the region into a "universal and shared home for the whole human race where nations should unite after disintegrating and scattered people come together after dispersing."[55]

Nadvi and Azad's writings reflect the AIKC's broader vision. Though they differed in their points of focus, both shared the idea that the Caliphate campaign could make inter-religious cooperation possible. In so doing, they strived to tie the Caliphate campaign and the protection of sacred Muslim spaces in the Arabian Peninsula to anti-colonial struggles elsewhere, guaranteeing the fate of Muslim minorities amidst aggressive forms of majoritarian nationalism in places like South Asia. Yet, by envisioning the Hijaz as an international territory, the Khilafists denied the right of self-determination—that same idea that was inherent in their enterprise in India—to the Hijazis.

Muslims as Ethno-Territorial Nationalists: The Soviet Model and the Hijaz

The AIKC was not the only enterprise that viewed the Hijaz as a laboratory for new ways of organizing multiethnic political authority. Competing visions emanated from the Soviet state and its distinct model of ethno-territorial difference, which Soviet officials viewed as the key to the emancipation of and self-determination for Muslims worldwide. This model was developed at the intersection of revolution, civil war, and state-building in which the question of whether Muslims constituted a single nation played a central role.

Though early official Soviet interpretations of Islam were diverse, a major interpretation construed it as a force aligned with Socialist principles.[56] Accordingly, in December 1917 the Bolshevik government proclaimed that the Muslims of Russia would be "free and inviolable" under Soviet rule[57] and called upon the "Muslims of the East" to rebel against European colonial powers.[58] Defining Tsarist policies as Russian chauvinism, the Soviet state eradicated all previous

[54]Malihabadi, *Zikr-i Azad*, 163.

[55]Azad, *Masala*, 174.

[56]Michael Kemper, "The Soviet Discourse on the Origin and Class Character of Islam, 1923–1933," *Die Welt des Islams, New Series* 49, 1 (2009): 6–8; Masha Kirasirova, "The Eastern International: The 'Domestic East' and the 'Foreign East' in Soviet-Arab Relations, 1917–68" (PhD diss., New York University, 2014), 37–44.

[57]Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin) and Joseph Dzhugashvili (Stalin), "Appeal to the all the Toiling Muslims of Russia and the East," in John Riddel, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku 1920—The First Congress of the Peoples of the East* (Atlanta: Pathfinder Press, 1993), 283.

[58]Ibid., 283–84. See also Masha Kirasirova, "The 'East' as a Category of Bolshevik Ideology and Comintern Administration: The Arab Section of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East," *Kritika* 18, 1 (2017): 7–34.

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prerogatives of the Russian Orthodox Church.[59] With notable exceptions,[60] until the late 1920s the Soviet state largely refrained from extensive anti-religious campaigns against local Islamic practices. Considering Muslims oppressed peoples, Soviet officials even supported Muslim movements in shaping various Soviet republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus.[61]

Drawing on the infrastructure of the official Muslim institutions established under Tsarist rule, the Soviet state nominated Muslim scholars it considered progressive to head its state-sponsored Muslim institutions. A major example was the Central Spiritual Administration for the Muslims of Inner Russia, Siberia, and Kazakhstan (TsDUM; est. 1920), which became a center for Islamic modernist activism (commonly known as "jadidism"). Previously marginalized by the Tsarist state, the *jadidis* were—until the Stalinist purges of the late 1920s—key allies of the Soviet state that provided religious justifications for its policies, such as emancipation of women and advocacy for the compatibility between Islam and natural sciences. These Muslim scholars and their institutions became a window through which the Soviet state staged itself internationally as an "emancipatory power" with which Muslims in colonized regions could cooperate. Still, state-approved Muslim scholars never limited their role to that of a "rubber stamp," and constantly worked to preserve Muslim life and traditions amid Soviet atheist policies.[62]

The Soviet government's view of Islam as a revolutionary force was shaped during the turmoil of the Russian Civil War (1918–1921). Domestically, Soviet leaders believed that Muslims in the former Tsarist realms could be a crucial source of support and manpower for the fledgling Red Army. Externally, Lenin and his associates believed that by collaborating with Islamic movements across the colonial world they would weaken Britain, France, and other imperialist powers that militarily threatened the emerging Soviet state.[63]

Considering anti-colonialism to be a key pillar of its early foreign policy, the Soviet government grounded its support for Muslims in the idea of self-determination. Whereas Britain and France pressured the United States and the League of Nations not to promote self-determination in regions under their colonial rule,[64] Soviet officials asserted that self-determination had to be universally applied.[65] Indeed, Lenin, like other Soviet leaders, was suspicious of national self-determination, arguing before the October Revolution that some forms of nationalism constituted

[59]This policy was embodied in the "Decree on Separation of Church from State and School from Church" (20 Jan. 1918) and the first constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR; 10 July 1918). See Soviet Russia, *The Russian Constitution,* adopted 10 July 1918 (New York: Nation Press, 1919), 7.

[60]See, for example, the "unveiling campaigns" in Soviet Central Asia: Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Adrienne Lynn Edgar, "Unveiled: Turkmen Women under Soviet Rule, 1924–29," *Russian Review* 62, 1 (2003): 132–49.

[61]See, for example, Krista A. Goff, *Nested Nationalisms: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Adeeb Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

[62]Michael Kemper, "From 1917 to 1937: The Muftī, the Turkologist, and Stalin's Terror," *Die Welt des Islams* 57, 2 (2017): 162–91.

[63]Kirasirova, "Eastern International," 46–47.

[64]Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 220.

[65]Leon Trotsky, for example, called upon the Allied Forces in January 1918 to "accept absolutely and integrally the principle of the rights of all peoples freely to determine their own destinies…." See The India Office Records and Private Papers, the British Library (IOR), L/PS/11/130/P 4.

