

Mehmed V Wants You: Ottoman and German Propaganda in the First World War

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Introduction

During the First World War (1914-1918), the Ottoman Empire was allied with the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. The Ottoman declaration of war against the Entente Powers (Britain, France, and Russia) on 11 November 1914 took the form of a call to *jihad*.¹ The First World War had begun following the assassination of the Archduke of Austria-Hungary, Franz Ferdinand, on 28 June 1914,² and the system of alliances through Europe pulled most of the major powers into the conflict.³ The Ottoman Empire was not a part of this system of alliances, but they concluded formal negotiations with the German Empire and signed a treaty on 2 August 1914.⁴ Germany saw this as an opportunity to use Islam as a tool of warfare. The Ottoman government saw the war as an opportunity to remove themselves from the shackles of foreign economic control and transform the empire into a modern state.⁵ Some historians have referred to the period from 1914-1922 as the ‘war of independence’,⁶ while others have called the period from the beginning of the First Balkan War (1912-1913) to the end of the War of Independence (1919-1922) a ‘ten-year-war’,⁷ emphasizing the impact and interconnected nature of these three wars for the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman declaration of war took place in November 1914 after months of armed neutrality. The sultan declared *jihad* and called upon the people of the Ottoman Empire and

¹ Mustafa Aksakal, “‘Holy War Made in Germany’? Ottoman Origins of the 1914 Jihad,” *War in History* 18, no. 2 (2011), DOI: 10.1177/0968344510393596, 186.

² James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War I* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981), 23.

³ Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War I*, 26-27.

⁴ Ulrich Trumppener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 15-16.

⁵ Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13-14.

⁶ Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914*, 15.

⁷ Alexandre Toumarkine, “Coming to Terms with the Imperial Legacy and the Violence of War: Turkish Historiography of World War I between Autarchy and a Plurality of Voices, 1914-2019,” in *Writing the Great War: The Historiography of World War I from 1918 to the Present*, ed. Cristoph Cornelissen and Arndt Weinrich (New York: Berghahn Books, 2021), 377.

Muslims everywhere to join the Ottoman Empire in waging war against the Entente Powers. In this thesis I will discuss the impact that this declaration had on Ottoman and German propaganda in the first two years of the First World War. Both of these powers were trying to use this declaration to their advantage, but they did not do so in a cohesive manner. Each of these empires pursued their own propaganda aims upon the same basis of *jihad*. The first chapter will follow the Ottoman propaganda efforts, which were primarily focused on encouraging the people of the Ottoman Empire to support the Ottoman war effort. The second chapter will follow the German propaganda efforts that used *jihad*, which were primarily focused on encouraging non-Ottoman Muslims to support the war aims of the Central Powers by fighting against the Entente Powers in their own localities. The lack of cohesion, as well as the differing aims and understanding of what could be achieved through the use of *jihad* in propaganda resulted in less successful propaganda efforts than the Ottoman Empire and German Empire could have had if they had more united aims.

The German-Ottoman alliance has been portrayed by some historians as solely the result of German intervention, a line of thought that will not be followed in this thesis. The alliance has garnered controversy since the First World War and this controversy has continued through the last century of historical discourse. One of the primary reasons that the alliance and the declaration of *jihad* was considered to be “made in Germany” is due to the fact that the Ottomans had not used *jihad* as an official line of propaganda since the Tanzimat (“reforms”) of 1839.⁸

Jihad, a term often defined as “holy war,” is a concept that originated in the time of the Prophet Muhammad and is referenced in the Qur’an.⁹ There are two forms of *jihad*, greater *jihad*, which

⁸ Coşkun Çakır, “Tanzimat,” in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 553; M. Şüleri Hanioglu, “Ottoman Jihad or Jihads: The Ottoman Shī‘ī Jihad, the Successful One,” in *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje’s “Holy War Made in Germany”*, edited by Erik-Jan Zürcher (Leiden, NL: Leiden University Press, 2016), 118.

⁹ Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 1996), 1-2.

is an internal striving towards God that is associated with Muslim mystics or Sufis,¹⁰ and lesser *jihad*, war against non-Muslims.¹¹ Both forms are the subject of much scholarly debate and discussion due to shifts in perspectives, especially in a post-9/11 cultural landscape.¹² From the beginning of the war Britain took great pains to present the 1914 *jihad* declaration as a creation of German manipulation.¹³ A prominent Dutch scholar of Islam, C. Snouck Hurgronje, published in January 1915 [here or after title?] a tract called *The Holy War 'Made in Germany'* which also decried the declaration of *jihad* as a result of German influence.¹⁴ He asserted that *jihad* was a remnant of “mediæval fanaticism.”¹⁵ His focus was on the impact that it could have on “the colonial project of civilizing the Muslim world.”¹⁶ In a retort to Hurgronje, German scholar Carl Becker emphasized both his claim that the *jihad* was not a German creation, and his perception that the use of “Jihad and pan-Islamism as weapons in the war” was legitimate.¹⁷ Pan-Islam is another term that has been subject to much debate and discussion. It has been defined in ways that contradict one another, and as a concept has been seen as either influential or of no consequence.¹⁸ It is often defined as the concept of unity, particularly political unity, between Muslims across the globe.¹⁹ It can imply a unity of action or goals and an ability to “rally. . . the entire Muslim world to the cause.”²⁰ The divergence in religious belief among Muslims has

¹⁰ Richard Bonney, *Jihād: From Qur'an to bin Laden* (Hampshire, UK: Palmgrave MacMillan, 2004), 12

¹¹ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 3-4.

¹² Bonney, *Jihād*, 12-13.

¹³ John Slight, “Reaction to the Ottoman Jihad *fatwa* in the British Empire, 1914-1918,” in *The Great War in the Middle East*, edited by Robert Johnson and James E. Kitchen, URL: <https://oro.open.ac.uk/53043/3/53043.pdf>, 2.

¹⁴ Hanioglu, “Ottoman Jihad or Jihads,” 117.

¹⁵ C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Holy War 'Made in Germany'*, translated by Joseph E. Gillet (London, UK and New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), 33.

¹⁶ Léon Buskens, “Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, ‘Holy War’ and Colonial Concerns,” in *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's 'Holy War Made in Germany'*, edited by Erik-Jan Zürcher (Leiden, NL: Leiden University Press, 2016), 29.

¹⁷ Buskens, “Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, ‘Holy War’ and Colonial Concerns,” 35.

¹⁸ Buskens, “Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, ‘Holy War’ and Colonial Concerns,” 38.

¹⁹ Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 1.

²⁰ Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam*, 5

often been overlooked by those attempting to create Pan-Islamic feeling to further their goals,²¹ including Kaiser Wilhelm II.

The First World War was in many ways a very modern conflict, however many of the modern forms of propaganda distribution such as radio and film did not emerge as widespread forms of mass media until the inter-war period. Propaganda on both sides during the First World War was largely reliant on print and word of mouth. Print mediums included posters, books, articles, and photographs, which were in high demand across the world.²² Still, the nature of mass communication and advertising by 1914 meant that the First World War was the first conflict to involve propaganda on such a wide scale.²³

Historiography

According to historian Alexandre Toumarkine, the historiography of the First World War within Turkey has undergone several phases. These phases and the historiography as a whole were greatly impacted by the post-war political climate in the country.²⁴ Many early historians of the First World War within modern-day Turkey had ties with the military²⁵ and the histories that they wrote were greatly influenced by Turkish nationalism.²⁶ Much of the early Western scholarship about the First World War did not focus on the Ottoman Empire, as these scholars often considered the war in the East to be not as important as the war on the Western Front.²⁷ Contemporary British military leaders equally considered the conflict in the Middle East to be a

²¹ Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam*, 4.

²² Deborah D. Wallin, "World War I," in *Russia: 1918-1953 - Zionism*, ed. Robert Cole, vol. 3 of *The Encyclopedia of Propaganda* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 870.

²³ Garth S. Jowett, and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 4th ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 206-207.

²⁴ Toumarkine, "Coming to Terms with the Imperial Legacy and the Violence of War," 369-370.

²⁵ Toumarkine, "Coming to Terms with the Imperial Legacy and the Violence of War," 372.

²⁶ Toumarkine, "Coming to Terms with the Imperial Legacy and the Violence of War," 375.

²⁷ Toumarkine, "Coming to Terms with the Imperial Legacy and the Violence of War," 374.

“sideshow.”²⁸ Early works of scholarship by Western authors that do describe the involvement of the Ottoman Empire, particularly works that do not focus on the Ottoman Empire, are often paternalistic in nature.

While early historians were often narrow minded, later historians have explored the issues differently. There are more Turkish historians who have been translated into English, and a greater access to primary source documents for Western and Turkish scholars,²⁹ allowing for a shift in perspective. The history of propaganda in the First World War is a very specific subsection of the history of the First World War and is often treated as a part of the overall whole rather than specifically written on. There are enough historians who have written about the Ottomans and Germans that are discussing the propaganda campaigns as part of their works that it is possible, even without many monographs focusing solely on the topic, to find reliable secondary sources. Tilman Lüdke’s 2005 book *Jihad made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War* is one of the few monographs on the subject of Ottoman propaganda and propaganda surrounding the Ottoman Empire in the period of the First World War. He argues for the interwoven nature of propaganda and intelligence work,³⁰ as intelligence organizations were instrumental in the production and distribution of propaganda. Donald McKale’s *War by Revolution* (1998) is another text that is more focused on British and German propaganda.

The collection of essays written for the centennial of the publication of Hurgronje’s *The Holy War ‘Made in Germany’* and edited by Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Jihad and Islam in World War I* (2016) is a *tour de force* of prominent historians in the field, including Tilman Lüdke, Mustafa

²⁸ David R. Woodard, *Hell in the Holy Land: World War I in the Middle East* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 20.

²⁹ Toumarkine, “Coming to Terms with the Imperial Legacy and the Violence of War,” 383.

³⁰ Tilman Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War* (Münster, DE: Lit Verlag, 2005) URL: <https://archive.org/details/jihadmadeingerma0000ludk/page/n1/mode/2up>, 6.

Aksakal, and Mehmet Beşikçi, among others. All three of these historians have written on topics similar to their monographs. Lüdke wrote on German propaganda. Aksakal wrote on the beginning of the First World War for the Ottomans, and Beşikçi wrote on domestic propaganda in the Ottoman Empire, particularly that which was aimed at soldiers. This collection is very useful as a source on many different aspects of the Ottoman and German relations in the First World War, and as an essay collection it is also useful as an introductory text to the subject.

Beşikçi's book, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War* (2012) and Yiğit Akın's book *When the War Came Home* (2018) both look at the lives of everyday soldiers and civilians in the Ottoman Empire and the ways in which the larger scale political and military decisions affected them. Both texts also examine the impact of the Balkan Wars on the ways people reacted to the war and the propagandistic efforts of the government. Erik-Jan Zürcher's chapter in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, "Little Mehmet in the Desert: The Ottoman Soldier's Experience," also discusses the experiences of the Ottoman soldier, most prominently the way literacy rates impacted what kinds of records were being created by and about Ottoman soldiers.³¹

Other monographs such as Aksakal's *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914* (2008) and Ulrich Trumpener's *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918* (1968) are more focused on the broad strokes of the political and military aspects of the Ottoman entrance into the conflict. Eugene Rogan's *The Fall of the Ottomans* (2015) and Sean McMeekin's *The Ottoman Endgame* (2016) are both even more general knowledge texts beginning with the revolution of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in 1908. Rogan's text ends with the end of the First World War, whereas McMeekin's text ends with the end of the Ottoman War of Independence.

³¹ Erik Zürcher, "Little Mehmet in the Desert: The Ottoman Soldier's Experience," in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, edited by Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), 235. Citation refers to the Pen & Sword Select edition.

While earlier texts have significant bias, more modern sources have done a better job of presenting the multiplicity of perspectives. Most of these texts, when discussing the origins of the German-Ottoman alliance and the declaration of *jihad*, portray it as a complex diplomatic issue where both powers hoped to gain something from the other, rather than merely the dominance of one state over another. Several of the sources on the propaganda itself have come from either German or Turkish historians. More classical texts such as the work of Trumpener,³² which has been frequently cited and analyzed since its publication, bridge the gap between the immediate post-war histories and the more modern texts. While there are still gaps in the historiography, there is a solid body of research on which to build further analysis of the topics.

