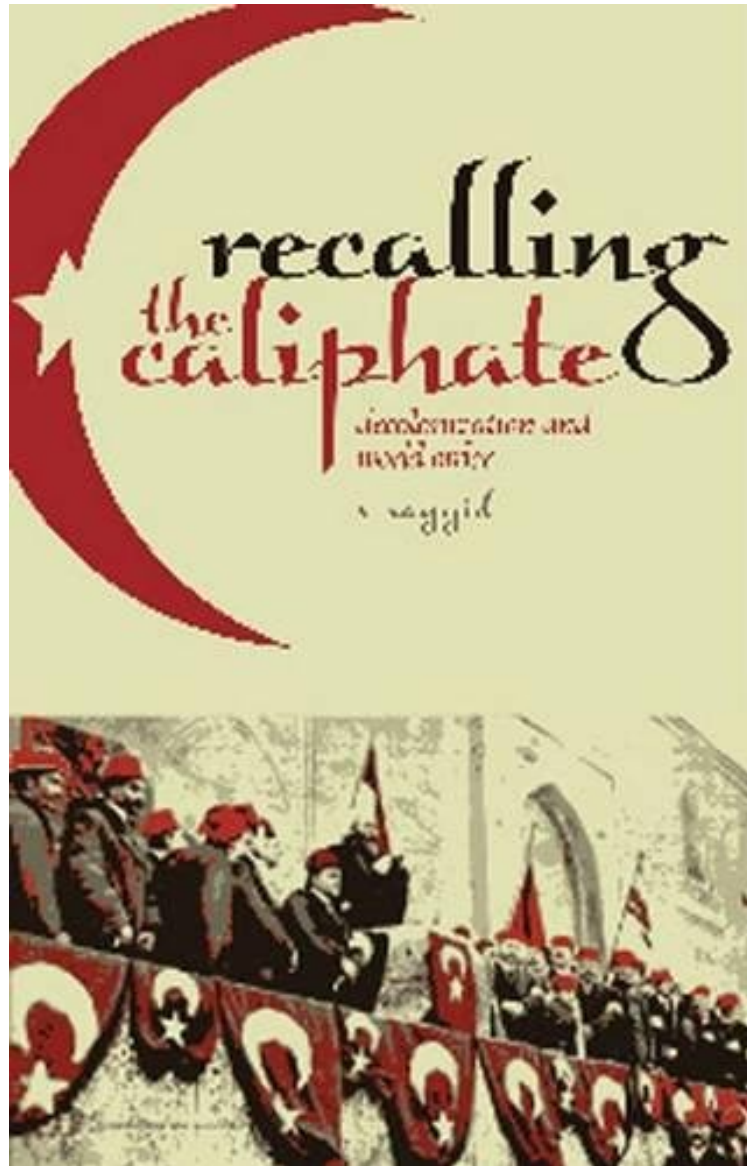


Recalling the Caliphate: Decolonisation and World Order

S. Sayyid

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(insert sociological explanation), the book looks at Islam as the name that gives Muslims a name. Sayyid looks at some conceptual categories that are often used to understand and frame the Muslim question. These include categories such as secularism, democracy and diaspora. He then effectively deconstructs each of these categories. He demonstrates that they are not neutral or value-free instruments of analysis but instead shape our perceptions in specific ways and do the work of keeping Muslim practices outside the limits of the normal. It is not, therefore, the Muslim world that we are looking at that is the necessary object of analysis but the lens through which we look. To illustrate, let us take the case of secularism. Secularism is the demand for the separation of one's political self from one's religious and cultural selves. Close observation of the politics of any nation across the world would show that this is an ideal observed in words but rarely followed in practice. Instead, secularism becomes a conceptual category that makes it possible for Western and Westernised commentators to berate the prevalence of the religious/superstitious worldview in Muslim societies. Armed with an accurate aim, a razor-sharp analysis and a sense of humour, Sayyid dismantles a host of conceptual categories. This makes the book useful to not just the specialist interested in the Muslim world but to any post-structuralist scholar desirous of engaging with critical thinking on language, representation and reality. Sayyid draws from a wide variety of sources and is the rare academic who quotes as often from non-Western writers and thinkers as Western ones. In the final four chapters of the book, Sayyid tackles the question: What would a Muslim politics look like? Again eschewing the obvious, Sayyid does not offer simplistic religious or political answers. He looks at certain Muslim political formations that already exist, such as the Organization of Islamic co-operation, which consists of fifty-seven member countries, the idea of Islamic states and Islamic economies or the category of the ummah as a community of Quran worshippers. Sayyid brings the same acuity of analysis to these formulations, and makes the argument that these formulations need not be essentially and automatically Muslim. It is in this context that a return to the Caliphate can be articulated. Sayyid notes the various demands for and fears of a return of the Caliphate. At the same time, his argument is that the vision for the Caliphate is also a political demand, political in the sense that it requires a change in the way in which the world is ordered. In a formulation that is beautiful in its simplicity and poignant in its possibility, he states that recalling the Caliphate is building a world in which the presence of Muslims is not a scandal. I can think of no better possibility than that. