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EMPIRE AND TRANS-IMPERIAL SUBJECTS IN THE NINETEENTH- CENTURY MUSLIM MEDITERRANEAN*

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ABSTRACT. *During the nineteenth century, the Muslim Mediterranean became a locus of competing imperial projects led by the Ottomans and European powers. This article examines how the migration of people and ideas across North Africa and Asia complicated processes of imperial consolidation and exposed the ways in which North Africa, Europe, and Asia were connected through trans-imperial influences that often undermined the jurisdictional sovereignty of imperial states. It demonstrates that cross-border migrations and cultural transfers both frustrated and abetted imperial projects while allowing for the imagining of new types of solidarities that transcended national and imperial categorizations. In analysing these factors, this article argues for a rethinking of the metropole–periphery relationship by highlighting the important role print and trans-imperial networks played in shaping the Mediterranean region.*

I

In 1898, French authorities in Tunisia took an interest in one Mahmoud Zeki. Only twenty-eight years of age, Zeki had already managed to establish a small but not insignificant reputation for himself in the eastern Mediterranean region. In Cairo, he had run a series of newspapers which drew the ire of British colonial authorities. After being expelled from Egypt, he migrated to Tunisia before moving on to Tripolitania in 1897, where he spoke out against the French colonial system. By the following year, Zeki was in Istanbul running a bi-weekly newspaper entitled *The Ottoman Star* with a mixed editorial staff of Arabs and Turks. According to French authorities, the paper was favourable to the Ottoman Empire and Sultan Abdülhamid’s brand of Pan-Islamism. More alarming was the fact that the paper carried a broad spread of stories

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covering the Maghreb, signalling it might be an organ for disseminating Ottoman influence across North Africa.¹ Suspicious of these activities, French officials forbade Zeki re-entry into Tunisia in the spring of 1898 in light of his recent accusations in print that the Tunisian protectorate was 'interfering with the principles of the Muslim religion'.²

What makes Zeki's story noteworthy is not its unique or exceptional character. On the contrary, it is its ubiquitous quality that is informative. Colonial and ministerial archives are filled with accounts of itinerant Muslims who at one time or another piqued the interests of colonial authorities. Their peregrinations across imperial borders no less than their political temperaments were suspect in an age of fierce imperial rivalries and consolidation. The Mediterranean world through which Zeki and others circulated was an imperial space, but it was also one that resisted the very practices and sensibilities that guided empire-building in the nineteenth century. Efforts to demarcate borders and enforce territorial boundaries were part and parcel of the imperial project, especially following the Berlin Conference of 1884, which required powers to demonstrate 'effective occupation' in order to lay claim to territory. These practices, formalized in international law, were representative of the 'simple' space that informed European imperial imaginaries in the period of high imperialism. Yet beneath the homogeneous, abstract space of formal empire always lurked the 'gothic complex space' of indigenous societies with their overlapping identities and trans-local attachments, a factor made evident in Zeki's imperial border-hopping.³

Imperium, designating 'command' or 'power', has always connoted a measure of control over a people or territory.⁴ This definition is revealing given that empires have traditionally been treated as bounded sovereign entities with more-or-less fixed borders and jurisdictions. From at least the eighteenth century onwards, regimes endeavoured to consolidate their power by drawing borders and redirecting loyalties toward imperial centres.⁵ In many respects, empire necessitated categories of spatial and social fixity. Yet this impression of stability adhered more to the colour-coded maps that were produced by imperial powers – maps with sharp lines and rigidly defined borders – than to the actualities of rule as it occurred on the ground. Recent appraisals have revised long-held assumptions regarding the nature of empire-building in the

¹ Archives Nationales de Tunisie (ANT), E 532, dossier 6/1, 'Secrétariat Général: Bureau de la comptabilité', 11 May 1898.

² ANT, E 532, dossier 6/1, 'Note: A. S. du journal *L'Étoile ottomane*', 16 May 1898.

³ For concepts of 'simple' and 'gothic' space, see John Milbank, 'Against the resignations of the age', in Francis P. McHugh and Samuel M. Natale, eds., *Things old and things new: Catholic social teaching revisited* (New York, NY, 1993), p. 19.

⁴ Anthony Pagden, 'Fellow citizens and imperial subjects: conquest and sovereignty in Europe's overseas empires', *History and Theory*, 44 (2005), pp. 28–46.