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economic exploitation and political discrimination. Yet Lenin also considered national self-determination a possible means of attaining social justice and liberating colonized peoples worldwide, a key step for realizing Socialist internationalism.[66]

The Soviets eventually did implement self-determination in a limited manner, seeking to secure Moscow's control over the former Tsarist territories,[67] but Moscow still used this principle to draw Muslims into its political program. Thus, the Stalin-headed Commissariat of Nationalities (Narkomnats) established a Muslim section (MUSKOM; 1918–1921). Headed by the Tatar Muslim Mirsaid Khaidargalievich Sultan-Galiev (1892–1938), the MUSKOM promoted the idea that religion was fundamental to Muslim lives in uniting them against colonial oppression.[68] Similarly, Konstantin Mikhailovich Troianovskii, a Bolshevik scholar of the East and a prominent official in Comintern (Communist International; 1919–1943), argued in 1918, "Muslims' religious politics … allows us to consider them as a single nation, despite the fact that they do not have a common language, territory, and are scattered (*razdrobleny*) across Asia."[69]

Such views, however, began to fade following the Congress of the People of the East in Baku (1920), where the concept of national difference triumphed over the longstanding (pre-revolutionary) principles of religious difference. As Masha Kirasirova has argued, "The transition in the Bolshevik practice of working with 'Muslims' to working with 'nations' occurred during this period."[70] The Soviet state now adopted Stalin's position that a nation needed to have a shared language, territory, culture, and economy, but religion could not be the basis for nationhood.[71]

Central to this transition was the establishment of the USSR in 1922, in which the Soviet system projected self-determination via *korenizatsiia* (indigenization) policy. This policy encouraged non-Russian ethnic groups to promote their national culture and use their indigenous languages, while discouraging any cultural expression that clashed with this ethnogenetic framework dictated by Moscow.[72] *Korenizatsiia* was also Moscow's "solution" to the post-Versailles minority question, as it encouraged

[66]V. I. Lenin, "On the National Pride of the Great Russian," in *Collected Works*, vol. 21, Aug. 1914–Dec. 1915 (Moscow: Progress Press, 1964), 103. See also, *idem*, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," in *Collected Works*, vol. 20, Dec. 1913–Aug. 1914 (Moscow: Progress Press, 1964), 411–12; Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 5–8; Faith Hillis, *Utopia's Discontents: Russian Émigrés and the Quest for Freedom, 1830s–1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 196–201.

[67]Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 67–70.

[68]Gary Guadagnolo, "'Who Am I?': Revolutionary Narratives and the Production of the Minority Self in the Early Soviet Era," *Region* 2, 1 (2013): 72–73.

[69]Konstantin Mikhailovich Troianovskiĭ, *Vostok i revoliutsii͡a: popytka postroenii͡a novoĭ politicheskoĭ programmy dli͡a tuzemnykh stran Vostoka—Indii, Persii i Kitai͡a*, 42, cited from Kirasirova, "Eastern International," 38.

[70]Kirasirova, "Eastern International," 38.

[71]J. V. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," in *J. V. Stalin*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 301–8.

[72]Jeremy Smith, "Stalin as Commissar for Nationality Affairs, 1918–1922," in Sarah Davies and James Harris, eds., *Stalin: A New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 48–49; Kimitaka Matsuzato, "The Rise and Fall of Ethnoterritorial Federalism: A Comparison of the Soviet Union (Russia), China, and India," *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, 7 (2017): 1050–51.

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the creation of autonomous republics and regions within the larger Union republics as a way to "protect" non-titular nations.[73] Moscow took *Korenizatsiia* to the extreme. While it conditioned self-determination on compliance with the Communist Party's doctrines, *Korenizatsiia* was "extended downward into smaller and smaller national territories (national districts, village soviets, collective farms) until the system merged seamlessly with the personal nationality of each Soviet citizen."[74]

In this context, Stalin and his supporters also confronted Sultan-Galiev, who supported greater autonomy for the Soviet national republics. They tried and ousted him from the Russian Communist party in 1923[75] and the Soviet state fully adopted the idea that Muslim politics had to be handled within the confines of ethno-territorial nationalism. This Soviet commitment to this model also provided Moscow's policies in the Hijaz with a flexible framework for justifying its geopolitical positions. NKID (The Soviet Commiserate for Foreign Affairs) and Comintern officials sought the creation of an Arab ethno-territorial nation-state from which they could "influence" the opinion of Muslim pilgrims from around the world.[76] Thus, the Soviet Union even developed ties with Husayn's government and exchanged representatives with it in 1924, though it had initially denounced his cooperation with British colonial policies.[77]

By the end of 1924, though, Moscow began shifting its support from Husayn to Ibn Saʿud, who was advancing toward gaining full control of the Hijaz. To justify its position, the official Soviet orientalist journal *Novyĭ Vostok* (the New East; 1922–1930) argued that Husayn's rise to power in 1916 thwarted the emergence of an Arab national liberation movement. Reporting on the *hajj* of 1924, the article condemned the religious corruption that took place under Hashimite rule, mentioning, "Some of the rituals, which the pilgrims carry out in the process of the *hajj*, represent a reoccurrence of ancient heathen rituals that existed until the time of the Prophet Muhammad."[78] Presenting such conditions as demonstrative of the general backward state of the Hijaz under the Hashimite dynasty, the article compared Husayn to the Ottoman Sultan ʿAbdul Hamid II (1876–1909), who had purportedly subjected the Hijaz to "his medieval despotism and European imperialism." While both men aspired to become a "Muslim pope," Husayn was distinct since he "used the flag of an all-Arab independence as a guise."[79] Defining

[73]Paul W. Werth, "What Is a "Minority" in an Imperial Formation? Thoughts on the Russian Empire," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 41, 3 (2021): 330–31.

[74]Terry Martin, *Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 10.

[75]Smith, "Stalin as Commissar," 58; Guadagnolo, "Who Am I?," 78–79, 85–86.

[76]As Chicherin wrote to Stalin on 18 December 1923. See Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), f. 159, op. 2, d. 63, l. 11; See also the letter from the Soviet diplomat, Lev Karakhan, to the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party, 3 Jan. 1923: RGASPI, f. 5, op. 2, d. 210, ll. 1–3. For an English translation of Karakhan's letter, see Masha Kirasirova, trans. and introduction, "Memo to Stalin: Lev Karakhan's Argument for Establishing Soviet Diplomatic Ties with the Hejaz (1923)," in Eileen Kane, Masha Kirasirova, and Margaret Litvin, eds., *Russian-Arab Worlds: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 145–49.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ismail Zade, "Palomnichestvo v Mekku," *Novyĭ Vostok* 8–9 (1925): 234.

[79]Ibid., 242.

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Husayn as "pan-Islamist," the article contrasted his policies with the ethno-territorial principles of the Soviet state.