³² Toumarkine, "Coming to Terms with the Imperial Legacy and the Violence of War," 387.

Chapter One

The focus of Ottoman propaganda during the First World War was largely on their own population, and to some extent Muslims outside of the Ottoman Empire. They were focused on promoting favourable views of the war among Muslims. The call to *jihad* and the emphasis on religious duty and sacrifice was a key part of this.³³ Additional propagandistic efforts included organizations such as the Ottoman Navy League³⁴ and several women's societies³⁵ where volunteer work happened outside of direct military service and donations could be given, which gave people a place to direct pro-war attitudes that the state was trying to develop. A paramilitary youth league was set up on the blueprint of the German paramilitary youth league, the Young Germany League.³⁶ Within the regular forces of the military much of the propaganda was dispensed by the battalion imams who were crucial in efforts to increase morale among the troops.³⁷ They used their military victories as a way to increase morale on both the home front and the war front.³⁸ The Ottomans also directed subversive propaganda towards Muslims in other areas of the world, where there was a lack of cooperation between the Ottoman and German propaganda efforts. The Ottoman officials, despite some places where their military organization and operations intertwined, did not trust the Germans to create propaganda that was favourable

³³ Slight, "Reaction to the Ottoman Jihad *fatwa* in the British Empire, 1914-1918," 4.

³⁴ Nadir Özbek, "Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire: War, Mass Mobilization and the Young Turk Regime (1908-18)," in *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 5 (2007), URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4284588>, 795.

³⁵ Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 156; Özbek, "Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire," 805.

³⁶ Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Volunteerism and Resistance* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2012), 218-219.

³⁷ Mehmet Beşikçi, "Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad: The Role of Religious Motifs and Religious Agents in the Mobilization of the Ottoman Army," in *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's "Holy War Made in Germany"*, edited by Erik-Jan Zürcher (Leiden, NL: Leiden University Press, 2016), 104-105.

³⁸ Mesut Uyar, "Remembering the Gallipoli campaign: Turkish official military historiography, war memorials and contested ground," *First World War Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016), DOI: 10.1080/19475020.2016.1234965, 166-167.

to the Ottomans and would sometimes suppress or try to control German propaganda that was directed at areas that they thought to be in their sphere of influence.³⁹

The Ottoman Empire underwent a series of rapid changes in the period immediately preceding the First World War. Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909) had introduced a constitution in the late 1870s which led to the first parliamentary elections in the Ottoman Empire. Two years later, following the loss of large swaths of territory to other empires as well as an attempted coup, the sultan suspended both the constitution and the parliament.⁴⁰ In 1908, one of the most prominent revolutionary organizations in the loose coalition of organizations known as the Young Turks was the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Dissatisfied with the brutality and corruption of the regime and afraid of the disintegration of the empire, the CUP led a mutiny beginning in the Ottoman Third Army in Macedonia in July 1908.⁴¹ The revolution was intensely popular and given the lack of loyalty in the military in Macedonia the sultan had no hope of containing the uprising. On 24 July Abdülhamid II reinstated the constitution.⁴² In the elections that followed, the CUP won a majority in the lower house of the parliament as one of the two political parties that ran any candidates in the election, and many of the independents were favourable to the CUP's positions.⁴³ This revolution was followed by a period of economic instability and the loss of territory. There were both annexations by other imperial powers, such as that of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary, and the declaration of independence by

³⁹ Eberhard Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I: A Comprehensive History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 133.

⁴⁰ Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 4; François Georeon, "Abdülhamid II," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by Kate Fleet et al., 3rd ed., Brill, 2007, accessed January 13 2024, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_0101.

⁴¹ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 4-5; Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Abdülhamid II," in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009),

⁴² Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 5.

⁴³ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 7.

Bulgaria on 5 October 1908.⁴⁴ A counter-revolution began on the night of 12 April 1909 and briefly restored the Ottoman Empire to an absolute monarchy, but the CUP imposed martial law on Istanbul and reinstated parliament. This reinstated parliament voted to depose Abdülhamid II and replaced him with his younger brother, Mehmed Reşad or Sultan Mehmed V on 27 April 1909.⁴⁵

Mehmed V reigned from 1909 until his death in July 1918.⁴⁶ He held little power as a constitutional monarch and even less following the CUP *coup d'état* of 1913 which disassembled the multiparty system. Following the coup, he served as a symbolic figurehead for the government.⁴⁷ As sultan, Mehmed V was also the caliph, a title which came from the title *Khalifat Rasul Allah* (“successor to the Prophet of God”), and had functioned as the main office of religio-political leadership in the Muslim community since the death of the Prophet in 642. The matter of who held the title split the Muslim community into two sects, the Sunnis and the Shi’ites. In theory, all Muslims were to hold allegiance to the caliph as he was a religious and political leader, but in practice this was not the case.⁴⁸ Until Sultan Selim I took the title in 1517, the office of the caliph had belonged to the Quraysh tribe⁴⁹ and Sunni theologians argued that all caliphs needed to be descendants of the Qurayshis. Abdülhamid II made the claim to the caliphate even more contentious by using the 1876 Constitution to ensure that the titles of “caliph” and “sultan” were conjoined.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Daniel Allen Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2011), 36; Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 7.

⁴⁵ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 8-9.

⁴⁶ Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 203; Selçuk Akşin Somel, “Mehmed V (Reşad),” in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 371.

⁴⁷ Somel, “Mehmed V (Reşad),” 371.

⁴⁸ Bruce Master, “caliphate,” in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 114.

⁴⁹ Hayrettin Yücesoy, “Caliph and caliphate up to 1517,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by Kate Fleet et al. 3rd ed. Brill, 2007, accessed January 22 2024, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25459.

⁵⁰ Master, “caliphate,” 114.

Over the course of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire had fought in a number of different conflicts, the most prominent of which was the Crimean War (1853-1856).⁵¹ The empire had lost a lot of territory both to independence movements and to the Great Powers of Europe over the course of the reign of Abdülhamid II and his predecessors.⁵² He had attempted to mitigate his territorial losses and the collapse of his empire by dissolving the parliament and reinstating his total authority in 1878.⁵³ The Young Turks thought that constitutional reform would do the same.⁵⁴ Neither of them were successful. Following the Young Turk revolution, the Ottoman Empire once again became embroiled in conflicts caused by their provinces making bids for independence. The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 were short and bloody conflicts that were disastrous for the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁵ Often seen as precursors to the First World War in the Ottoman context, the Balkan Wars resulted in drastic reforms in how the Ottomans mobilized their military.⁵⁶ The Balkan Wars also created major changes in demographics as sections of the empire were lost, which in turn impacted who was being mobilized and how. The population of the Ottoman Empire had been quite heterogeneous, with a majority Muslim population. The other major ethnic and religious categories that existed in pre-war Ottoman society were (from largest to smallest): Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, Jews, and Europeans.⁵⁷ The 1914 census reflected the demographic changes caused by the Balkan Wars, in which the Muslim population gained an even greater majority.⁵⁸ These census records do not make a distinction between Muslim Turks and Muslims of other ethnicities. Prior to and during the Balkan Wars, there was

⁵¹ Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 20.

⁵² Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, xvii-xix; Somel, "Abdülhamid II," 6-7.

⁵³ Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 21.

⁵⁴ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, xix.

⁵⁵ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 50.

⁵⁶ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 50-51.

⁵⁷ Stanford J. Shaw, "The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 3 (Oct. 1978), 335.

⁵⁸ Shaw, "The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914," 336.

an emphasis on combining Muslims with non-Muslims in the fighting units of the military.⁵⁹ However, a perceived lack of loyalty to the empire on the part of non-Muslims, and a distaste on the part of Muslims for fighting alongside Christians in particular,⁶⁰ led to both “the conviction that religion was the prime motivator of Ottoman soldiers and non-Muslims’ exclusion from the fighting ranks.”⁶¹ Attempts to construct “an empire of Ottoman citizens regardless of religion and ethnicity”⁶² which began in the Tanzimat period when a series of Westernizing reforms introduced between 1839 and 1876⁶³ had included the removal of the language of *jihad* from the arsenal of official Ottoman propaganda for most of the 19th century.⁶⁴ The 1911 conflict in Libya, on the other hand, was portrayed as a holy war, particularly in European media, as the Europeans saw resistance against the Italian invasion as being purely religiously motivated; however, not all Muslims agreed with this presentation.⁶⁵ Even after the Balkan states declared a holy war in their 1912-1913 conflict, the Ottomans did not respond in kind.⁶⁶ Thus the First World War was seen as a departure from the Ottoman policy of the 19th century.⁶⁷

As the First World War began, a secret treaty of alliance was signed on 2 August 1914 between Germany and the Ottoman Empire, as represented by the German ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Baron Hans von Wangenheim, and Grand Vizier and foreign minister of the Ottoman Empire, Prince Mehmed Said Halim Paşa.⁶⁸ Of the three Ottoman officials who were in Berlin to negotiate the treaty, Enver Paşa was the most staunchly pro-German,⁶⁹ though many

⁵⁹ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 36.

⁶⁰ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 35-36.

⁶¹ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 36.

⁶² Hanioglu, “Ottoman Jihad or Jihads,” 118.

⁶³ Çakır, “Tanzimat,” 553.

⁶⁴ Hanioglu, “Ottoman Jihad or Jihads,” 118.

⁶⁵ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 38.

⁶⁶ Hanioglu, “Ottoman Jihad or Jihads,” 118.

⁶⁷ Mustafa Aksakal, “The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad,” in *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje’s “Holy War Made in Germany,”* edited by Erik-Jan Zürcher (Leiden, NL: Leiden University Press, 2016), 54.

⁶⁸ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 15-16.

⁶⁹ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 17-18.

believed that the Central Powers were stronger militarily.⁷⁰ The treaty obliged the two powers to remain neutral in the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia unless Russia intervened, in which case Germany was obligated to aid Austria-Hungary; after the treaty of 2 August, the Ottoman Empire was also obligated.⁷¹ However, the Russians had already begun to mobilize fully on the 30th of July, to which the Germans responded with an ultimatum on the 31st.⁷² The Ottoman Empire began to mobilize troops immediately after the signing of the treaty, though they also immediately made an official declaration of neutrality.⁷³ It is likely that this was in response to both the secret nature of the treaty, which was not known to all of the Ottoman ministers and senior military officers, as well as the hesitancy of many of those who had negotiated the treaty, including Said Halim.⁷⁴ Both Germany and Austria-Hungary, which agreed to adhere to the treaty on 4 August, were not particularly pleased about this decision;⁷⁵ however cooperation did exist between Germany and the Ottoman Empire, especially when it came to propaganda in regards to action around the Suez canal.⁷⁶ The two ships that made up the German Mediterranean Division, the *Göben* and the *Breslau*, were sent through the Mediterranean with the initial goal of reaching the Austro-Hungarian naval base of Pola; their destination was promptly switched to Istanbul, in order to prevent them from being sunk.⁷⁷ It was requested on 1 August by Baron von Wangenheim and Field Marshall Liman von Sanders that the two ships be

⁷⁰ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 20.

⁷¹ *Treaty of Defensive Alliance*, Germany and Ottoman Empire, art. 1-2, 2 August 1914, in *British and French Supremacy, 1914-1945*, edited by J.C. Hurewitz, vol. 2 of *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 1-2.

⁷² Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War I*, 28.

⁷³ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 23.

⁷⁴ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 23-24.

⁷⁵ J. C. Hurewitz, ed., *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, vol. 2 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 1.

⁷⁶ Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 95.

⁷⁷ Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan's Realm*, 70.

sent to Istanbul as they would “greatly enhance the capabilities of the Ottoman fleet in the Black Sea.”⁷⁸

After months of armed neutrality the Ottoman Empire finally entered the war against the Entente Powers by shelling the Russian port of Sevastopol in the Black Sea, and sinking two ships on 29 October 1914.⁷⁹ A part of the Ottoman fleet which included the *Göben* and the *Breslau*, under the command of Admiral Wilhelm Souchon, was sent out to do maneuvers in the Black Sea for several days prior to this first shelling under orders to either take advantage of an opportunity if one presented itself or to act when Enver Paşa sent a telegram.⁸⁰ Enver Paşa never sent a telegram, which forced Souchon to make the decision for when to attack.⁸¹ The Russian declaration of war took place on 2 November 1914,⁸² followed by the British and French declarations on 5 November.⁸³

The Ottoman declaration of war, which took the form of a *fatwa* or legal opinion declaring *jihād*, was important in the propaganda undertaken by both the Ottomans and the Germans in the First World War. It was issued on the authority of Mehmed V calling for Muslims everywhere to rise up in *jihād* against the Entente Powers and was presented to various dignitaries in a closed ceremony on 11 November 1914.⁸⁴ Meaningfully, it was then read out on the steps of the Mosque of Mehmed the Conqueror on 14 November.⁸⁵ It had taken two weeks of deliberation and debate by 29 legal scholars to finish the final text of the *fatwa*,⁸⁶ though there

⁷⁸ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 26.