⁵ Matthew Edney, *Mapping an empire: the geographical construction of British India, 1765–1893* (Chicago, IL, 1990); Morag Bell, Robin Butli, and Michael Heffernan, eds., *Geography and imperialism, 1820–1940* (Manchester, 1995).

modern period. Whereas previous models focused on conquest and top-down state policies, new scholarship has indicated the important role that migratory patterns, missionaries, merchants, and cross-border communities alike played in the construction of global empires. Empire-building was shaped by pressures from below that would influence imperial politics as well as modern ideas of citizenship and cultural identity.⁶ By examining the activities of trans-imperial subjects like merchants and migrants, historians have not only demonstrated the fluidity of borders, but also the ways in which individuals and groups negotiated their own conceptions of belonging at the margins of empires.⁷ In a broader context, examining movements and communities that cut across borders opens the possibility of analysing new types of solidarities that transcend conventional frameworks of national or imperial space. It situates individuals around a range of relational principles rooted in networks, cultural ties, and ideologies that have the potential to remap and reposition familiar geographies.⁸

The nineteenth-century Muslim Mediterranean provides a context for engaging with the connected histories of empire across Africa, Europe, and Asia. While processes of modern state formation were well underway in the Mediterranean by mid-century, the region remained a borderland characterized by migratory movements and a remarkable internal diversity.⁹ Modern state and imperial formations were often superimposed over pre-existing commercial and social networks running from the Atlantic coast to South Asia and beyond. European attempts to establish jurisdiction along the southern and eastern Mediterranean littoral had to contend with these actualities. Territorialization in a strict sense proved difficult to enforce, not least of all because much of North Africa had once been nominally part of the Ottoman Empire. Muslim subjects retained social and cultural ties with Istanbul and the Ottoman Near East well after European rule was introduced. In carving out African empires and protectorates, therefore, European powers had to impose control – *imperium* in the most literal sense of the word – over a mobile Islamic population with ties and loyalties that resisted the type of bounded sovereignty commanded by an imperial state. This was no less true of the Ottoman Empire, which was occupied with centralizing imperial

⁶ Ella Natalie Rothman, *Brokering empire: trans-imperial subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, NY, 2012); James H. Meyer, *Turks across empires: marketing Muslim identity in the Russian-Ottoman borderland, 1856–1914* (Oxford, 2014); Resat Kasaba, *A moveable empire: Ottoman nomads, migrants and refugees* (Seattle, WA, 2009).

⁷ Seema Alavi, *Muslim cosmopolitanism in the age of empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), pp. 11–13.

⁸ David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the geographies of freedom* (New York, NY, 2009), p. 50.

⁹ Julia A. Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an age of migration, 1800–1900* (Berkeley, CA, 2011); Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The eastern Mediterranean and the making of global radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley, CA, 2013); Edmund Burke III, ‘Toward a comparative history of the modern Mediterranean, 1750–1919’, *Journal of World History*, 23 (2010), pp. 907–39.

authority and integrating a complex mosaic of multi-ethnic provinces and frontier regions into the state.¹⁰

If trans-imperial flows proved disruptive to state-building projects, imperial governments nonetheless found ways of pressing them into service. In addition to state actors, local elites and activists could and frequently did harness networks for their own ends, in many instances fostering political and social movements with the potential for cross-border mobilization. These various spheres of activity suggest that the age of empire also reconfigured traditional networks and infused them with new cultural and political meaning. Aided by innovations in global print culture, imperial subjects from Algeria to India were able to frame broad political platforms that reimaged the bounds of their respective communities.¹¹ More provocatively, the synergies engendered by print media, religious networks, and anti-colonial protest had the potential to foster collective responses to regional events and empower publics. During the Libyan and Balkan Wars of 1911–13, trans-imperial networks played a vital role in mobilizing opinion and organizing voluntary aid associations across imperial frontiers. These activities marked an early chapter in the history of modern humanitarianism as traditional networks converged with new media and financial networks to ‘mobilize empathy’ for both charitable and political ends.¹²

Understanding these trans-imperial dynamics and how they functioned ultimately outlines a novel analytical framework for the study of empire. It replaces the familiar metropole–periphery relationship with a constellation of competing metropolises and peripheries, emphasizing the convergence of localized political, economic, and social processes born from imperial rivalry and contestation. While such a model may appear to diverge from traditional top-down histories of empire, it is important to recognize that trans-imperial currents were never completely divorced from processes of empire-building. In certain instances, they were integral to it. Although states attempted to discipline cross-border flows, they also exploited and even encouraged them when it served their interests. The nineteenth century marked a critical moment in the ‘re-spatialization’ of the Mediterranean as powers attempted to carve out and consolidate imperial states. Empire-building and resistance were two parts of a dialectical process.¹³ Rather than favouring perspectives from ‘above’ or ‘below’, therefore, the Muslim Mediterranean reveals the need for

¹⁰ Cem Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East: modernity, imperial bureaucracy and Islam* (London, 2012); Selim Deringil, *The well-protected domains: ideology and the legitimization of power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London, 2011).