Adjusting their state's ethno-territorial vision in accordance with Moscow's immediate geopolitical goals, Soviet officials believed that recognizing Saudi sovereignty could facilitate an alliance with independent Muslim nation-states, including Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan against Britain and other colonial powers. Soviet officials considered Republican Turkey central to such an alliance. In 1924 Mustafa Kemal's regime abolished the Ottoman Caliphate, further placing the Turkish Republic within the realm of ethno-territorial nationalism.[80] Accordingly, Chicherin instructed the Soviets' highest-ranking diplomat to Turkey, I͡Akuv Suri͡ts (1882–1952), to persuade the Turkish government that allying with the Saudi state would assist Ankara in its efforts to regain the former Ottoman province of Mosul from Britain, which had annexed it to Mandatory Iraq.[81]

Such advice reflected Moscow's policy toward countries in Asia that were under semi-colonial British influence. Chicherin noted in the early 1920s that this policy was predicated on helping these countries reduce their economic dependence on the British Empire by supporting their efforts to industrialize. As Samuel J. Hirst has argued, the Soviet state justified such support in anti-imperial terms rather than according to Marxist theories of development and advocated internationally against foreign commercial concessions, which it deemed a threat to national sovereignty.[82] *Novyĭ Vostok* reflected this view, and lauded Ibn Saʿud for rejecting the suggestion of Egypt's King Fuad (r. 1922–1936) to use the funds of foreign capitalists to initiate infrastructural projects in the Hijaz, such as building railways and roads. As Ibn Saʿud concluded, such projects would be funded by either his own government or donations received from Muslims worldwide.[83]

AIKC Responses to the Soviet Model of Governance

At first glance, it appears that some elements of these Soviet policies were shared by the AIKC's members. One such element was the Soviet anti-colonial stance, particularly Moscow's rejection of British involvement in the Hijaz and other post-Ottoman regions. In March 1926, Rızâeddin bin Fakhreddinov (1858–1936), the Mufti of TsDUM (1920–1936), joined the AIKC in objecting to the initiative of King Fuad and Egyptian Muslim scholars to convene an international Muslim conference in Cairo. Like the AIKC, Fakhreddinov considered Egypt a territory occupied by Britain and called for a conference held beyond the "influence of colonialist powers."[84]

[80]See Aydin, *Idea of The Muslim World*, 127–32; Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, 155–71; Ryan Gingeras, *Eternal Dawn: Turkey in the Age of Atatürk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 91–128.

[81]The Russian Foreign Policy Archive (AVPRF), f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 8–9.

[82]Samuel J. Hirst, "Comrades on Elephants: Economic Anti-Imperialism, Orientalism, and Soviet Diplomacy in Afghanistan, 1921–23," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 22, 1 (2021): 13–40, 28–29.

[83]Ismail Zade, "Mekkanskiĭ Kongress: Pismo iz Dzheddi," *Novyĭ Vostok* 20–21 (1926): 397–98. I thank Azat Bilalutdinov for sending me a copy of this article.

[84]NAI, Foreign and Political Department, nos. 1–48, confidential file 345, 1926, p. 33.

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In the early 1920s, some AIKC activists, such as Malihabadi, did appreciate the Soviet anti-colonial and anti-capitalist message.[85] Yet, most AIKC activists largely opposed the Soviet Union, and in fact, with the notable exception of Indian Muslim anti-colonialists who collaborated with Soviet officials (mostly via Afghanistan), the Soviet state never gained wide support among South Asian Muslim movements. Whether or not this resulted from increased British surveillance and censorship of the Indian mail and press, their proponents commonly viewed the Soviet state as violent, atheistic, and inherently anti-Muslim. That said, the criticism AIKC activists invoked was singular since they condemned not only Moscow's methods of implementing socialism but also its management of religious, social, and national differences.

For example, during a 1920 visit to Europe, Sulayman Nadvi claimed that, although one could not deny that the October revolution initially triggered "international love and sympathy," it "gradually transformed into a particular form of Russian racism."[86] For Nadvi, socialism and Soviet ethno-territorial policies remained ideologies articulated by Europeans for European conditions.

The Rampur-born AIKC activist and journalist Muhammad ʿAli Jauhar (1878–1931) held a similar position. A product of Anglo-Muslim institutions and British universities, Jauhar was a prolific writer known for his activism for the Ottoman Caliphate and promotion of educational reforms in British India. He responded in 1925 to a letter sent to him by the Leningrad-based Tatar-Muslim scholar Musa Jarullah Bigiev (1875–1949). Linked to various transregional Muslim networks, Bigiev sought to learn from Jauhar's experience in founding Muslim educational and cultural institutions across the subcontinent.[87] Bigiev noted that the Soviet Union "has established equality amongst all nations and peoples, and has restored permanent peace and equality of rights and human privileges," so that "all religions are freed, and respected, and each community has a permanent democratic institution that controls its own affairs."[88]

In his reply, Jauhar inveighed against the Soviet state, declaring, "The Bolsheviks are the enemy of every religion; they only consider their own political and economic views as correct, and seek to propagate them." He added that the Soviet government did not differ from its Tsarist predecessor in its hostility toward Muslims and policies of religious coercion, refusing to give currency to the verse "there is no compulsion in religion [Qurʾan 2:256]."[89]

Nadvi's and Jauhar's diatribes against the Soviet state thus reflected the AIKC's rejection of Moscow's ethno-territorial vision, yet such diatribes only presaged a direct opposition between the Khilafist and Soviet visions for the Hijaz.

[85]For example, see the Calcutta-based journal, *Paigham* (The message), 1921, which Malihabadi edited. *Paigham* published an Urdu translation of an Arabic article from the Egyptian press that depicted a speech by Ibrahim Ebilov (1881–1923), the Soviet Azeri ambassador to Turkey, who lauded Soviet policies toward Islam. See "Soviet nizam hukumat-i Azarbijan ki siyasi halat," *Paigham* 1, 11 (2 Dec. 1921): 6–7.

[86]Nadvi, *Barid-i farhang*, 166.

[87]On Jauhar's role in founding the Muslim university Jamia Millia Islamia in Aligarh (ca. 1920; relocated to Delhi in 1925), see Gail Minault and David Lelyveld, "The Campaign for a Muslim University, 1898–1920," *Modern Asian Studies* 8, 2 (1974): 180–89.

[88]Musa Jarullah [Bigiev], "Muslims in Russia, Perfect Equality of Rights: A Letter to Maulana Mahomed Ali," *Bombay Chronicle*, 1 Oct. 1925: n.p. I thank Selcuk Altuntaş for sharing this source.

[89]Muhammad ʿAli Jauhar, "Islam aur Ishtirakiyat," in Muhammad Sarvar, ed., *Mazamin-i Muhammad ʿAli* (Delhi: Maktaba Jamiʿa, 1938), 174.