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Rigorous and thorough analysis By Shvetal Vyas ReCalling the Caliphate provides an insightful analysis of Muslim presence in the world today and does so without falling into religious or sociological clichés. Instead of saying Muslims are like this because of (insert religious edict) or because of (insert sociological explanation), the book looks at Islam as the name that gives Muslims a name. Sayyid looks at some conceptual categories that are often used to understand and frame the Muslim question. These include categories such as secularism, democracy and diaspora. He then effectively deconstructs each of these categories. He demonstrates that they are not neutral or value-free instruments of analysis but instead shape our perceptions in specific ways and do the work of keeping Muslim practices outside the limits of the normal. 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As late as the last quarter of the twentieth century, there were expectations that Islam's political and cultural influence would dissipate as the advance of westernization brought modernization and secularization in its wake. Not only has Islam failed to follow the trajectory pursued by variants of Christianity, namely confinement to the private sphere and

depoliticisation, but it has also forcefully re-asserted itself as mobilizations in its name challenge the global order in a series of geopolitical, cultural and philosophical struggles. The continuing (if not growing) relevance of Islam suggests that global history cannot simply be presented as a scaled up version of that of the West. Quests for Muslim autonomy present themselves in several forms - local and global, extremist and moderate, conservative and revisionist - in the light of which the recycling of conventional narratives about Islam becomes increasingly problematic. Not only are these accounts inadequate for understanding Muslim experiences, but by relying on them many Western governments pursue policies that are counter-productive and ultimately hazardous for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. "Recalling the Caliphate" engages critically with the interaction between Islam and the political in context of a post colonial world that continues to resist profound decolonization. In the first part of this book, Sayyid focuses on how demands for Muslim autonomy are debated in terms such as democracy, cultural relativism, secularism, and liberalism. Each chapter analyzes the displacements and evasions by which the decolonization of the Muslim world continues to be deflected and deferred, while the latter part of the book builds on this critique, exploring, and attempts to accelerate the decolonization of the Muslim Ummah.

"S. Sayyid has written a highly insightful exploration of Muslim identity ("the ummah") in the modern world. Unlike many who have pontificated on Islam and Muslims, Sayyid is very well informed on Islamic and European history, and has an impressive command of contemporary critical theory. The result is an excellent book." - Talal Asad, Graduate Center of the City University of New York
"To my knowledge, this is the best attempt at decolonising the Muslim mind and politics. But it is much more than that. It is a complex and powerful rendering of a Muslim contribution to a new non-liberal cosmopolitanism., and should be read by all." - Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Professor of Sociology at the University of Coimbra and University of Wisconsin-Madison
About the Author
S. Sayyid is the author of A Fundamental Fear. He was formerly the Director of the International Centre of Muslim and Non-Muslim Understanding at the University of South Australia and is currently based at the University of Leeds.