¹¹ Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi’s printing press: experiments in slow reading* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); James L. Gelvin and Nile Green, eds., *Global Muslims in the age of steam and print* (Berkeley, CA, 2013).

¹² Richard Ashby Wilson and Richard D. Brown, ‘Introduction’, *Humanitarianism and suffering: the mobilization of empathy* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 1–30.

¹³ Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann, ‘Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization’, *Journal of Global History*, 5 (2010), pp. 149–70.

a more complex understanding of how pressures from above and below interacted with one another and how these twin processes simultaneously accommodated and challenged prevailing notions of sovereignty in the modern period.

II

North Africa came under European rule in progressive stages during the long nineteenth century. By the outbreak of the First World War, France was in possession of a large and primarily Arabo-Berber Muslim empire stretching across Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Britain had established a protectorate in Egypt in the 1880s, while Italy, largely for reasons of prestige, attempted to carve out a colony in Libya after 1911. By 1914, the terrain of North Africa, once nominally contained within the Ottoman Empire, had been completely transformed. This great power perspective tends, however, to compartmentalize the various territories of the region into insulated imperial enclaves. It conceals the fact that the Muslim Mediterranean was a mobile and interconnected world.

Muslim elites were connected through a variety of cultural and social institutions that spanned continents. Religious scholars (*'ulamā*) attended leading centres of Islamic learning such as al-Qarawiyyin in Fez and al-Azhar in Cairo, and typically maintained relations with elites across Africa and the greater Middle East after receiving their education.¹⁴ In tandem with established religious scholars, Sufi networks also linked localities through affiliated lodges and spiritual centres (*zāwīya*). Those initiated into a specific *tariqa* (order) travelled between centres and benefited from the schools and mosques run by respective orders.¹⁵ Some of these *tariqa*, like the Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya, had a substantial scope of action extending from subcontinental Asia to Morocco and often intersecting with lucrative commercial and caravan routes tied to the Indian Ocean.¹⁶ Religious pilgrimage, most significantly the annual hajj, similarly served to connect peripheral regions to Islamic centres. Cairo was a popular stopping place for North African pilgrims heading to Mecca, and typically a visit to Istanbul completed the itinerary.

As imperial states attempted to consolidate their power throughout the region, cities such as Cairo, Tunis, Istanbul, and Mecca became more than nodal points within a familiar social and cultural geography. These urban centres were transformed into sites of trans-imperial entanglements that

¹⁴ Mustafa Tuna, *Imperial Russia's Muslims: Islam, empire and European modernity, 1788–1914* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 21–35.

¹⁵ B. G. Martin, *Muslim brotherhoods in nineteenth-century Africa* (Cambridge, 1976).

¹⁶ Butrus Abu-Manneh, 'The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in the Ottoman lands in the early nineteenth century', *Die Welt des Islams*, 22 (1982), pp. 1–36; Ira M. Lapidus, *Islamic societies to the nineteenth century: a global history* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 283–4; Anne K. Bang, *Islamic Sufi networks in the Western Indian Ocean (c. 1880–1940): ripples of reform* (Leiden, 2014); Niles Green, *Sufism: a global history* (Oxford, 2012).

infused older networks and cultural activities with new political meanings.¹⁷ Numerous studies have highlighted how imperial powers intervened in and even ‘colonized’ the hajj for varying reasons of security and profitmaking during the nineteenth century.¹⁸ More recently, it has been noted that the Ottoman Empire likewise managed pilgrimage routes and monitored travellers for political ends.¹⁹ In many instances, European surveillance was a response to the perceived dangers of Islamic radicalism and anti-colonial resistance. British authorities kept abreast of Indian Muslims who left the subcontinent for Mecca and subsequently relocated to the Hijaz, Egypt, and Istanbul where they disseminated anti-imperialist ideologies.²⁰ French officials equally monitored pilgrims, and even introduced a more stringent passport system in the 1890s to assuage fears of Algerians and Tunisians being radicalized abroad.²¹