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The Emergence of the Saudi Hijaz and the Beginnings of the AIKC-Soviet Debate

The AIKC had initially supported the Saudi forces against their Hashimite rivals, rejecting Husayn's claim for the Caliphate. Its activists believed that Ibn Saʿud would replace Husayn's Arab kingdom with an international Muslim republic.[90] Indeed, Ibn Saʿud initially attempted to secure international Muslim legitimization for his actions and disregarded Husayn's successor, ʿAli, who called upon him to "ignore the foreigners (referring to the AIKC) … who have no business in our country."[91] The Hashimite statements during 1924–1925 only further weakened its support in British India. It argued that the AIKC's vision of a republican government would contradict the will of the region's majority, "the Beduins" (*al-Badu*). As the Hijaz Government contended, whereas the Beduins solely followed Islamic and customary laws, the "minority," one-sixth of the Hijaz's inhabitants, were Muslim "emigrants" (*muhajirin*) who resided in the cities. The Hijaz government viewed these "emigrants" as temporary visitors and "foreign subjects" and stressed that they were not entitled to "voting rights" because foreign governments would instrumentalize them to interfere in the Kingdom's affairs.[92]

Amid such positions, the Saudi forces gained AIKC support for the conquest of the Hijaz during 1924–1925. They further benefited from the tacit non-interference by the British, who viewed Husayn's claim to the Caliphate as a threat to their control over Mandatory Palestine.[93]

However, the AIKC's view of the Saudi state changed after reports that Saudi forces had implemented violent and homogenizing policies in the Hijaz. Following the guidance of Hanbali-Wahhabi scholars, Saudi officials sanctioned the destruction of tombs and shrines of Muslim saints and historical figures, asserting that they violated Islamic prohibitions on the association of an object or person with God (*shirk*).[94] The destruction of these religious sites triggered anti-Saudi campaigns in India, which caused the AIKC's popularity on the subcontinent to wane and made its activists targets of protests. In Lucknow, during November of 1925, two hundred protesters armed with sticks threatened Jauhar while he was giving a speech. His brother Shaukat also "narrowly escaped an assault" when outside a Bombay mosque he encountered protestors who were enraged by the Saudi bombardment of Medina.[95]

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[90]See the interview the Egyptian daily *al-Aharam* conducted with the prominent AIKC activist Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari (1880–1936): "al-Doktor Ansari bak," *al-Aharam*, 8 Aug. (1925): 4.

[91]Al-Enazy, *Creation of Saudi Arabia*, 139–61.

[92]Wizarat al-Kharijiyya li-Hukumat al-Hijaz, *Muhimmat al-wafd al-Hindi fi al-Hijaz*, TNA FO 686/139,1925, 14. I thank John M. Willis for sharing this document.

[93]Al-Enazy, *Creation of Saudi Arabia*, 133.

[94]While most Khilafists condemned these Saudi policies, Abul Kalam Azad, who became less and less involved in Khilafat politics during this period, did support the Saudis. See John M. Willis, "Azad's Mecca," 578–80.

[95]IOR L/P&J/12/112. However, it is important to note that the Saudi state did receive some support from members of other South Asian movements. Daniel Majchrowicz has recently shown that representatives of different South Asian Muslim movements who visited the Hijaz during the 1920s and 1930s held competing views about Saudi policies in the region. Yet, as he noted, though they disagreed about the policies of the Saudi state and its religious legitimacy, they did share the idea that South Asia's Muslims ought to have a major role in deciding the region's future. See Daniel Majchrowicz, "'Can't Touch This': Early Indian Muslim Responses to the Saudi Conquest of the Hijaz," *Journal of Urdu Studies* 3, 1–2 (2023): 63–87.

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Whereas the AIKC had to reassess its initial support for the Saudi state, the Soviet Union supported Ibn Saʿud in the name of ethno-territorial self-determination. After Ibn Saʿud announced in January 1926 that the Hijazis "proclaimed him King of the Hijaz,"[96] the Soviet Union become the first country in the world to recognize his kingship, preceding Britain, which officially recognized the Saudi state in 1927.[97] Soviet support for the fledgling Saudi state also demanded Moscow to counter criticisms from different Muslim countries of the Saudi-Wahhabi religious policies.

Fakhreddinov, for example, acknowledged in 1926 that some shrines had been destroyed during Saudi-Hashimite clashes, but stressed that the destruction had ceased and that Ibn Saʿud now promoted inter-Muslim rapprochement.[98] Likewise, Kashshaf al-Din Tarjumani (1877–1943), Fakhreddinov's deputy and a former imam of Kazan, also that year defended the Saudi state. He denied accusations that the Saudi forces had demolished and desecrated Muslim shrines and holy places across the Hijaz and claimed that Indian and Egyptian commissions visiting the region had found them "groundless."[99]

Moscow also recruited Muslim journals across the Soviet Union in support of the Saudi state. One such example was the Dagestan-based Arabic monthly *Bayan al-Haqaʾiq* (Statement of the truths; 1925–1927).[100] While its articles initially expressed fear that Saudi rule in the Hijaz would lead to a *ghaʾila* (disaster) and inter-Muslim division,[101] the journal's editorship subsequently followed the official NKID position. In 1927, for example, a Muslim *hajji* (pilgrim) from Dagestan reported that Saudi forces "do not prevent people from visiting the tombs" of the prophet, his family, and his companions, but that they made sure that such visits would be conducted only in accordance with the *shariʿa*.[102]

In addition, Soviet diplomats waged international campaigns in favor of Saudi policies. In Iran, during 1926, Soviet diplomats persuaded the Persian ruler Reza Shah (r. 1926–1941) to restrain Shiʿi Muslim clerics who led anti-Wahhabi campaigns, arguing that such attacks could increase the power of the Shiʿi clerical establishment in the Iranian Government.[103] Turkey was also the target of such Soviet diplomacy. Turkey's government shared with the Saudi state the model of ethno-territorial sovereignty and recognized Ibn Saʿud's rule over the Hijaz, yet also viewed Saudi religious policies as "conservative" and "reactionary." In 1926, for example, Chicherin heard from a Turkish diplomat that, unlike the Saudi state, the Turkish position was that religion should be separated from the state and its institutions and that Turkey therefore could not "come to terms" with Ibn Saʿud.[104]

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[96]Arnold Toynbee, *The Islamic World since the Peace Settlement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 311.

[97]Freitag, *A History of Jeddah*, 80.

[98]AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 55.

[99]"Mekke-i Mükerreme Nedvesi Münasebetiyle," *Islam Majallasi* 6 (1926): 734–37, cited from Norihiro Naganawa, trans. and introduction, "The Congress of the Muslim World, Mecca, June 1926, Reflected in Tatar and Russian Journals," in Eileen Kane, Masha Kirasirova, and Margaret Litvin, eds., *Russian-Arab Worlds: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 150–60.

[100]Arabic was the lingua franca of the North Caucasus.

[101]"Ahwal al-Hijaz wa Ghaʾila al-Wahhabiyya," *Bayan al-Haqaʾiq* 1, 1 (1925): 2–3.