⁷⁹ Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914*, 179.

⁸⁰ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 51; Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, 55.

⁸¹ Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914*, 179.

⁸² Aksakal, ““Holy War Made in Germany”?,” 186; Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 51.

⁸³ Woodard, *Hell in the Holy Land*, 2.

⁸⁴ Aksakal, ““Holy War Made in Germany”?,” 186.

⁸⁵ Aksakal, ““Holy War Made in Germany”?,” 186.

⁸⁶ Eugene Rogan, “Rival jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East,” *Journal of the British Academy* 4 (2016), DOI: 10.5871/JBA/004.001, 4.

were publications of the text as early as 7 November in pan-Islamic pamphlets.⁸⁷ Given the non-traditional makeup of the *fatwa*, wherein it called for *jihad* against specific polities as opposed to non-believers in general, there were reservations about it in the Ottoman government, particularly from the sultan and his religious scholars.⁸⁸ The *fatwa*, formatted in the traditional form of questions and responses,⁸⁹ laid out five questions, with each question being answered with a “yes.”⁹⁰

| Number | Question | Answer |
|--------|---|--------|
| 1 | “When it occurs that enemies attack the Islamic world, when it has been established that they seize and pillage Islamic countries and capture Muslim persons and when His Majesty the Padishah of Islam thereupon order the jihad in the form of a general mobilization, has jihad then, according to the illustrious Koranic verse: ‘ <i>Go forth, light and heavy! Struggle in God’s way with your possessions and yourselves; that is better for you, did you know</i> ’ (K 9:41), become incumbent on all Muslims in all parts of the world, be they young or old, on foot or mounted, to hasten to partake in jihad with their goods and money?” | “Yes.” |
| 2 | “Now that it has been established that Russia, England, and the governments that support them and are allied to them, are hostile to the Islamic Caliphate, since their warships and armies attack the Seat of the Islamic Caliphate and the Imperial Dominions and strive (God forbid) for extinguishing and annihilating the exalted light of Islam [cf. K 9:32], is it, in this case, also incumbent upon all Muslims that are being ruled by these governments, to proclaim jihad against them and to actually attack them?” | “Yes.” |
| 3 | “If some Muslims, now that the attainment of the aim [viz. the protection of the Ottoman Empire] depends on the fact that all Muslims hasten to partake in the jihad, refrain from doing so (which God forbid), is this then, in this case, a great sin and do they deserve Divine wrath and punishment for their horrible sin?” | “Yes.” |

⁸⁷ Aksakal, “‘Holy War Made in Germany’?,” 186.

⁸⁸ Rogan, “Rival jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East,” 4.

⁸⁹ Brinkley Messick, “*Fatwā*, modern,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by Kate Fleet et al., 3rd ed., Brill, 2017, accessed January 13 2024, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27049.

⁹⁰ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 56-57.

| | | |
|---|---|--------|
| 4 | “If the states mentioned that are fighting against the Islamic government compel and force their Muslim population by [threatening them] to kill them and even to exterminate all members of their families, is it even in this case according to the <i>sharī`ah</i> absolutely forbidden for them to fight against the troops of the Islamic countries and do they [by transgressing this prohibition] deserve the hell-fire, having become murderers?” | “Yes.” |
| 5 | “Is it in this case for the Muslims that are in the present war under the rule of England, France, Russia, Serbia, Montenegro and their allies, since it is detrimental to the Islamic Caliphate, a great sin to fight against Germany and Austria which are the allies of the Supreme Islamic Government and do they deserve [by acting so] a painful punishment [in the Here-after]?” | “Yes.” |

Table 1. Translation of the *fatwa*.⁹¹

Both the first and second question establish a Qur’anic precedent for what the government is asking of the Ottoman population, and by extension of Muslim populations in other polities. The first question establishes that if there was an attack on “the Islamic world” and the sultan “order[ed] the jihad in the form of a general mobilization,”⁹² as he is doing in the promulgation of this *fatwa*, then every Muslim must support the *jihad*. This support could come in either the form of “goods and money” or as martial action.⁹³ In the first question verse 41 of the ninth *sura*, or section of the Qur’an is quoted,⁹⁴ indicating to those who would hear or read it that there was a Qur’anic basis not only for the call to arms, but also for calling on those who could not fight to aid the *jihad* in other ways.

The second question lays the blame for the Ottoman entrance into the war at the feet of the Entente powers for attacking “the seat of the Islamic Caliphate.”⁹⁵ As established above, it was the Ottomans who fired the first shells to bring themselves into the war. This interpretation –

⁹¹ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 56-57.

⁹² Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 56.

⁹³ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 56.

⁹⁴ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 56.

⁹⁵ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 56.

the Ottoman Empire as a victim – was maintained throughout the war. A proclamation by Mehmed V followed the reading of the *fatwa* in which he stated that a squadron of the Ottoman fleet had been engaging in manoeuvres in the Black Sea when they were fired upon by a part of the Russian fleet that had been laying mines in the area.⁹⁶ The shelling of forts on the peninsula of Gallipoli by the British and French on 3 November,⁹⁷ as well as the British attack on a fort in the Gulf of Aqaba on 1 November prior to the official declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire⁹⁸ were portrayed as the act of a major belligerent power attacking a neutral one.⁹⁹ Given the alliances between the three powers, it makes sense that they would follow Russia in declaring war against the Ottoman Empire despite the lack of direct attack on either Britain or France. Britain in particular believed that the Ottoman Empire would not pose a major threat, which led to the disastrous Gallipoli campaign of 1915.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the Ottoman response makes sense from both a propagandistic and religious standpoint. The people of the Ottoman Empire were not eager to go to war,¹⁰¹ nor were many of the politicians,¹⁰² and painting themselves as the aggressor would likely have further discouraged any chance of popular support for the conflict. In a religious sense there is a debate as to whether or not Muslims are “to fight the unbelievers only as a defense against aggression or under all circumstances.”¹⁰³ Classical interpretations of the Qur’an regard verse 9:5, the so-called “Verse of the Sword”, as an “unconditional command to fight the unbelievers” unless “they repent, maintain the prayer and pay the prescribed alms,”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁶ Charles F. Horne, and Walter F. Austin, eds., *The Great Events of the Great War* (New York: National Alumni, 1923), 2:398-399.

⁹⁷ C. F. Aspinall-Oglander, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents by Direction of the Historical Section Committee of Imperial Defense: Military Operations Gallipoli*, Vol. 1 (London: William Heinemann, 1935), 34-35.

⁹⁸ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 75.

⁹⁹ Horne and Austin, eds., *The Great Events of the Great War*, 2: 399.

¹⁰⁰ Christopher M. Bell, *Churchill and the Dardanelles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 70-71.

¹⁰¹ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 56.

¹⁰² Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 53-54.

¹⁰³ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Qur’an 9:5.

thus becoming Muslims. Other stances follow verses such as 2:190 and 9:12-13, which indicate that Muslims should not attack non-believers unless they are first attacked.¹⁰⁵ Claiming that the Ottoman Empire had been attacked gave leeway for either of those Qur’anic interpretations to be applied, though there are minimal references to the Qur’an, or any other precedent-setting texts, within the *fatwa* itself.¹⁰⁶

The third question of the *fatwa* stated that those who did not participate in the *jihad* would face divine punishment.¹⁰⁷ The fourth question also evoked divine punishment, specifically targeting the Muslims who lived under the rule of the Entente Powers. It stated that even if those governments threatened to “kill them and even to exterminate all members of their families” they should not go to war against the “Islamic government,” the Ottoman Empire, because they would “deserve the hell-fire, having become murderers.”¹⁰⁸ Other translations of the *fatwa* say that they would “merit the fire of hell”¹⁰⁹ or call it an “unpardonable sin.”¹¹⁰ As I am only looking at translations of these texts, I do not know how the language of these passages would compare to that of Qur’anic verses about punishment for refusing to fight in God’s name. However, there are instances in which divine punishment for refusing to fight is directly mentioned in the Qur’an, such as verse 9:39 and verses 9:81-82, wherein there is reference to the hellfire that will be the fate of those who do not “striv[e] in God’s way with their possessions and their persons”¹¹¹ following their deaths. The fifth question also enforced the idea that the Muslims under the rule of the Entente Powers were not to fight against the Central Powers, but

¹⁰⁵ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 2.

¹⁰⁶ David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 92.

¹⁰⁷ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 57.

¹⁰⁸ Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 57.

¹⁰⁹ Geoffrey Lewis, “The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihād in 1914,” *Islamic Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1975): 158.

¹¹⁰ Horne and Austin, eds., *The Great Events of the Great War*, 2:401.

¹¹¹ Qur’an 9:81.

more temporal reasoning was used, as it is stated in this question that it would be “detrimental to the Islamic caliphate”¹¹² for them to fight the Central Powers.

Ultimately the *fatwa* was being used for two goals, both of which were propagandistic in nature. The first was to encourage Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire to fight in a war they did not necessarily want. The second goal was to encourage Muslim subjects of the Entente Powers to rise up in rebellion against their British and French colonial masters. The first goal spoke to the aims of the Ottoman Empire while the second goal was more the focus of the German Empire.

One of the ways in which the Ottoman Empire spread propaganda was through organizations and societies. Several semi-official aid organizations were created in the years following the revolution. Three of these organizations were the Navy League (*Osmanlı Donanma-i Milliye İane Cemiyeti*), the National Defense Committee (*Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*), and the Red Crescent Society (*Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*).¹¹³ These organizations grew even larger and more influential at the outbreak of the First World War as they were used to instill further patriotism and nationalism, as well as providing the public with an opportunity to contribute to “the defense of the fatherland.”¹¹⁴ Other organizations such as the The Ladies’ Aid Society for Soldiers’ Families (*Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*) were created during the First World War with the same goals in mind.¹¹⁵

The Navy League was founded in 1909.¹¹⁶ Its primary goal was fundraising money for the navy, and allowed the affluent the opportunity to show their patriotism.¹¹⁷ However, many

¹¹² Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, 57.

¹¹³ Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire,” 797.

¹¹⁴ Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire,” 805.

¹¹⁵ Nicole A. N. M. Von Os, “Aiding the Poor Soldiers’ Families: The Asker Âilelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti,” *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 21 (Fall 2011), URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/173028>, 279.

¹¹⁶ Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire,” 795.

¹¹⁷ Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire,” 799.

poorer people also donated their money to the League.¹¹⁸ Prior to the war, between 1911 and early 1914 the Ottoman Empire used League funds to purchase and commission a number of naval vessels from the British.¹¹⁹ This included several dreadnoughts based on the King George V class of the Royal Navy, then “the most modern and powerful [class of] dreadnoughts.”¹²⁰ These purchases would have given the Ottoman Empire naval supremacy over the Greeks and Italians in the Mediterranean as well as the Russians in the Black Sea.¹²¹ On 31 July 1914, the British commandeered the ships for their war effort, though the Ottoman crews were not informed of this until an hour before the vessels were meant to be handed over on 2 August.¹²² Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, proposed that the ships be returned to the Ottoman Empire at the end of the war and to pay additional compensation for their use.¹²³ He later stated that a plan had been drawn up as early as 1912 for the seizure of all vessels to be completed in the six months following the outbreak of a war.¹²⁴ Stipulations in the contract allowed for such a seizure, though it also required a concurrent payment for the full value of the ships, should a war break out.¹²⁵ Churchill also stated that these ships “were vital” to the superiority of the Royal Navy and it was necessary to keep them out of Ottoman hands,¹²⁶ The Ottoman government rejected Churchill’s offer in protest of the appropriation of the ships, which they viewed as “an arbitrary violation of international law.”¹²⁷ One propagandist described it as an act of “piracy.”¹²⁸

¹¹⁸ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 70-71.