French authorities were particularly sensitive to the trans-border connections binding Islamic societies. As they conquered and occupied Algeria between 1830 and 1848, the French military waged a gruelling war against native resistance movements led by local Sufi leaders aided from Morocco.²² Given this experience, French colonial administrators consistently portrayed Sufi orders as well-organized and politically subversive organizations capable of mobilizing wide-scale resistance at a moment’s notice. As a rule, officials remained suspicious of the ‘foreign’ connections Maghrebi Sufis maintained.²³ In 1887, Louis Rinn, chief of the Native Affairs service in Algeria, pressed for heavier surveillance of the *zawāyā*, adding it would be ‘advantageous’ to keep records on the foreign students attending these religious schools.²⁴ On his instructions, lists were drawn up by the sub-prefects including information on students’ place of origin, arrival date in Algeria, and putative ‘influence’ in the localities.²⁵ The foreign elements attributed to the *tariqa* highlighted the perceived vulnerability of an

¹⁷ Alavi, *Muslim cosmopolitanism*, pp. 23, 135–6.

¹⁸ Eileen Kane, *Russian hajj: empire and the pilgrimage to Mecca* (Ithaca, NY, 2015), pp. 7–8; Michael Christopher Low, ‘Empire and the hajj: pilgrims, plagues and Pan-Islam under British surveillance, 1865–1908’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 40 (2008), pp. 280–6; Nile Green, ‘The hajj and its own undoing: infrastructure and integration on the Muslim journey to Mecca’, *Past and Present*, 226 (2015), pp. 193–9.

¹⁹ Lâle Can, ‘Connecting people: a Central Asia Sufi network in turn-of-the-century Istanbul’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 46 (2012), pp. 373–401.

²⁰ Low, ‘Empire and the hajj’, p. 277.

²¹ See Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence (ANOM), 81F/836, ‘Instruction concernant le pèlerinage de la Mecque’ (1893); ANT, A 267 bis, dossier 1, ‘Circulaire aux contrôleurs civils: pèlerinage de la Mecque’, 3 Mar. 1902.

²² Amira K. Bennison, *Jihad and its interpretations in pre-colonial Morocco: state-society relations during the French conquest of Algeria* (London, 2002); James McDougall, *A history of Algeria* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 60–73.

²³ George R. Trumbull III, *An empire of facts: colonial power, cultural knowledge and Islam in Algeria, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 97–101; Jean-Louis Triaud, *La légende noire de la Sanûsiyya: une confrérie musulmane saharienne sous le regard français (1840–1930)* (Paris, 1995).

²⁴ ANOM, Alger/2U/20, Louis Rinn to the prefects of Algiers, 4 Nov. 1887.

²⁵ ANOM, Alger/2U/20, ‘Circulaire aux sous-préfets, administrateurs et maires’, 9 Nov. 1887.

Algerian colony situated at the nexus of trans-regional Islamic religious and political influences. It similarly exposed deep-seated anxieties over the diffuse and de-centred character of Muslim social relations, anxieties that persistently crept into French and European policy outlooks throughout the period.²⁶

Contrary to expectations, French efforts to control Muslim cultural institutions occasionally provoked, rather than inhibited, cross-border movement. A small contingent of Algerians and Tunisians joined existing communities abroad in Tripoli, Egypt, Istanbul, and most prominently Syria from the 1840s onward. These émigré communities retained commercial and familial connections with their home regions that generated points of conflict between French and Ottoman authorities on numerous occasions. Under the capitulatory legal regime applied within Ottoman territories, European consuls could extend legal 'protection' to Christians and Muslim clients, exempting them from Ottoman laws and taxation. Wary that Europeans would use *protégés* to expand their influence, Ottoman statesmen proposed recognizing subjects through 'national' criteria over more traditional forms of religious identification in order to clarify the position of Muslims originating from European protectorates outside the empire. Stamping fellow Muslims with national difference was a responsive strategy intended to restrict the prerogative of European consuls and reinforce Ottoman imperial sovereignty.²⁷ To say the least, European authorities were reluctant to oblige.