[102]Al-Idara, "Fi haqq safar al-hajj," *Bayan al-Haqaʾiq* 3, 10 (1927): 16.

[103]Naumkin, "Sovetskie muftii na Vcemusul′manskom kongresse," 337–38.

[104]AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 60.

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Moreover, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned that Ibn Saʿud's attempt to establish an international Muslim council in Mecca to tackle "religious questions" would be weaponized by him to circulate Wahhabi ideas across Muslim countries, including Turkey.[105] Chicherin sought to allay Turkish fears. While he agreed that the Saudi state was not as "religiously progressive" as the Turkish one, he told Suri͡ts that Turkey should also consider the Saudi inclination toward anti-imperial politics and therefore support it.[106]

Indeed, not all the Soviet governmental and propagational organs were enthusiastic about Ibn Saʿud's regime. On 8 April 1926, for example, *Pravda* (Truth), the official mouthpiece of the Soviet state, depicted Ibn Saʿud as a British agent who sought to provide Britain with control and influence over the identity of the future Caliph. Seeking to subject *Pravda* to the NKID's diplomatic support for the Saudi state, Chicherin argued that Ibn Saʿud was no longer a British agent and that such articles could weaken Moscow's stance in questions relating to the Hijaz's international status and the *hajj*. It was Chicherin's opinion that eventually gained prevalence in the following years.[107]

Despite NKID efforts to legitimize Ibn Saʿud, the British Foreign Office doubted in 1926 that Soviet propaganda could influence the Saudi state.[108] At the same time, though closely tied to Britain, Ibn Saʿud sought to expand international recognition for his kingship and warmly welcomed Moscow's diplomatic support.[109] As part of his efforts, he convened between June and July 1926 an international Muslim congress in Mecca to discuss the future and development of the Hijaz. It was during this congress that the AIKC and Soviet delegates debated the Hijaz's future model of governance.

A Clash in the Hijaz: The Mecca Congress of 1926

The Mecca Congress brought together sixty-eight delegates from fifteen countries, including the Soviet and AIKC delegations. Writing to Chicherin asking permission to travel to Mecca, Fakhreddinov, officially invited by Ibn Saʿud, tied Soviet Muslims to Moscow's broader revolutionary goals. He argued that the Soviet Muslim delegation's participation in the congress would be crucial for Muslims in the Soviet republics due to the ritual importance of the *hajj*. Such participation would also "increase the beneficial position that Soviet power occupies regarding the peoples of the East—the former object of oppression and exploitation of imperialism."[110]

Chicherin authorized a Soviet Muslim delegation to attend. Headed by Fakhreddinov, it was comprised of some of the Soviet Union's most prominent Muslim scholars. With the exception of the Caucasus, the Soviet delegation included delegates from each Soviet region with a significant Muslim population, including Crimea, Volga-Urals, Astrakhan, Siberia, and Central Asia. Among its notable delegates were the aforementioned Bigiev and Tarjumani, as well as the chairman

[105]Ibid., 13–16.

[106]Ibid., 62.

[107]Naumkin, "Sovetskie muftii," 353–35.

[108]The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) FO 371/114. I thank Nile Green for sharing this document.

[109]Jacobson, *When the Soviet Union Entered*, 179–82; Toynbee, *Islamic World*, 311.

[110]AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 3.

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of Tashkent's Spiritual Directorate of Muslims, ʿAbd al-Wahid ʿAbd al-Raʾuf Kariev (1859–1937?). The delegates were elected by the Muslim assemblies of their own respected regions but were also approved by the OGPU (the Joint State Political Directorate), the Soviet apparatus of intelligence and internal security.[111]

Not all Soviet officials were content with the organization of the delegates according to their national identities; that is, with assigning their election to the different Soviet republics. As argued by Karim Hakimov, the highest-ranking Soviet diplomat in the Hijaz, this "method of election" led each delegate to consider "himself a delegate of the Muslims of such and such region" and not of all the Soviet Union.[112] In other words, Hakimov thought Moscow's decentralized approach to Muslim politics prevented the implementation of its immediate political goals.

In addition, the Soviet Muslim delegates stood at the center of mutual suspicions between Soviet intelligence officers and diplomats. Hakimov, for example, wrote to Moscow to complain that Bigiev had come to visit him in Jeddah during the summer of 1926 in order to report about his activities to Moscow, particularly whether he "[understood] his tasks in the Hijaz."[113] Suspicions also existed among the Soviet Muslim delegates themselves. Members of the delegation suspected Kariev, the delegate from Soviet Central Asia, of being an OGPU agent whose main role was to spy on them.[114] According to OGPU and NKID documents, both Kariev and Bigiev reported to OGPU during the conference,[115] but their roles went beyond spying on their fellow delegates and Soviet diplomats in the Hijaz. The OGPU instructed them to get closer to AIKC delegates, most notably Jauhar and his brother Shaukat, and learn more about their plans concerning the Caliphate and Hijaz.[116] Whether or not such clandestine operations came to fruition, Hakimov rejected any collaboration with the Indian Khilafists, arguing that it could lead to the politicization of the congress, one that would not guarantee Moscow's interests—the upkeep of Saudi sovereignty.[117]

The disagreement between NKID and OGPU officials on how to implement Soviet policies did not extend to their understandings of the delegation's objectives in Mecca: both sought to guarantee Ibn Saʿud's control over the Hijaz. Thus, in accordance with Ibn Saʿud's attempt to limit the congress only to religious and infrastructural questions, Chicherin concluded that the delegation's participation would be limited to matters concerning the safety and security of pilgrims in the Hijaz and the protection of Muslim holy sites in the region. Soviet officials considered Ibn Saʿud the only leader capable of politically unifying the populations of the Arabian Peninsula and as the representative of the oppressed populations of the region, hinting at the poorer state of Najd compared to the Hijaz.[118]

[111]Farkhshatov, "Diplomaticheskai͡a missii͡a," 22 n7.

[112]AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 31.

[113]Ibid.

[114]This information is found in Surit͡s' letter of June 1926 to Chicherin: ibid., 22.

[115]J. N. Guseva, "Diskurs otechestvennykh spet͡ssluzhb," 430–33.

[116]The British Consul in Jeddah, S. R. Jordan, reported in July 1926 that the ʿAli brothers visited the Soviet Muslim delegation during their stay in Mecca. See TNA FO 371/11446.

[117]AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 31.

[118]Ibid., 53; Zade, "Mekkanskiĭ Kongress," 401.