¹¹⁹ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 71.

¹²⁰ Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan’s Realm*, 65.

¹²¹ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 71; Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan’s Realm*, 65.

¹²² Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan’s Realm*, 67-69.

¹²³ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 69.

¹²⁴ Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, Vol. 1 (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923), 208.

¹²⁵ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 69.

¹²⁶ Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 1:209.

¹²⁷ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 70.

¹²⁸ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 49.

The seizure of the ships resulted in a significant surge in anti-British sentiment in both the government and the public; many Ottoman subjects had directly contributed money to acquire these ships. The Ottoman government, and by extension the Navy League, had been profiling the purchase of these ships in their propaganda regarding the future of Ottoman naval power.¹²⁹ News of the British seizure of the ships spread quickly throughout the Ottoman Empire. The Naval League, in conjunction with the Ottoman media, immediately began to wage a propaganda campaign to decry the actions of the British. Statements issued by the Navy League declared that it “caused extreme grief and sadness in [the] association”¹³⁰ and that “all Muslims and Turks”¹³¹ shared in this feeling. There were articles of condemnation published in newspapers, and some telegrams from the public also appeared.¹³² One telegram sent by “a mother of a soldier” directly to the British embassy expressed her hope that “. . . God causes all your [the British] battleships to be crushed by the German navy, amen.”¹³³ The German ships were portrayed as having been transferred to the Ottoman navy to offset the loss of the dreadnoughts, an action which was meant to emphasize Germany’s positive relationship with the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁴

The Ottoman National Defense Committee was composed of five parts: a Central Executive Board, an Aid Commission, a Commission of Propaganda/Agitation, a Recruitment Commission and a Health Commission.¹³⁵ Both the Recruitment Commission and the Health

¹²⁹ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 71.

¹³⁰ “Muhterem Millete,” *Donanma*, no. 55 (28 Temmuz 1330/10 August 1914), 98, quoted in Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Volunteerism and Resistance* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2012), 49.

¹³¹ “Yad-ı Hazin,” *Donanma*, no. 57 (18 Ağustos 1330/31 August 1914), cover page, quoted in Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Volunteerism and Resistance* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2012), 49.

¹³² Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 49.

¹³³ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 50.

¹³⁴ Butler, *Shadow of the Sultan’s Realm*, 78.

¹³⁵ Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire,” 801.

Commission acted as auxiliaries to the military while the Recruitment Commission was responsible for recruiting volunteers to create and staff large military units.¹³⁶ Volunteer troops were accompanied to the front by a religious scholar who was expected to provide religious guidance, increase the morale of the troops, and encourage more volunteers to join the force along the way.¹³⁷ During the First World War, the National Defense Committee helped to run various charitable organizations including soup kitchens and workshops where women (whose primary earner had enlisted) would be employed to sew clothing.¹³⁸ They also organized competitive shooting drills in an attempt to encourage more Ottoman subjects to learn how to shoot a rifle.¹³⁹ Another public campaign by the National Defense Committee was the organization of two different types of sermons at major mosques, both in Istanbul and in the provincial centres. The first was intended to remind people of their religious responsibilities and duties in wartime and to give reasons for those duties. The second was to pray for the success of the Ottoman military.¹⁴⁰

There were two organizations focused specifically on aid for women and the families of soldiers. One was the Women's Auxiliary of the Red Crescent Society, which provided relief throughout the First World War in the same ways the National Defense Committee did, operating soup kitchens and sewing workshops.¹⁴¹ The soup kitchens became particularly prominent as the war progressed. Starting in 1917 the Red Crescent Society became "the largest provider of cooked food" in Istanbul, where over 700,000 people were in need of food.¹⁴² The Ladies' Aid Society for Soldiers' Families (*Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*) was created by the

¹³⁶ Özbek, "Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire," 801.

¹³⁷ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 195.

¹³⁸ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 156.

¹³⁹ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 195-196.

¹⁴⁰ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 88-89.

¹⁴¹ Özbek, "Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire," 805.

¹⁴² Von Os, "Aiding the Poor Soldiers' Families," 279.

wives and daughters of high ranking members of Ottoman society as well as German officials serving in the Ottoman Empire in 1915.¹⁴³ This included the wives of Enver and Baron von Wangenheim, and the daughter of Field Marshall Liman von Sanders, head of the pre-war military mission to the Ottoman Empire; they made up much of the upper echelons of the aid society.¹⁴⁴ This organization provided food and clothing to poor soldiers' families.¹⁴⁵ The Women's Auxiliary of the Red Crescent Society stated in a publication that "[t]he nation is not defended merely with weapons,"¹⁴⁶ equating the work done by the society to support families with the work of soldiers. A public declaration by the National Defense Committee directly connected this support with *jihad*, stating that "nourishing deprived families that the soldiers left behind in their villages was an equally religious and humanitarian duty"¹⁴⁷ as fighting in the war. One of the leading causes of desertion were problems with the distribution of monetary support to families through the government, which in turn caused soldiers to attempt to return home to support their families.¹⁴⁸ Violence against the families of soldiers was another major cause of desertion.¹⁴⁹ As such, aid to families was crucial not only to maintaining morale on the home front, but also to maintaining morale among soldiers. Beyond the lack of support for those left behind at home, desertion was also caused by lack of proper attire and food being supplied by the military; moreover, fresh recruits who encountered refugees, wounded soldiers and the dead returning from the front became demoralized before they arrived.¹⁵⁰ From the very beginning of

¹⁴³ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 156.

¹⁴⁴ Von Os, "Aiding the Poor Soldiers' Families," 262.

¹⁴⁵ Von Os, "Aiding the Poor Soldiers' Families," 274-275.

¹⁴⁶ "Osmanlı Hanımlarına," *Tanin* 2227 (3 March 1915), 3, quoted in Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 156.

¹⁴⁷ "Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti," *İkdam* 6324 (29 September 1914), 2, quoted in Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 156.

¹⁴⁸ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 97.

¹⁴⁹ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 99.

¹⁵⁰ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 85-86.

the war the army corps faced serious shortages of officers and matériel.¹⁵¹ The labour battalions also faced terrible conditions, being unarmed on top of the hard labour and malnourishment.¹⁵²

Throughout the Ottoman Empire speeches and sermons were critical for propaganda campaigns.¹⁵³ While the First World War saw revolutions in many technologies and methods of warfare, including propaganda, the radio did not become prominent until after the war,¹⁵⁴ and thus other methods of communication had to be used. One method the Ottomans used to reach the illiterate, other than sermons, was the use of town criers with musical accompaniment to spread news under the directive of the Ministry of War.¹⁵⁵ This method of spreading news had been used in wartime at least since the 1890s. Others who spread propaganda orally were members of the semi-official aid organizations, religious figures, and municipal government officials who would, among other things, read aloud copies of speeches and articles to crowds. The language of *jihad* permeated all communications between the government and the public.¹⁵⁶ Militant music in the style of Western marches was also composed and performed as a symbol of modernization and Westernization of the Ottoman military.¹⁵⁷

Many Ottoman civilians were not at all enthusiastic for another war in the face of the devastation of the recent Balkan Wars. An emphasis was placed on the traits of duty and sacrifice for both soldiers and those who were on the home front. The soldiers were expected to sacrifice their lives and the civilians were expected to sacrifice many of the comforts and even necessities of life such as their grief for their loved ones lost to the war for “the empire’s survival.”¹⁵⁸ One of

¹⁵¹ Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908-1923* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 135.

¹⁵² Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 91-92.

¹⁵³ Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I*, 6.

¹⁵⁴ Wallin, “World War I,” in *Russia: 1918-1953 - Zionism*, 870.

¹⁵⁵ Odile Moreau, *La Turquie dans la Grande Guerre: du l’Empire ottoman à la République de Turquie* (Paris: Soteca, 2016), 98.

¹⁵⁶ Moreau, *La Turquie dans la Grande Guerre*, 98.

¹⁵⁷ Moreau, *La Turquie dans la Grande Guerre*, 98.

¹⁵⁸ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 95.

the key institutions which emerged to mobilize recruitment, especially in rural areas, was the Ottoman Youth League (*Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri*), which was created in 1916.¹⁵⁹ The Ottoman Strength League (*Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri*) likewise was an organization for the training of boys “both physically and spiritually, for the defense of the fatherland, and to ensure that they kept their strong patriotic character until death;”¹⁶⁰ it was established in May 1914¹⁶¹ and abolished in 1916 after the Ottoman Youth League was formed.¹⁶² The Ottoman Strength League was based both on earlier Ottoman examples of societies intended to train young men for military service and boy scouting.¹⁶³ It was directly associated with the War Ministry and was compulsory in all public schools.¹⁶⁴ Participation and good conduct in the activities of the Strength League could lead to young men getting a license which would allow them certain privileges after enlisting in the army; for instance this license could guarantee that they would not be sent to “extremely hot provinces” while also allowing a slightly faster promotion track from private to corporal.¹⁶⁵ This organization also imparted moral lessons upon these boys, such as the importance of honesty and respect for authority.¹⁶⁶ The Strength League existed primarily in major cities, and was only accessible to the educated, who made up a minority of the population.¹⁶⁷ However, it was abolished when the Youth League was created so as to prevent any possible conflict between the two organizations.¹⁶⁸ The Ottoman Youth League was overseen by a German Colonel, Heinrich Von Hoff, who had been involved in the Young Germany League under Colmar von der Goltz

¹⁵⁹ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 216.

¹⁶⁰ Zafer Toprak, “İttihat ve Terakki’nin Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri,” *Boğaziçi University Journal: Humanities* 7 (1979), 105-107, quoted in Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Volunteerism and Resistance* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2012), 209.

¹⁶¹ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 208.

¹⁶² Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 220.

¹⁶³ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 207-208

¹⁶⁴ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 208.

¹⁶⁵ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 210-211.

¹⁶⁶ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 210.

¹⁶⁷ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 213-215.

¹⁶⁸ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 220.

prior to the war in 1911.¹⁶⁹ Von der Goltz recommended Von Hoff to head the Ottoman Youth League;¹⁷⁰ indeed von der Goltz was an influential figure in the modernization of the Ottoman military, and had sometimes been called “the father of the Turkish army.”¹⁷¹ He had first arrived in the Ottoman Empire in 1878 as part of the German advisory commission for the modernization of the Ottoman military and military education.¹⁷² From 1883-1895, he was the inspector of Ottoman military schools and taught at the Ottoman War College.¹⁷³ Even before his arrival in the Ottoman Empire his tracts on military strategy were immensely popular.¹⁷⁴ Von Hoff emphasized the importance of “disciplining . . . the nation”¹⁷⁵ in the development of the Ottoman Youth League. The Ottoman Youth League focused on the uneducated peasant boys that made up the majority of the population who were targeted for enlistment.¹⁷⁶ Despite attempts by the government to allow the involvement of non-Muslim recruits, documentation from the organization rarely mentioned the actual participation of non-Muslims.¹⁷⁷ This is not surprising given the emphasis placed by the military on limiting non-Muslims to auxiliary roles and serving in units such as labour battalions.¹⁷⁸

Part of the restructuring of the Ottoman military following the Balkan Wars included the development of the position of the battalion imam (*tabur imamları*), who was assigned to a battalion on a more permanent basis.¹⁷⁹ Given the religious nature of the declaration of war the

¹⁶⁹ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 218.

¹⁷⁰ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 218-219.

¹⁷¹ F. A. K. Yasamee, “Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz and the Rebirth of the Ottoman Empire,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 9, no. 2 (July 1998), 91.

¹⁷² Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 217.

¹⁷³ Yasamee, “Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz and the Rebirth of the Ottoman Empire,” 91.

¹⁷⁴ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 217-218.

¹⁷⁵ Heinrich Von Hoff, “Genç Dernekleri’nin Şimdiye Kadar Teşkilât ve Tevsii,” *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası* 1 (1 September 1333/1 September 1917), 8, quoted in Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Volunteerism and Resistance* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2012), 216.

¹⁷⁶ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 217.

¹⁷⁷ Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War*, 221-222.

¹⁷⁸ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 36.

¹⁷⁹ Beşikçi, “Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad,” 104.

battalion imam played an important role in disseminating state propaganda to the soldiers. The responsibilities of this position included religious duties such as leading prayers and reciting the Qur'an, but also promoting the morale of troops and "provid[ing] the troops with basic religious education."¹⁸⁰ These imams often went with their troops to the front lines to lead by example and "to encourage the fighting spirit of soldiers."¹⁸¹ One of the methods in which officials tried to prevent desertion was through the preaching of battalion imams, who usually did so by "exalting martyrdom and being a holy warrior"¹⁸² and referencing the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. They reinforced the notion of desertion as a great sin.¹⁸³ Another method of preventing desertion was physical punishment such as imprisonment or beatings.¹⁸⁴ They also preached against suicide and self-mutilation, the latter being considered a strategy to get oneself removed from active service.¹⁸⁵

The ordinary soldier became very important in the propaganda of the First World War.¹⁸⁶ The propaganda figure of Mehmetçik or Little Mehmed as the ideal ordinary soldier was created, and his key traits included courage, modesty, and "a sincere willingness to sacrifice in the name of the greater Ottoman cause."¹⁸⁷ Sacrifice was a very important part of the war propaganda for all of the combatant powers in the First World War, especially given the attrition of the Western Front. Ottoman propaganda of sacrifice had a particularly Islamic tone and tenor. An example is of a story shared by a father, Sergeant Fahreddin, in *Harp Mecmuası*, a prominent magazine published by the Ministry of War, in which his son stated "[t]hose who go to the army will become either a martyr or a *ghazi* . . . Dad, will you not become a martyr or a *ghazi* like

¹⁸⁰ Beşikçi, "Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad," 104.

¹⁸¹ Beşikçi, "Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad," 105.

¹⁸² Beşikçi, "Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad," 105.

¹⁸³ Beşikçi, "Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad," 105.

¹⁸⁴ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 107.

¹⁸⁵ Beşikçi, "Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad," 105.

¹⁸⁶ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 93.

¹⁸⁷ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 93.

them?”¹⁸⁸ Literature, particularly things written in very simple language, was used as a method of spreading propaganda to soldiers and civilians. These tracts included poetry that was easily memorized as well as religious manuals which were designed to provide religious education and reinforce military service as a religious duty.¹⁸⁹ Low literacy rates meant that the main way that soldiers got news from home was from people travelling from the villages and bringing the news, and then taking news back home again.¹⁹⁰ Songs were a common way that soldiers expressed their wartime experiences.¹⁹¹ Often they were older tunes with new lyrics set to them and they expressed not just the experience of the First World War but also the experiences of the wars of the 19th century, that “those who went on campaign had no chance of returning and that they would die in some far off desert.” One of the most well known of these songs was the *Çanakkale Türküsü* (‘Dardanelles Song’). One of the stanzas of this song is as follows:

“At Chanakkale I was hit;
 Alive they dumped me in a grave;
 Goodbye, sweet youth, goodbye.”¹⁹²

The lamentations of the soldiers who fought at Gallipoli, a peninsula which forms part of the Dardanelles strait, were starkly contrasted with official Ottoman propaganda. The campaign at Gallipoli was the first major victory of the war and to many it showed they were “capable of fighting and winning in modern warfare against the greatest powers of the day.”¹⁹³ They had had a string of defeats at the beginning of the war, including in strategically important places such as Basra and the Suez Canal.¹⁹⁴ The Gallipoli campaign was devastating for the Ottoman Empire in

¹⁸⁸ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 95.

¹⁸⁹ Beşikçi, “Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad,” 98.

¹⁹⁰ Zürcher, “Little Mehmet in the Desert,” 230.

¹⁹¹ Zürcher, “Little Mehmet in the Desert,” 235-236.

¹⁹² Zürcher, “Little Mehmet in the Desert,” 236.

¹⁹³ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 215.

¹⁹⁴ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 215.

terms of manpower, with over 200,000 casualties.¹⁹⁵ It was equally devastating to the Entente Powers who also sustained over 200,000 casualties.¹⁹⁶ The British had thought that they would easily be able to defeat the Ottomans by sailing up the Dardanelles to Istanbul.¹⁹⁷ Instead they fought a protracted land war which extended the course of the war overall. It brought Bulgaria into the war in September 1915 on the side of the Central Powers, which meant that the Entente had to send troops to Serbia to hold back the advances of the Central Powers and made it possible for the Germans to send matériel directly to the Ottoman Empire through Bulgaria.¹⁹⁸ Part of the reason for the Ottoman success was the restructuring of the Ottoman military.¹⁹⁹ General von Sanders, the commander of the Ottoman army in the Gallipoli campaign argued that the Ottoman Empire would not have, as Churchill and other British officials thought, fallen into a revolution as soon as the British arrived in Istanbul, but would have been able to defend the capital well.²⁰⁰ Despite the losses, the victory resulted in a much needed boost in morale for both the people and the government.²⁰¹ Ottoman propaganda efforts included the translation of documents from English and French, particularly those which emphasized Ottoman military might, and suppressing those which reflected negatively on the Ottoman military.²⁰² Painters and other artists were commissioned to commemorate the campaign and other events of the war following the Entente withdrawal. The exhibits were very popular and travelled internationally in countries of the Central Powers prior to the end of the war. The Gallipoli campaign became a

¹⁹⁵ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 100.

¹⁹⁶ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 214.

¹⁹⁷ Bell, *Churchill and the Dardanelles*, 70.

¹⁹⁸ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 207.

¹⁹⁹ Zürcher, "Little Mehmet in the Desert," 231-232.

²⁰⁰ Bell, *Churchill and the Dardanelles*, 319.

²⁰¹ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 100.

²⁰² Uyar, "Remembering the Gallipoli campaign," 166.

space for memorialization and commemoration as a way of glorifying the dead and emphasizing their triumph.²⁰³

Propaganda created by the Ottoman Empire was not exclusively aimed at the people of the Ottoman Empire. Another organization which was created following the revolution was the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (TM). This group was conceived by Enver Paşa and answerable only to the Grand Vizier, Said Halim and later Talât Paşa, and the Minister of War, Enver Paşa himself.²⁰⁴ It is unclear as to when precisely the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* was formed, however it was operating during the Libyan conflict of 1911, and its success at that time greatly inspired its continued work during the First World War. In the Libyan conflict, the Ottoman Empire saw success from the use of pan-Islam as a motivating factor, though they did not expend much effort into propaganda.²⁰⁵ It seems likely that pan-Islam was not actually a major motivation for the Arab tribesmen who joined the Ottoman regular forces in defending their homeland. During this conflict, the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* was charged with containing separatist movements that were seen as a threat to the Ottoman Empire as well as fighting the Europeans,²⁰⁶ a task that they continued into the First World War.²⁰⁷ However, many volunteers came from all over North Africa to fight against the Italians.²⁰⁸ Due to a numerical disadvantage, these forces were primarily engaged in guerilla warfare and using such tactics they were able to stop the Italians from advancing beyond the coast until they were forced to sue for peace by the outbreak of the First Balkan War. Guerilla tactics were also used by the Ottomans in the Balkan Wars.²⁰⁹ The successes in Libya, limited though they were, resulted in the belief that these tactics could be

²⁰³ Uyar, "Remembering the Gallipoli campaign," 167.

²⁰⁴ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 75.

²⁰⁵ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 38.

²⁰⁶ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 76.

²⁰⁷ Moreau, *La Turquie dans la Grande Guerre*, 123.

²⁰⁸ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 38.

²⁰⁹ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 76.

used to contain “enemy troops in the colonies”²¹⁰ in order to give the Ottoman Empire further time to mobilize. These irregular forces, guerilla bands or *çetes* made up of volunteers,²¹¹ or *fedais*,²¹² were set up by the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*. Some of these volunteers were criminals that had their sentences annulled and were then sent to join the guerilla forces. This was couched in the language of *jihad* as it was said that engaging in *jihad* would wash away one’s sins.²¹³ The major areas of the TM’s subversive measures were in Egypt, North Africa, and India.²¹⁴ There was a TM force sent to Egypt, one to Iraq, and one to enter talks with Ibn Sa’ud, a major figure in the Arabian peninsula and later founder of the modern state of Saudi Arabia; importantly, these forces held more weight than the propaganda campaigns of the Germans, which in these areas was largely rhetorical.²¹⁵ On the other hand the TM provided, at least in some instances actual troops.²¹⁶ They were able to build units of irregulars made of a variety of volunteers, which did go on to fight in parts of the conflict such as the first attempt to take the Suez Canal.²¹⁷ However, neither the TM nor the German *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* (NO), could provide enough support, through men, matériels, and funds, to encourage local nationalist groups to ally with them.²¹⁸

There was also an office created within the Ottoman Ministry of War, the Central Office for the Islamic Movement, which was created “to coordinate pan-Islamic revolutionary activities with the Germans.”²¹⁹ Members of the TM also engaged in the creation of propaganda tracts.

²¹⁰ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 76.

²¹¹ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 78.

²¹² Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 81.

²¹³ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 76.

²¹⁴ Moreau, *La Turquie dans la Grande Guerre*, 124.

²¹⁵ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 81.

²¹⁶ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 81.

²¹⁷ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 80.

²¹⁸ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 82.

²¹⁹ Donald M. McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998), 50.

Several members of the organization, particularly Shaykh Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisian and Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Shawish, were contributing works to the German propaganda campaign.²²⁰ Shaykh Salih actually worked for the predominant German organization producing propaganda aimed at Muslims, the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient*. Historian Tilman Lüdke states that it is likely that the Germans were unaware that either of these men were also drawing salaries from the TM and as such it is possible that Enver Paşa was using them to “exercise a limited means of control on German propaganda.”²²¹ Enver Paşa saw much of the propaganda produced by German consuls as “inept” and some of their tracts were suppressed by Ottoman censorship because they encroached too far into the Ottoman sphere of interest.²²²

The Ottoman declaration of *jihad* was very useful for their propaganda efforts, which were mostly focused on their own people. This was necessary not only due to the devastation of the Balkan Wars, but also due to the difficult conditions on the war front and the home front. Desertions were common due to the poor conditions on the war front, illustrated by the fact that soldiers often went without shoes,²²³ and the poor conditions on the home front, where soldiers often returned home to support their families. Religious imagery was used to try to exhort the people of the Ottoman Empire to be enthusiastic about the war in both positive and negative manners. To support the war effort was important because it was one’s religious duty and fulfilling one’s religious duties held the implication of the reward that awaited one in heaven. If one did not support the war effort, there was the promise of punishment, both temporal and eternal. The call to *jihad* was also aimed at Muslims outside of the Ottoman Empire, the results of which were greatly feared by the Entente Powers but were ultimately minimal.

²²⁰ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 77.

²²¹ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 77.

²²² Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I*, 133.

²²³ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 85; Beşikçi, “Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad,” 261.

Chapter Two

To begin this chapter, I will return to the beginning of the war and expand on the disparate ideas regarding the alliance in both the Ottoman and German governments. These disparate ideas surrounding the alliance translated to disparate ideas in what their propaganda aims were. This chapter also includes a discussion of three of the types of propaganda created by the Germans which were aimed at or related to Muslims, Ottoman and otherwise. These types of propaganda are as follows: Pan-Islamic propaganda in North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, atrocity propaganda on the Western Front, and the recruitment propaganda of the prisoner of war camps.

The Ottoman government tried to foster alliances between both sides over the course of 1914. The Ottomans had become isolated and were looking to bolster connections with the major European powers.²²⁴ Two of the members of the ruling triumvirate of the committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the Minister of the Interior, and from 1917, the Grand Vizier, Talât Paşa, and the naval minister Cemal Paşa²²⁵ had made advances to Russia and France respectively

²²⁴ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 34.