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Therefore, the Soviet Muslim delegation's task was to resist any threat to Saudi sovereignty, in particular that of the AIKC.[119] Chicherin and Hakimov instructed the Soviet Muslim delegates to oppose the AIKC's Caliphal project and, if unable to do so, prevent the election of a pro-British candidate as Caliph.[120] Supporting Ibn Saʿud's call for delegates to avoid any matters concerning international politics and the relations between Muslims and their governments,[121] the Soviet state resisted any discussions that undermined the sovereignty of Muslim nation states.[122]

This Soviet support for the new Saudi state also meant that its Muslim delegates had to ignore the animosity that some Hijazis had publicly invoked toward that state. Exemplifying this point was the Soviet delegate from Astrakhan (today's Southern Russia), ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿUmerov (1867–1933). The latter mentioned in his travelogue the dissatisfaction that people in the Hijaz felt toward Ibn Saʿud's regime and the religious prohibitions it imposed on the visitation (*ziyara*) of tombs and shrines. In spite of his exposure to such criticisms, ʿUmerov did not undermine Soviet policies in the Hijaz. He noted that he opposed the anti-Saudi views he had heard during his visit, indicating perhaps his fear of contradicting the official Soviet policy.[123]

Yet, the Soviet policy of depoliticizing the congress was in itself a form of politicization. Chicherin sought to establish Soviet influence on the regulation of Muslim holy sites in the region via a permanent council in Mecca of Islamic religious scholars from different countries, including one Soviet member.[124] Viewing the populations of the Arabian Peninsula as "mostly ignorant and ill-fitted to assimilate the advanced Sovietic ideas," Soviet officials imagined the Hijaz as a center from which its agents could circulate their revolutionary principles to Muslims worldwide.[125]

But the Soviet state also had other reasons to send a Muslim delegation to the Hijaz. Chicherin stated, "The delegation intends to declare in front of all the Muslim World that, thanks to the correct resolution of the national question by the Soviet regime, the Muslims of the USSR enjoy equal rights as the representatives of the other religions enjoy and full freedom in the religious sphere."[126] Promoting the spirit of Chicherin's words, Fakhreddinov stated after the delegation's return to the USSR that Soviet internationalism refuted previous trans-imperial conspiracies regarding "pan-Islamism," and added that it enabled Muslims in the Soviet realms to freely interact with their "foreign coreligionists."[127]

While the Soviet state promoted the idea that the political future of Muslims could be guaranteed solely within the framework of ethno-territorial nationalism (whether

[119] AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 13, 40.

[120] Ibid., 1–2.

[121] Ibn Saʿud, "Khitab jalalat al-malik: al-iftitahi li-al-muʾtamar al-Islami al-awwal," *Umm al-Qura*, 11 June 1926: 1.

[122] AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 40.

[123] See ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿUmerov, "Rukopisʹ Umerova," A. A. Khasavnekh and I. A Nurimanov, trans., *Khadzh Russiĭskikx Musulʹman* 10 (2021): 30, 48.

[124] Ibid., 6.

[125] As Kariev explained to Iqbal Ali Shah (1894–1969), an Indian Muslim visitor to the Mecca Congress. See TNA FO 371/11446.

[126] AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 6–7.

[127] Ibid., 56.

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monarchial or republican), Muhammad ʿAli Jauhar had a different idea. He believed that the Hijaz had to have a different future—one subjected solely to the sovereignty of God, a key concept he espoused based on the writings of H. G. Wells and Ahmadi translations of the Qurʾan rather than classical Islamic works of jurisprudence and theology.[128] As Milinda Banerjee has argued, Jauhar and other Indian Muslim thinkers during the interwar period "proclaimed the direct sovereignty of God over the world in an unmediated chain of command that linked divinity to citizenry."[129] This position enabled Jauhar to promote the idea of Unity of God among his co-religionists and defy colonial policies in both South Asia and the Middle East by placing them in opposition to God's rule.[130] Simultaneously, invoking God as an exclusive sovereign enabled Jauhar to argue that the Hijaz's future should only be decided via an international Muslim consensus rather than the region's inhabitants.

Jauhar, who participated in the congress alongside Shaukat ʿAli, Nadvi, and the prominent Khilafist Shuʿaib Quraishi, objected to the idea that the establishment of ethno-territorial nation-states was merely a product of World War I. Rather, he viewed such states as part of thirteen hundred years of predicaments that had afflicted Muslims since the end of the period of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs (al-Khulafaʾ al-Rashidun), noting, "Currently, the part of the Arabian Peninsula that has been occupied and governed by non-Muslims is larger than the part non-Muslims held at the time of the Prophet Muhammad…."[131]

This predicament and division were not solely restricted to the Arabian Peninsula, but, "These hereditary empires, which Muslims established after the period of the Righteous Caliphate, did not integrate into a single nation. Rather, the Muhammadan nation (Ummat-i Muhammadi) was divided into Turks, Afghans, Mughals, Iranians, and other rulers and subjects."[132] As Jauhar explained, Ibn Saʿud, in his espousal of the nation-state model, stood in stark contrast to the period of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, when, "Religion and government were not two separate branches in the republic of Islam. The ruler of democracy was no one except God. All the people used to hold equal status and the Caliph used to be merely the first among equals."[133]

Drawing on the model of Muslim political organization in the era of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, Jauhar developed an idea of Islamic republican government (*jumhuri hukumat*):[134]

> To the extent that it was connected to Muslims, the Islamic government was a republican one. There was much difference between other republican governments and Islamic republics in that there were some fundamental

[128] On the concept of the "Sovereignty of God," see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "The Sovereignty of God in Modern Islamic Thought," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25, 3 (2015): 389–411; Willis, "Burying Muhammad 'Ali Jauhar."

[129] Milinda Banerjee, *The Mortal God: Imagining the Sovereign in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 358.

[130] Ibid., 358–62.

[131] Muhammad ʿAli Jauhar, "Muʾtamar Hijaz aur Khilafat [*Hamdard*, 1 May 1926]," in Muhammad Sarvar, ed., *Mazamin-i Muhammad ʿAli*, vol. 2 (Delhi: Maktabah-i Jami'a, 2011), 340–41.

[132] Muhammad ʿAli Jauhar, "ʿAlam-i Islami ki Muʾtamar [*Hamdard*, 13 Apr. 1926]," *Mazamin-i Muhammad ʿAli*, 236.

[133] Jauhar, "Muʾtamar Hijaz," 337–38.

[134] On Jauhar's republican vision, see Willis, "Burying Muhammad 'Ali Jauhar."

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> laws that no legislative assembly could amend or cancel. Thus, [the Islamic republican government] can prevent any changes of such kind that would transform a democratic government into a popular one and then adopt, gradually, a form of irresponsible autocracy. Popular government has no traces in the Islamic republic, nor is there room for a Mussolini in such a republic. Only God is the ruler and all those created by God have equal status amongst one another. Neither a king nor an absolute ruler can deprive God of His rights. Indeed, they are servants who do not have any special rights before God.[135]

Islamic republicanism was, Jauhar argued, the only way to prevent tyranny. A site of this universal experiment, the Hijaz should have "a true democracy" that would "not be like America and France where race and capitalism are worshipped, but a republic that would be established on the principle of the righteous Caliphate in which Bilal the Abyssinian (the first Muslim muezzin)—the slave—would have the same status as the Caliph of the Quraishi family."[136]

The AIKC delegation rejected Ibn Saʿud's argument that these were the Hijazis themselves who had asked him to govern the region. Claiming to have met with a wide spectrum of Hijazis during their travels in the region, the Khilafists argued that he had no support among the region's inhabitants, who considered him a foreigner. Moreover, Ibn Saʿud used the revenues he had collected to enrich himself and his supporters in Najd rather than develop the Hijaz. According to the AIKC, the Hijazis sought to end the Saudi occupation and instead share their sovereignty with the Muslim world.[137] Therefore, the AIKC delegation argued, "It is not an autocratic and hereditary government of a Najdi king that was established over the people of the Hijaz … but a government of one nation that was established over another one."[138] Viewing the Saudi state as worse than colonial powers, the AIKC delegates stated, "European countries are merely arrogant in their worldly superiority," but Ibn Saʿud also implemented "arrogance in religion" toward the Hijazis.[139] The Khilafists argued: "The [Najdi-Saudi] ruling nation would consider the members of the other nation [i.e., the Hijazis] as perpetrators of the great sin of idolatry and authorize each of its [Najdi-Saudi] members to inflict punishment upon each individual from the [so-called] governed-culprit nation whenever and in every means they desire to do so."[140]

This "arrogance in religion," the AIKC delegation asserted, was rooted in the Saudi state's inability to accept religious diversity among Muslims. For example, Nadvi argued that, though Muslims had constantly disagreed on how to interpret the Qurʾan and Sunna (sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad), these disagreements had remained restricted to the sphere of verbal and written polemics. It was the Saudi state, he contended, that breached this "unity in diversity."[141]

[135]Jauhar, "Muʾtamar Hijaz," 338.
[136]Ibid., 343–44.
[137]Nadvi et al., *Masala-i Hijaz*, 38–39.
[138]Ibid., 111.
[139]Ibid. 111–12.
[140]Ibid., 111.
[141]Ibid., 72.

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As an alternative to this emerging Saudi governance, Jauhar envisioned the future republic of the Hijaz as autonomous in its internal affairs. At the same time, "Islamic external matters, such as pilgrims, the assurance of comforts for the visitors to the *hajj*, repelling the influence of non-Muslims, and arrangements for education in the Qurʾan and *hadith*,"[142] would be governed by a League of Muslim Nations (Jamiʿyyat al-Umam al-Islamiyya). Claiming to draw upon the early twentieth-century vision of the Crimean *jadid* Ismail Gasprinski (Ismail Gaspirali in Tatar; 1851–1914),[143] Jauhar believed that such an organization would secure the liberty of the Hijaz, as well as protect Muslims in the international arena in accordance with the tradition of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. In so doing, Jauhar imagined the region as a demilitarized space that would be managed through international-local Muslim consultation and cooperation.[144]

Such plans aside, the Khilafists' aspirations were hindered at the Mecca Congress since most of its committees were controlled by supporters of the Saudi state backed by the full support of the Soviet delegation. The AIKC delegation accused Ibn Saʿud of giving most seats in the congress to his supporters, creating an anti-democratic system that made impossible any discussion about the Hijaz's system of governance.[145] The Khilafists also complained that the Saudi government prevented them from telegraphing their views to Muslims worldwide by refusing to share with them the Morse Code used in the Hijaz.[146] Rejecting the AIKC's accusations, the delegation of a rival Indian Muslim organization, the Punjab-based and Wahhabi-inspired Ahl-i Hadith, called the AIKC's members "adventurists" who misused Muslim donations. The members of this organization objected to the AIKC's plans, arguing that Ibn Saʿud was the only legitimate ruler in the region who was accepted by all Arabs.[147]

Other participants, such as the above-mentioned Muhammad Rashid Rida, who became one of Ibn Saʿud's major supporters during the period in question, argued that the Khilafists posed a danger to the Hijazis' sovereignty. Like the Ahl-i Hadith, he contended that Ibn Saʿud embodied the Hijazis' own desire for self-determination. He stated, "The opinion of the people of the Hijaz themselves was that they did not agree to be governed by independent foreign countries opposed to them in the school of jurisprudence, such as Yemen and Iran, or in ethnicity, such as the Turks and the Afghans."[148] Invoking ethnic and linguistic difference as politically salient aspects of identity, he argued the Hijazis would never accept non-Arab rule since they rejected "the intervention of the Islamic peoples who are humiliated under the colonial states—such as the Indians, the Javanese, and the Moroccans."[149] Thus, though as we saw

[142] Jauhar, "Muʾtamar Hijaz," 345.

[143] Gasprinski invoked this idea during his stay in Cairo during 1907–1908. See Thomas Kuttner, "Russian Jadîdism and the Islamic World: Ismail Gasprinskii in Cairo, 1908," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 16, 3 (1975): 383–424.

[144] Jauhar, "ʿAlam-i Islami ki Muʾtamar," 239.

[145] Nadvi et al., *Masala-i Hijaz*, 58–59.

[146] Ibid., 71.

[147] AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 11, 39.

[148] Muhammad Rashid Rida, "al-Rad al-ʿala al-Zaʿim Muhammad ʿAli al-Hindi," in Yusuf Husayn Ibish and Yusuf Qasma Khuri, eds., *Maqalat al-Shaykh Rashid Rida al-siyasiya*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar Ibn ʿArabi, 1994), 2011.

[149] Ibid.