²²⁵ Andrew Mango, *From Sultan to Atatürk* (London: Haus Publishing, 2009), 4.

between May and July of 1914.²²⁶ These proposals were both turned down. Talât Paşa approached the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Dmitryevich Sazonov, in Livadia, and made reference to the possibility of an alliance. Following the visit he spoke to the Russian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Mikhail Nikolayevich von Giers, arguing that an alliance would greatly benefit the Ottoman Empire and quiet Russian fears “that Ottoman recovery . . . was pointed at Russia.”²²⁷ Cemal Paşa, a Francophile who had worked closely with the British naval mission in Istanbul, was the ruling member most enthusiastic about an alliance with the Entente Powers.²²⁸ He hoped that closer ties with Britain and France would ensure that neither Germany nor Russia would be a threat to Ottoman sovereignty.²²⁹ Cemal Paşa approached the French in a visit to Paris at the end of June wherein he also called upon the captains of the dreadnoughts that had been ordered in Britain and heard their concerns about the slow rate of completion.²³⁰ The Director of Political Affairs, Pierre de Margerie, the French official Cemal Paşa spoke with,²³¹ told him that agreement between all three of the Entente Powers for an alliance with the Ottoman Empire “seem[ed] to [him] very doubtful.”²³² This refusal swayed Cemal Paşa over to accepting an alliance with Germany.²³³ When the Ottoman government approached the German ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Baron Hans von Wangenheim, with an offer of alliance on 22 July 1914, he turned them down.²³⁴ This proposal had come through the Minister of War and third member of the ruling triumvirate, Enver Paşa, who officially held the position of Deputy Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) as the Sultan was nominally the C-in-C of the Ottoman

²²⁶ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918*, 20.

²²⁷ Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914*, 85-86.

²²⁸ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 38.

²²⁹ Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman, 1913-1919* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1922), 99.

²³⁰ Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman*, 104.

²³¹ Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman*, 105.

²³² Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman*, 106.

²³³ Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman*, 108.

²³⁴ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918*, 15.

military.²³⁵ Von Wangenheim's decision was "in accordance with standing policy directives" and not exclusively because of his lack of faith in the Ottoman military.²³⁶ Kaiser Wilhelm II vetoed the decision made by von Wangenheim only two days later on 24 July.²³⁷

The Kaiser's decision was made with the concept of Pan-Islamic unity in mind.²³⁸ He wanted to use it to disrupt the Entente war efforts. However, it was also linked to Ottoman military readiness and strategically important location. While the Ottoman Empire was not a particularly strong military power, neither were any of Germany's other possible allies. Even before the end of July, there were some within the German government who did not think Austria-Hungary would last long or be bold enough for the coming war. In a letter written on 18 July 1914²³⁹ from the Bavarian *Chargé d'Affaires*, or representative,²⁴⁰ of the Bavarian government in Berlin, Schoen, to the Bavarian Prime Minister Georg von Hertling,²⁴¹ he related that the Under Secretary of State "made the statement that Austria-Hungary, thanks to her indecision and her desultoriness, had really become the Sick Man of Europe as Turkey had once been."²⁴² Schoen also indicated that the Under Secretary of State, Arthur Zimmerman,²⁴³ and his boss, the Secretary of State or Foreign Secretary, Gottlieb von Jagow²⁴⁴ both believed, and they were not alone,²⁴⁵ that Austria-Hungary was not decisive enough to declare war and the

²³⁵ Mango, *From Sultan to Atatürk*, 4.

²³⁶ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918*, 15.

²³⁷ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918*, 15.

²³⁸ Hanioglu, "Ottoman Jihad or Jihads," 117.

²³⁹ Imanuel Geiss, ed., *July 1914: the outbreak of the First World War: Selected Documents*, translated by Henry Meyric Hughes et al (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 127.

²⁴⁰ *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. "chargé d'affaires," accessed March 03 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/charge-d-affaires>.

²⁴¹ Paul Hoser, "Hertling, Georg, Graf von," in *1914-1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, edited by Ute Daniel et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2016).

²⁴² Geiss, *July 1914: the outbreak of the First World War*, 128.

²⁴³ Geiss, *July 1914: the outbreak of the First World War*, 106.

²⁴⁴ Florian Altenhöner, "Jagow, Gottlieb von," in *1914-1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, edited by Ute Daniel et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2016).

²⁴⁵ Geiss, *July 1914: the outbreak of the First World War*, 128n4.

“unconditional support” given by Germany alarmed them.²⁴⁶ The Ottoman Empire, as discussed in Chapter 1, was more indecisive in entering the war, though that was unknown at the time. The Germans were aware of their lack of robust alliances. Kaiser Wilhelm believed that Ottoman troops could be deployed effectively against the Suez Canal, which would, if captured, ensure the British would have resort to bringing supplies from India and other colonies around the Cape of Good Hope, significantly hampering their war effort,²⁴⁷ and the Germans had just come to learn from the head of their military mission in Istanbul, General Otto Liman von Sanders, that there were “four or five” Ottoman army corps,²⁴⁸ a formation typically composed of two or more divisions and their auxiliaries,²⁴⁹ sufficiently prepared for action.²⁵⁰

The hurried and limited nature of the German-Ottoman alliance, on top of the fact that it had been proposed by the Ottoman government, indicates that the Ottoman Empire was not, as some suspected, merely a “satellite of the Reich.”²⁵¹ Henry Morgenthau, American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, saw the Ottoman Army as having become “Prussianized”²⁵² under the Germany military mission. In his memoir published in 1918 he said he was “now convinced”²⁵³ that the training of the Ottoman army by the German military mission had been “in preparation for the approaching war.”²⁵⁴ On the other hand, there was also a British naval mission, headed by Admiral Arthur Limpus, responsible for the restructuring of the Ottoman Navy.²⁵⁵ As such, Germany was not the only European power that had had influence on the restructuring of the

²⁴⁶ Geiss, *July 1914: the outbreak of the First World War*, 129.

²⁴⁷ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 32.

²⁴⁸ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918*, 15n24.

²⁴⁹ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “corps,” accessed April 7, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/corps>.

²⁵⁰ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918*, 15n24.

²⁵¹ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918*, 6.

²⁵² Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1918), 47.

²⁵³ Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, 46.

²⁵⁴ Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, 46.

²⁵⁵ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 37.

Ottoman military. Both Limpus and Sanders held significant positions in the Ottoman military. Limpus was made C-in-C of the Ottoman Navy, and was subsequently replaced by the German Admiral Wilhelm Souchon after the Ottoman Empire entered the war.²⁵⁶ Sanders was made General of the First Army Corps, a move which prompted contention with the Russians as the First Army Corps protected Istanbul and the Dardanelles Straits, and this was territory the Russians coveted. He was then promoted out of that position to field marshal.²⁵⁷ Despite the presence of the German military mission, the events which led up to the alliance indicate that this alliance had not been planned well in advance.

The military mission, as well as Germany's economic presence in the region were signs of the German desire to bolster the strength of the Ottoman empire as an ally against Russia and Britain.²⁵⁸ One of the most prominent features of the German economic presence was the building of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, an expansive project that began in earnest in the early 20th century.²⁵⁹ To Cemal Paşa, this economic cooperation was the only reason why the Germans had any continued interest in the Ottoman Empire. He stated that without their economic interests "it would not occur to the Germans to aid [the Ottomans] if danger threatened."²⁶⁰ While there were positive military and economic relationships between the Ottoman and German Empires, there were other frictions. The rise in Ottoman national pride following the beginning of the war was a problem to the Germans as it threatened their neocolonial dominance in the area and their access to economic concessions, such as the permission to construct the railway.²⁶¹ The German chief of general staff, General Helmuth von Moltke had said six weeks prior to the

²⁵⁶ Thomas P. Iredale, "Role of German Officers in the Gallipoli Campaign," in *1914-1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, edited by Ute Daniel et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2019), DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.11441/1.1.

²⁵⁷ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 37.

²⁵⁸ McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 48.

²⁵⁹ McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 45-46.

²⁶⁰ Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman*, 99.

²⁶¹ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 127.

assassination of the Archduke that he did not think that the Ottoman Empire would be “an asset . . . for the Triple Alliance [Entente] or Germany.”²⁶²

German views of Islam as a tool of warfare was another way that the Ottoman Empire was rendered important in their foreign policy. The interest in Pan-Islam as a propaganda tool cultivated by Wilhelm II and other members of his government preceded the German-Ottoman alliance. During his 1898 trip through the Levant, then under the control of the Ottoman Empire, he made a speech at the tomb of Salah al-Din in Damascus in which he proclaimed: “May the Sultan and his 300 million Muslim subjects scattered across the earth, who venerate him as their Caliph, be assured that the German Kaiser will be their friend for all time.”²⁶³ This was not the only declaration of friendship and protection he made on that trip, as he had made overtures of support to Catholics and German Protestants in the Holy Land, and was also approached by Zionists to plead their case to the Sultan, which he did not ultimately do.²⁶⁴ His Damascus speech was spread “far and wide,” especially in Arabic and Turkish newspapers. Not all members of his government were pleased about this. Some thought that the speech would sour relations with Britain, Russia, and France and efforts were made – ultimately unsuccessfully – to edit it before it was published.²⁶⁵ The rumours that Wilhelm II had converted or would convert to Islam began to circulate and neither he nor anyone else in his government denied them.²⁶⁶ This rumour was put to use by the Germans during the First World War to encourage Muslim allegiance to Germany. They claimed that the Kaiser had converted to Islam and had changed his name to Hajj

²⁶² Carl Mühlmann, *Das deutsch-türkische Waffenbündnis im Weltkriege* (Leipzig, 1940), 13-14, quoted in Ulrich Trupener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 14.

²⁶³ Wilhelm II, “Tischrede in Damaskus (8 November 1898),” in *Reden des Kaisers. Ansprachen, Predigten, und Trinksprüche*, edited by Ernst Johann (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1966), 81, quoted in Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 14.

²⁶⁴ McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 13.

²⁶⁵ Peter Hopkirk, *On the Secret Service East of Constantinople: the Plot to Bring Down the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 24; McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 14-15.

²⁶⁶ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 9.

Muhammad Guillamo; he was sometimes referred to as Hajj Wilhelm Friend and Protector of Islam.²⁶⁷ As such Germany was fighting Russia “for the cause of Islam.”²⁶⁸ Kaiser Wilhelm’s 1898 tour also inspired a rumour, particularly among the Muslims in North Africa, that there was a traditional friendship between Germans and Muslims that extended back to the time of the Prophet.²⁶⁹ It is likely that Wilhelm II intended for his Damascus speech to warn the British “that they no longer had a monopoly over the East.”²⁷⁰ In letters written to Tzar Nicholas II while he was in the Levant, Wilhelm II indicated that he was already thinking about Pan-Islam as a tool of warfare. He stated that “the Mahometans were a tremendous card in our game in case you or I were suddenly confronted by a war;” in the case of war with England, the Tzar was known to be “the master of millions of Mahometans.”²⁷¹ Generally Wilhelm II, like many Europeans, believed Islam to be a monolithic religion over which the sultan-caliph ultimately held uncontested rule.²⁷² Many in Berlin at the beginning of the war thought that “the world of Islam loved Germany and hated Britain”²⁷³ and they could easily be manipulated into supporting a war against Britain. The declaration of *jihad* by order of the sultan-caliph was expected to cause “absolute mayhem in the colonies of Britain, France and Russia, most of which were either entirely Muslim populated . . . or had sizeable Muslim minorities,”²⁷⁴ to Germany’s benefit.

Another figure in the German government who was strongly in favour of a Pan-Islamic project was Max von Oppenheim, an “archeologist-spy”²⁷⁵ and member of the German Foreign Office. He suggested the possibility that Germany could use Pan-Islam as a way to undermine

²⁶⁷ Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I*, 131.

²⁶⁸ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 81.

²⁶⁹ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 10.

²⁷⁰ Hopkirk, *On the Secret Service East of Constantinople*, 24.

²⁷¹ Wilhelm II, *The Kaiser’s Letters to the Tzar*, edited by Isaac Don Levine and Neil Forbes Grant (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920), 61.

²⁷² McKale, *War by Revolution*, 8.

²⁷³ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 68.

²⁷⁴ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 45.

²⁷⁵ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 10.

“her potential enemies,” the powers which would later make up the Entente, in 1898.²⁷⁶ There are disputes among scholars regarding the importance of von Oppenheim’s suggestions to the Damascus speech and to German foreign policy in general.²⁷⁷ Other members of the government, such as Arthur Zimmermann and Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter, the foreign secretary from 1910-1912, also saw Pan-Islam as a useful tool in foreign relations. Military officials also deemed it as a “means of threatening” British India.²⁷⁸ Others, at least in the pre-war period, emphasized the importance of German relations with Britain.²⁷⁹ At the beginning of the First World War von Oppenheim, with the backing of Zimmermann,²⁸⁰ created the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* (NO) as a part of the Foreign Office.²⁸¹ Different interests between the Ottomans and the Germans made it difficult to create a single propaganda organization,²⁸² and when they were operating together interpersonal conflict and cultural clashes, particularly the ill treatment of Ottomans at the hands of German officers, “greatly reduced German prestige in Ottoman eyes, thus counteracting the German propaganda effort.”²⁸³ Much of the propaganda produced by the Germans to be distributed in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia took the form of newspaper production.