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earlier he considered ethnic and linguistic identities as fluid and changeable, Rida was committed to the idea that the Hijaz was first and foremost an Arab-Muslim territory. In his view, the Khilafists sought to use the numerical proportion of Indian Muslims to impose their views on the Muslim World by making the Hijaz,

> into a republic whose affairs will be managed by an Islamic council comprised of all the Islamic nations. Every nation will have members in this council according to its numbers. If two million … from every nation would have a representative or a member in this council, as they [i.e., ʿAli brothers] both told me, let it be as an example, that Najd will have one member, the Hijaz will have one, and Egypt will have seven since its population is 14 million. As for India, its Muslims will have thirty-five members since they comprise seventy million and therefore they will have the majority vote for themselves. How then would they cross over and agree with some of the members from the other nations?[150]

Despite these attacks, the Khilafists attempted to increase their cooperation with non-Saudi representatives. Thus, the AIKC lauded the role of most delegations, including the Soviet one, and thanked them for attending the congress and seeking solutions for the future of the Hijaz in particular and Islam in general.[151]

The Soviet state did not reciprocate in kind: *Novyĭ Vostok*, for example, defined the AIKC as a movement comprised of elite bourgeois landowners, who "have not yet broken off from the old social structure," a movement which "possesses influence over a broad stratum of the Indian Muslim society, thanks to the backwardness and religious fanaticism of the Muslim masses in India."[152]

These opinions viewed the AIKC as a reactionary movement that promoted a false Muslim unity. Seeking to delegitimize the Khilafists in the international Muslim arena, *Novyĭ Vostok* also portrayed the AIKC delegates as Anglophiles. It criticized them for delivering their speeches during the congress in English, even though its official languages were Arabic and the other national languages of the different delegates.[153] *Novyĭ Vostok* went so far as to define the AIKC's behavior during the congress as foreign *vmeshatel′stvo* ("interference"). Any attempt to use transregional Muslim politics to dismantle Saudi rule over the Hijaz, the journal predicted, would be futile since this territory was first and foremost an Arab nation state.[154]

Conclusion

Expressing his joy in a letter to Suri͡ts in the summer of 1926, Chicherin considered the Mecca Congress a success for the Soviet government. Though the congress yielded no practical decision, Chicherin lauded the Soviet delegation's role in preventing the AIKC's plans and further strengthening Moscow's relations with the Saudi state. No less importantly, Chicherin believed that the presence of a Soviet

[150]Ibid., 2013.

[151]Nadvi et al., *Masala-i Hijaz*, 70.

[152]Ismail Zade, "Indiĭskie Khalifatisti i Gedzhas," *Novyĭ Vostok* 22 (1928): 101.

[153]Zade, "Mekkanskiĭ Kongress," 400.

[154]Zade, "Indiĭskie Khalifatisti i Gedzhas," 101–15.

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Muslim delegation had helped brand the USSR as an ally of oppressed Muslims around the world.[155]

Against this optimistic assessment, the journey of the Soviet Muslim delegation to the Hijaz reflected the precarious state of Muslims in the Soviet Union at this time. The exposure to rich library collections of Islamic manuscripts in Mecca, Medina, and Istanbul during their journey brought delegation members both happiness and sorrow. Fakhreddinov lamented that such repositories would never be available to his co-religionists in the Soviet Union.[156] Moreover, on their way to Mecca, the Soviet Muslim delegation was humiliated by British officials in Suez, who placed its members in "a car resembling an animal cage" and transferred them to Alexandria, where they remained under arrest for five days. On their return to the Soviet Union, the delegates faced other troubles. Carrying rosaries, prayers rugs, turbans, holy water, and other souvenirs and gifts they had received or purchased in Mecca, they were stopped by Soviet customs officials at the port city of Odessa, who confiscated their objects as contraband. While Chicherin and other prominent Soviet officials were enraged by the behavior of these officials and sought to correct it,[157] this treatment reflected a dissonance between the Soviet delegation's statements in Mecca and the realities that Muslims in the Soviet Union faced on the ground.

The state of Soviet Muslims only worsened over the following years. The Soviet Union's anti-Muslim campaigns of the early 1930s, which included the banning of *hajj* travels, put an end to the idea that Moscow's policies were grounded in "religious tolerance." Such developments also increased suspicion among Saudi officials that Moscow would target the kingdom with Communist propaganda.[158]

As for the AIKC, after failing to establish an international Muslim republic in the Hijaz, some of its members continued to promote the movement's vision across the Middle East. In 1932, however, the Khilafists saw Ibn Saʿud declare the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, putting a definitive end to their vision for the Hijaz.

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The AIKC-Soviet debate emerged in the Hijaz in the context of the demise of the Ottoman multi-confessional order alongside increasing waves of ethno-territorial nationalisms that aimed to solve the question of diversity by creating homogeneous nation states. Amid these conditions, both the Soviet and AIKC models were worldmaking projects in the sense that they imagined a universal "solution" to questions of difference, in particular minority-majority conflicts. Yet, while both imagined a world without minority-majority differences, they had different visions of how to bring that about.

As for the Khilafists, they viewed their program as a means for uniting Muslims and non-Muslims alike under the banner of anti-colonialism. At the same time, fearing the fate of Muslim minorities amid the global emergence of majoritarian nation-states, the AIKC gave birth to the idea that the lack of non-Muslim presence in the Hijaz would protect and guarantee Muslims' religious freedom worldwide. AIKC members therefore became invested in a republican project intended to facilitate international Muslim governance over Islam's two holiest cities.

[155]AVPRF, f. 04, op. 12, d. 963, pa. 69/1926, l. 59.
[156]Farkhshatov, "Diplomaticheskai͡a missii͡a," 24.
[157]Ibid., 51–52, 76–77.
[158]Jacobson, *When the Soviet Union Entered*, 180.

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In opposition to the AIKC and its attempt to de-territorialize Muslim politics via the internationalization of Hijaz, the Soviet state envisioned a different model of managing difference. Its officials and delegates in the Hijaz viewed the latter as part of a larger system of ethno-territorial and anti-imperial states. In accordance with this vision, Soviet officials rejected transregional Islamic solidarities and accepted Muslim self-determination only in terms of ethno-territorial and linguistic belonging. At the same time, geopolitics played a role in shaping Soviet policies. Seeking to include the Saudi state within an anti-colonial alliance of independent Muslim states, Moscow ignored existing regional differences between Hijaz and Najd. Instead, Soviet officials stressed the so-called wide acceptance of Ibn Saʿud across the Arabian Peninsula and made various efforts to legitimize his rule.

Ironically, despite their inherent differences, the AIKC and Soviet delegates shared one thing in common: both denied the Hijazis themselves the right to self-determination. The AIKC imagined an internationally governed Hijaz with a limited domestic sovereignty for its inhabitants. The Soviet government eventually abandoned its own attentiveness to regional differences, arguing that it was Ibn Saʿud who best represented the political desires of the Hijazis in particular and the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula in general. In so doing, both the USSR and the AIKC subjected the Hijaz to broader internationalist and geopolitical concerns rather than local ones and contributed to the demise of self-determination in Islam's most sacred region.

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