Newspapers were the most prominent form of mass media at the time and the Germans saw the sparsity of newspapers in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) areas a detriment to the spreading of propaganda.²⁸⁴ For example, in Syria all of the propaganda at the beginning of the war was operated by the *Agence Ottomane*, which was a newspaper owned by the Ottoman

²⁷⁶ R. L. Melka, “Max Freiherr von Oppenheim: Sixty Years of Scholarship and Political Intrigue in the Middle East,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 1 (1973): 81.

²⁷⁷ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 13.

²⁷⁸ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 13.

²⁷⁹ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 14.

²⁸⁰ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 67.

²⁸¹ Hanioglu, “Ottoman Jihad or Jihads,” 117.

²⁸² Moreau, *La Turquie dans la Grande Guerre*, 81.

²⁸³ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 153-154.

²⁸⁴ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 152.

government,²⁸⁵ and military authorities until a German official, Dr. Curt Prüfer, convinced several newspaper owners in Beirut to shift their headquarters to Damascus in exchange for German subsidies.²⁸⁶ The office established by von Oppenheim, the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient*, did a variety of propaganda work including translation of news, publication of pamphlets, posters and other materials, as well as recruiting people to spread the German propaganda orally.²⁸⁷ Throughout the course of the war, members of the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient*, and the Turks, Arabs, Indians and Tartars they hired to supplement their writing,²⁸⁸ published 1012 different publications in over twenty languages and distributed a total of more than 3 million copies.²⁸⁹ Much of this material had to be smuggled over borders, such as into Egypt and the Maghreb, as well as giving it to pilgrims on *hajj*, or sending it with German “propaganda expeditions” to Persia (modern-day Iran) and Afghanistan. In April 1915, von Oppenheim went to Istanbul and established a second branch of the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* based in the German embassy in an attempt to ameliorate the state of distribution.²⁹⁰ He established 70 newsrooms throughout the Ottoman Empire and used them to publish and distribute propaganda material. This material included propaganda that was intended to disparage the colonial governance of the Entente Powers, which the Ottoman people were largely uninterested in. As such the Ottomans disregarded much of what was published by these newsrooms.²⁹¹ In addition to publications, von Oppenheim travelled and gave speeches in mosques in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire and in northern Arabia.²⁹² He placed emphasis on a Pan-Islamic *jihad* and

²⁸⁵ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 82.

²⁸⁶ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 152.

²⁸⁷ Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I*, 130.

²⁸⁸ Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I*, 130.

²⁸⁹ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 68.

²⁹⁰ Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I*, 131; McKale, *War by Revolution*, 112.

²⁹¹ Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I*, 131.

²⁹² McKale, *War by Revolution*, 111.

used anti-Christian, anti-British rhetoric in these inflammatory speeches.²⁹³ Economic exploitation in Entente colonies and the military supremacy of the Central Powers also featured heavily.²⁹⁴ Von Oppenheim proved insensitive to Turkish and Arabic cultures in these speeches; moreover, von Oppenheim was neither Muslim nor did he represent an Islamic power. He was not held in high regard by his audiences and he was unable to establish the network of information centres he wanted.²⁹⁵ Another example of a German propagandist who emphasized anti-British sentiment was Dr. Johann Brode, the consul in Jaffa. He felt that “reducing British prestige in the region” was important due to the proximity of Egypt and thus the British. This propaganda was also smuggled over the border into Egypt.²⁹⁶

According to British reports, in September 1914 there were thirty-two secret emissaries sent from the Ottoman Empire, a number of which were German officers, to “preach a ‘jihad’ [sic] in India, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan.”²⁹⁷ There had been little German presence in India prior to the war and the British, anxious about Pan-Islam in India,²⁹⁸ were able to successfully suppress any infiltration and agitation from Germans, Ottomans, and nationalist Indian expatriates.²⁹⁹ The German bombardment of the port of Madras by the light cruiser *Emden* amplified fears of German military strength.³⁰⁰ She was also raiding British shipping in the North Pacific and the Indian Ocean.³⁰¹ Rumours abounded that the cruiser would finish the bombardment by travelling up the Ganges River. The bombardment impacted the amount of

²⁹³ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 111-112.

²⁹⁴ Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I*, 131.

²⁹⁵ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 112.

²⁹⁶ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 127.

²⁹⁷ Sir Edward Grey to Sir L. Mallet, 29 September 1914, telegram, in *Correspondence Respecting Events Leading to the Rupture of Relations with Turkey*, no. 100 (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1914).

²⁹⁸ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 25.

²⁹⁹ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 76-77.

³⁰⁰ Heike Leibau, “Kaiser Kī Jay (Long Live the Kaiser): Perceptions of World War I and the Socio-Religious Movement Among the Oraons in Chota Nagpur 1914-1916,” in *The World in the World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives From Africa and Asia*, edited by Heike Leibau et al. (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2010), 264-265.

³⁰¹ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 77.

people who made the pilgrimage for Kumbh Mela that year, and thus was considered a propaganda success.³⁰² Belief in the possibility of an Indian uprising was supplemented by claims made by German diplomats in Iran and China who stated, without evidence, that “India was ripe for rebellion.”³⁰³ The diplomats also thought that the support given by Indian Muslims to the Ottomans during the Libyan and Balkan conflicts translated into a strong Pan-Islamic feeling.³⁰⁴ Ultimately the Indian population was largely supportive of the British war effort. The British mobilized 1.5 million Indian soldiers over the course of the war on a purely volunteer basis; the majority were deployed in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) against the Ottoman Empire.³⁰⁵

Germany also produced propaganda for the warfronts, some of which can be related to the discussion of propaganda aimed at colonial targets. One such case is the production of propaganda intended to counter the atrocity propaganda being produced by the Entente. Atrocity propaganda is a type of propaganda which intends to promote “enthusiasm for one’s own army and hatred or fear of the enemy.”³⁰⁶ There were three primary types of atrocity narratives in the First World War: massacres, mutilation, and the maltreatment of civilians and prisoners.³⁰⁷ The Ottoman Empire was not the main focus of the Entente atrocity propaganda despite the massive violence they enacted against the Armenians.³⁰⁸ In Ottoman media the Armenians were initially portrayed in a very positive light, which historian Yiğit Akın argues was a reflection of the anxiety the Ottoman government had regarding Armenian loyalty.³⁰⁹ The Russians had deployed

³⁰² Leibau, “*Kaiser Kī Jay* (Long Live the Kaiser),” 265.

³⁰³ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 77.

³⁰⁴ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 77.

³⁰⁵ Christian Koller, “The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia and their Deployment in Europe during the First World War,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 26, no 1-2 (2008): 113.

³⁰⁶ Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *Introduction to Military History* (New York: The Century Co., 1929), 111.

³⁰⁷ James Morgan Read, *Atrocity Propaganda, 1914-1919* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1941), 3.

³⁰⁸ John Horne, and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 84.

³⁰⁹ Akın, *When the War Came Home*, 166.

units of Armenian volunteers against the Ottomans beginning in November 1914.³¹⁰ The British gave some attention to the Armenian massacres in the Ottoman Empire,³¹¹ however because the Ottoman Empire was considered a “junior partner” to Germany, the scale of the massacre was not fully profiled.³¹² The primary British propaganda text on the subject, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, used many texts from eyewitness accounts, including those from neutral and German observers.³¹³ The officials who put this text together laid the blame on the Ottoman government and population,³¹⁴ though some French and British intellectuals and politicians claimed “without evidence” that Germany was responsible for the massacres.³¹⁵ The Germans published refutations of these claims, including Zimmermann’s reminders of the British treatment of the Boers.³¹⁶ In Germany, publications on the matter were greatly restricted.³¹⁷ To discuss the atrocities committed by their own allies was taboo, but of course discussion of the atrocities perpetrated by their enemies was promoted.

The Germans also accused the Entente Powers of committing atrocities by focusing on their use of colonial troops in Europe. The Central Powers were unable to deploy any colonial troops in the First World War, as they controlled relatively small overseas territories as compared to Britain and France, all of which came under attack shortly after the outbreak of war.³¹⁸ It was the first time colonial troops from the Southern hemisphere were deployed in Europe³¹⁹ and the Germans attempted to use this to their advantage. By calling out the Entente Powers for their use

³¹⁰ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 105.

³¹¹ Akin, *When the War Came Home*, 167.

³¹² Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 297.

³¹³ James Bryce, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16: Documents presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs by Viscount Bryce. With a preface by Viscount Bryce* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1916), xxii.

³¹⁴ Bryce, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16*, xxvi.

³¹⁵ John Horne, “Atrocities and war crimes,” in *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, edited by Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1: 577.

³¹⁶ Read, *Atrocity Propaganda, 1914-1919*, 125.

³¹⁷ Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I*, 19.

³¹⁸ Koller, “The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia,” 111-112.

³¹⁹ Koller, “The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia,” 113.

of colonial troops in Europe, the Germans sought to present themselves as the protectors of white people.³²⁰ Part of the danger of involving colonial troops in the war was the idea that teaching them modern warfare was a threat to white supremacy.³²¹ Presenting this danger in their propaganda directly contravened Germany's other propagandistic aims promoting rebellion in the Entente's colonies.

In a propaganda tract entitled "Employment, contrary to International Law, of Colored Troops upon the European Arena of War by England and France," published by the German Foreign Office in the summer of 1915,³²² sections from an 1871 speech by Otto von Bismarck were reproduced. In this speech, he decried the use of Turcos (a term used for the tirailleurs or light infantry of French African colonies)³²³ and Arabs on the account of the cruelty of these races.³²⁴ They also quoted from William Pitt the Elder, who spoke in 1777 during the American Revolutionary War on "the barbarians of America."³²⁵ Most of what is included in this pamphlet are testimonies given by "approved witnesses,"³²⁶ and "extracts from diaries and letters of citizens of hostile countries."³²⁷ These testimonies focus on French colonial troops, with only three testimonies mentioning Hindoo or Indian troops.³²⁸ The colonial troops were usually accused of mutilating Germans, both dead and alive. The pamphlet in question has one image,

³²⁰ Vedica Kant, "In the Land of *Hajji* Wilhelm: Indian Prisoners of War in Germany," in *If I die here, who will remember me?: India and the First World War* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2014), 160.

³²¹ Kant, "In the Land of *Hajji* Wilhelm," 160.

³²² Koller, "The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia," 123.

³²³ *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales*, s.v. "tirailleur," accessed April 7, 2024, <https://cnrtl.fr/definition/tirailleur>; Robert Huré, ed., *L'Armée d'Afrique: 1830-1962* (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle, 1977), 51.

³²⁴ "Letter G, 1914-1923, Germany, Auswaetigeis Amt, Employment, Contrary to International Law, of Colored Troops upon the European Arena of War by England and France, translation, undated," SCRB 111, box 38, folder 45, World War One Pamphlet Collection, University of Minnesota Libraries, Special Collections, and Rare Books, Minneapolis, <https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/item/p16022coll444:225>, 35.

³²⁵ "Auswaetigeis Amt, Employment, Contrary to International Law," 34.

³²⁶ "Auswaetigeis Amt, Employment, Contrary to International Law," 1.

³²⁷ "Auswaetigeis Amt, Employment, Contrary to International Law," 1.

³²⁸ See "Auswaetigeis Amt, Employment, Contrary to International Law," 7, 20, and 25.

dated 23 June 1915,³²⁹ of a young German who testified on 30 April 1915 that he had his eyes gouged out by a Zouave,³³⁰ a member of a different French colonial light infantry regiment.³³¹ In one of the testimonies, dated 17 May 1915, a German soldier described two Indians attempting to cut out the eye of a wounded man.³³² Belgian civilians were also accused of similar crimes of mutilation, including the removal of eyes.³³³ Another common motif was the removal of ears and fingers as trophies.³³⁴ These atrocities would have, as the title of the pamphlet suggests, violated international laws on the treatment of the wounded and prisoners.³³⁵ The repetitive nature of these stories as well as the relatively low number of stories about colonial troops in German atrocity propaganda (compare the 35-page pamphlet discussed above to the over 135 pages of *The Belgian People's War: A Violation of International Law*), suggest to historian Christian Koller that these were in fact relatively isolated incidents.³³⁶ In contrast, the Germans also had to publish pamphlets, such as Paul Walter's "*Die indischen Truppen in Frankreich*" or "The Indian Forces in France" which was intended to reduce German anxieties about Indian POWs.³³⁷ Walter portrayed these fears as having been created by "fanciful British press reports,"³³⁸ however they were likely also created by Germany's own atrocity propaganda.

The Germans wanted to capture Entente colonial troops, particularly Indians, in order to persuade them to become turncoats and have them join the Ottoman campaign or send them back

³²⁹ "Auswaetigeis Amt, Employment, Contrary to International Law," 29.

³³⁰ "Auswaetigeis Amt, Employment, Contrary to International Law," 27.

³³¹ *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales*, s.v. "zouave," accessed April 7, 2024, <https://cnrtl.fr/definition/zouave>.

³³² "Auswaetigeis Amt, Employment, Contrary to International Law," 20.

³³³ *The Belgian People's War: A Violation of International Law: Translations from the Official German White Book* (n.p. Imperial Foreign Office, 1915), 7.

³³⁴ "Auswaetigeis Amt, Employment, Contrary to International Law," 1.

³³⁵ Koller, "The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia," 122.

³³⁶ Koller, "The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia," 122.

³³⁷ Ravi Ahuja, "Lost Engagements? Traces of South Asian Soldiers in German Captivity, 1915-1918," in *When The War Began We Heard of Several Kings. South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, edited by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau and Ravi Ahuja (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011), 22.

³³⁸ Ahuja, "Lost Engagements?" 20.

to their homes to spread anti-Entente propaganda.³³⁹ They created propaganda that encouraged Indian troops to desert from the British military. Indian soldiers were deployed in Europe beginning in September 1914,³⁴⁰ and the Germans had immediately begun to encourage desertion.³⁴¹ In order for this strategy to work the Indians “had to believe that their chances were better with the enemy than they were with the British.”³⁴² Leaflets dropped by airplane in late 1914 and early 1915 over the trenches in France encouraged Indian Muslim troops to engage in *jihad* and encouraged Indian Hindus to rise up in rebellion against the British rule in India.³⁴³ Some Indian soldiers also heard from their compatriots who had become prisoners of war (POWs) that they were treated well under the Germans.³⁴⁴ There were sporadic cases of desertion throughout the war, but most of the German POWs from India were captives as opposed to deserters.³⁴⁵ Indian and African prisoners who were thought to be easily persuaded to join the cause of the Central Powers were sent to the *Halbmondlager* or Half Moon Camp, which had been created for propaganda purposes on the recommendation of von Oppenheim.³⁴⁶ Those suspected of maintaining their loyalty to their colonial masters were sent to other camps with harsher conditions.³⁴⁷ Intake was highest in late 1914 and late 1915.³⁴⁸ Only a minority of the Indian troops in the *Halbmondlager* in 1915 were Muslims.³⁴⁹ One of the important distinctions between this camp and others is the fact that the German authorities made concessions to religious prescriptions.³⁵⁰ They allowed for dietary strictures and the celebration of both Islamic

³³⁹ McKale, *War by Revolution*, 68.

³⁴⁰ Koller, “The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia,” 113.

³⁴¹ Andrew T. Jarboe, *Indian Soldiers in World War I: Race and Representation in an Imperial War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 99.

³⁴² Jarboe, *Indian Soldiers in World War I*, 99.

³⁴³ Jarboe, *Indian Soldiers in World War I*, 99-100.

³⁴⁴ Jarboe, *Indian Soldiers in World War I*, 100.

³⁴⁵ Ahuja, “Lost Engagements?” 19; Kant, “In the Land of *Hajji Wilhelm*,” 165.

³⁴⁶ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 117.

³⁴⁷ Ahuja, “Lost Engagements?” 20-21.

³⁴⁸ Ahuja, “Lost Engagements?” 20.

³⁴⁹ Ahuja, “Lost Engagements?” 20.

³⁵⁰ Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*, 117.

and Hindu festivals.³⁵¹ The first mosque in Germany was built within the camp, and the propagandists claimed that Wilhelm II had had a hand in funding its construction.³⁵² The mosque was also used as a symbol of the Ottoman-German alliance within Germany. Photographs of Ottoman politicians and journalists in the mosque were circulated within Germany and throughout those regions where the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* was circulating propaganda.³⁵³ Several editions of a newspaper called *Hindostan*, published in Hindi and Urdu were circulated almost exclusively within the camp.³⁵⁴ One of the members of the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* argued that the camp authorities should instead be reading Ottoman newspapers to the prisoners, as many of them were illiterate while the “makeshift nature of the newspaper made . . . [them] regard it with the greatest suspicion.”³⁵⁵ On top of the propaganda, the Germans also used this camp as an opportunity to engage in ethnographic and anthropological study.³⁵⁶ Photographs taken as part of these academic activities in the camp were used in propaganda on the Western Front.³⁵⁷ The German propagandists brought in Muslim nationalists to preach to the prisoners and to stress the religious obligation of fighting against the Entente Powers.³⁵⁸ The prisoners who volunteered largely went in small groups, but the actual number of volunteers is disputed. American consular reports stated that around 3,000 North

³⁵¹ Kant, “In the Land of *Hajji* Wilhelm,” 166.

³⁵² Martin Gussome, “Architectural Jihad: The “Halbmondlager Mosque as an Instrument of Propaganda,” in *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje’s “Holy War Made in Germany,”* edited by Erik-Jan Zürcher (Leiden, NL: Leiden University Press, 2016), 189.

³⁵³ Gussome, “Architectural Jihad,” 205.

³⁵⁴ Kant, “In the Land of *Hajji* Wilhelm,” 167; Heike Liebau, “Hindostan (newspaper),” in *1914-1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, edited by Ute Daniel et al. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10468.

³⁵⁵ Tilman Lüdke, “(Not) Using Political Islam: The German Empire and its Failed Propaganda Campaign in the Near and Middle East, 1914-1918 and Beyond,” in *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje’s “Holy War Made in Germany,”* edited by Erik-Jan Zürcher (Leiden, NL: Leiden University Press, 2016), 86.

³⁵⁶ Gottfried Hagen, “German Heralds of Holy War: Orientalists and Applied Oriental Studies,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-24-2-145>, 151.

³⁵⁷ Hagen, “German Heralds of Holy War,” 151.

³⁵⁸ Rogan, “Rival jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East,” 12.

Africans were sent to Baghdad to join the Ottoman forces.³⁵⁹ German reports stated that around 2,000 volunteers from British, French, and Russian militaries were sent to Istanbul.³⁶⁰ These numbers likely reflected, at least in part, the reluctance of the Ottomans to accept this kind of military aid. Their policy intended for the Muslim prisoners to be used to settle land instead of fighting the British.³⁶¹

These German propaganda efforts were largely ineffective. They were unable to meet their goals, which included the creation of a rebellion in India and Egypt among other colonies, and the enlistment of prisoners of war to fight with the Ottomans in Egypt and the Middle East. The Germans had limited success with these two goals in part due to their inability to cooperate with the Ottomans and in part due to their lack of understanding of the cultural and religious backgrounds which the people they were attempting to sway in their favour came from. Perhaps the most successful of the propaganda efforts discussed in this chapter was that of the atrocity propaganda, which created fear of the Entente colonial soldiers in Germans on the Western Front.

³⁵⁹ Rogan, "Rival jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East," 12.

³⁶⁰ Ahuja, "Lost Engagements?" 30.

³⁶¹ Ahuja, "Lost Engagements?" 30n54.

Conclusion

Contrary to the desires of the Germans, there was minimal revolt in the Entente colonies. There were some instances of success, such as in Persia, where the *jihad* proclamation and the work of German agents did result in sabotage against the British.³⁶² For the Entente Powers, particularly Britain, the possibility of *jihad* causing contention in the colonies was a major source of fear among military leaders and politicians.³⁶³ It impacted the decisions they made, both politically and militarily, including, for example, at Gallipoli. In spring 1915 the British suffered major naval losses in the Dardanelles due to German submarines and were forced to remove “all heavy battleships from the Dardanelles,” thus greatly reducing the naval support for their troops.³⁶⁴ Despite risks to the troops, the British planners were so concerned about the loss of the neutrality of the Balkan states and the *jihad* uprisings that might take place following a sign of British weakness that they did not order a withdrawal until the end of the year.³⁶⁵ Most of the

³⁶² McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame*, 296; Slight, “Reaction to the Ottoman Jihad *fatwa* in the British Empire, 1914-1918,” 1.

³⁶³ Slight, “Reaction to the Ottoman Jihad *fatwa* in the British Empire, 1914-1918,” 1.

³⁶⁴ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 188.

³⁶⁵ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 189.

German propaganda efforts were intended to counter the Entente Powers. The *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* spread anti-British propaganda throughout the MENA regions and made attempts to get that propaganda as far as India. The German Foreign Office also spread propaganda that portrayed both positive and negative views of the Entente colonial troops on the Western Front. In order to counter Entente atrocity propaganda they spread their own propaganda about the atrocities of the Entente, including the colonial troops. German positive propaganda was intended to portray Germany as a friend of Islam and encourage Muslim troops, particularly Indians, to desert. Captured Entente colonial troops and deserters were taken to POW camps and encouraged to switch allegiances to the Central Powers. While some prisoners did, the numbers were limited,³⁶⁶ and some used the opportunity to travel to the Ottoman Empire to fight as an opportunity to escape and attempt to make their way back to India.³⁶⁷ There was some cooperation between the Germans and the Ottomans in this project, but even then they disagreed on the end object.³⁶⁸

The Ottoman propaganda efforts aimed at Muslims outside of their empire were also largely unsuccessful. However, that was not the focus of their use of *jihad* propaganda. The mobilization of the Ottoman Empire for war was not an easy task, especially given the Ottoman defeats in the Balkan Wars, and the evocation of *jihad* and religious obligations was an important part of the mobilization efforts. The Ottoman government used *jihad* to entreat men to enlist in the military and then continued to use it to evoke fighting spirit and discourage desertion. *Jihad* was also used to encourage those who could not join the military to support the war effort in the ways that they could. Other forms of Ottoman propaganda drew on nationalism and loyalty to the Empire as a way to get the Ottoman people to support the war.

³⁶⁶ Ahuja, "Lost Engagements?" 30; Rogan, "Rival jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East," 12.

³⁶⁷ Kant, "In the Land of *Hajji* Wilhelm," 168.

³⁶⁸ Ahuja, "Lost Engagements?" 30n54.

This nationalism, as well as the perceived legitimacy of the authority calling the Ottoman people to *jihad*, which the Germans as a Christian empire could only attempt to gain in their propaganda around the supposed conversion of the Kaiser, were elements which contributed to the success of the Ottoman Empire's propaganda efforts. However, the Ottoman and German propaganda efforts were symbiotic. Without German cooperation and investment in the military, the Ottoman Empire likely would not have been able to convince the Ottoman people that their military was at all viable. The German restructuring of the army, particularly their training of a new officer corps and the creation of a new Ottoman Youth League, as well as the physical support in the form of men and matériel, were important for encouraging the Ottoman people to support the war effort. The German propaganda effort was reliant on the support of the Ottoman Empire. Had the Ottoman government not declared *jihad*, the Germans would not have been able to use it as a propaganda tool.

Analysis of the events surrounding the German-Ottoman alliance, their propaganda efforts, and the call to *jihad* has resulted in a wide range of opinions among historians, with varied thoughts on the degree of Ottoman agency in decision making and the level of success in propaganda efforts. The interwoven nature of the German and Ottoman war efforts had an important effect on the propaganda of both of the empires. One could not operate without the other and yet the lack of united aims and operations resulted in less successful propaganda campaigns. When regarded individually, the Ottoman propaganda efforts were more successful than the German propaganda efforts, because the Ottomans were able to, at least partially, reach their desired goals of mobilizing their population, whereas the Germans were unable to reach their desired goals of major rebellion to the detriment of the Entente.

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