The complex legal regimes in Ottoman territories became battlegrounds for jurisdictional control over subjects. Yet if they favoured European encroachment within the Ottoman Empire, these arrangements could also pose problems in European protectorates where capitulatory laws remained in place. As Mary Dewhurst-Lewis has shown in her study of French Tunisia, Algerians arriving in the regency were able to claim French status under the law and evade the repressive *Code de l'indigénat* they were subject to in Algeria. This prospect entitled them to equal civil rights with Europeans and set a dangerous precedent with regard to the hierarchies ordering colonial society.²⁸ Entering Tunisia, Algerians 'escaped everything' and enjoyed 'an individual liberty without restriction', complained the resident-general Justin Massicault.²⁹ In Syria, Algerians similarly attempted to skirt taxes and conscription owed to the Ottoman state by virtue of claiming French exemption under the law.

²⁶ John Ferris, 'The internationalism of Islam: the British perception of a Muslim menace, 1840–1951', *Intelligence and National Security*, 24 (2009), pp. 57–77; Edmund Burke III, *The ethnographic state: France and the invention of Moroccan Islam* (Berkeley, CA, 2014), pp. 27–35.

²⁷ Will Hanley, 'What Ottoman nationality was and was not', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, 3 (2016), pp. 277–98; Lâle Can, 'The protection question: Central Asians and extraterritoriality in the Late Ottoman Empire', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 48 (2016), pp. 679–99.

²⁸ Mary Dewhurst-Lewis, *Divided rule: sovereignty and empire in French Tunisia, 1881–1838* (Berkeley, CA, 2013).

²⁹ Archive Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, La Courneuve (AMAE), Tunisie NS 17, Massicault to minister of foreign affairs, 10 Apr. 1889.

Ottoman authorities continually wrangled with French consular officials over the ambiguous status of émigrés, with each seeking to claim them as their own.³⁰

Disputes over personal legal status underscored the thorny issues that trans-imperial subjects provoked and occasionally produced unexpected scenarios involving multiple regions. The demands of Sheikh Mustafa Sellaoui, a native of Tuat residing in Tunis in 1889, were telling in this respect. Tuat, an oasis outpost located along the trans-Saharan trade route running south of French Algeria, was nominally under the control of the Moroccan sultan at this time. As the recognized head of a Moroccan émigré community in Tunis, Sellaoui had been invested by the bey of Tunis with *protégé* status, permitting him to demand taxes from the émigrés under his charge and to lay claim to authority in Tuat.³¹ Sellaoui was clearly using his *protégé* status to enrich himself and extend his personal power, a fact that the Tuatine émigré community well understood. Refusing to pay the taxes demanded of them, the Moroccans under Sellaoui's charge assassinated the sheikh in the streets of Tunis in 1892 following a heated dispute.³² The fact that a Moroccan subject residing in Tunisia was claiming jurisdiction over an area that would soon be annexed to French Algeria testified to the often byzantine relationships that spanned the domains of North Africa's regional powers in the late nineteenth century.

Émigré communities like those established in Syria or Tunisia straddled imperial borders, and in doing so connected neighbouring imperial powers in ways that exposed the porous nature of those very borders. Naturally, regional powers were not above exploiting trans-imperial links if it was in their interest to do so. French consular officials in Damascus noted the potential value émigrés in Syria could offer and advised providing aid to influential emirs in paving the way for a future protectorate.³³ Conversely, Ottoman authorities used the Algerian emigration to court Muslim loyalties and reaffirm the empire's status as a protector of Muslims. Sufi networks and ethnic Turkish communities in French colonies provided conduits through which émigré letters extolling the sultan's generosity and favourable treatment circulated. French officials saw these communications for what they were, noting the close relationship between the Ottoman government and the *agence d'émigration* based in Damascus. Émigré activities were organized by the Syrian vilayet via Tunis, where agents on the ground assisted with disseminating propaganda

³⁰ Pierre Bardin, *Algériens et Tunisiens dans l'Empire Ottoman de 1848 à 1914* (Paris, 1979), pp. 54–78; Allan Christelow, *Algerians without borders: the making of a global frontier society* (Gainesville, FL, 2012), pp. 53–62.

³¹ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 116, Massicault to minister of foreign affairs, 26 Feb. 1889; Spuller, minister of foreign affairs to Gaston, minister of France in Tangier, 21 Mar. 1889.

³² AMAE, Tunisie, NS 116, Blondel to minister of foreign affairs, 8 June 1892.

³³ ANOM, GGA/15H/7, 'Consul général, chargé du consulat de France à Damas à M. Cruppi, Ministre des affaires étrangères', 18 Mar. 1911.

across the Algerian frontier and coordinating travel arrangement for prospective migrants.³⁴

These details illustrated the complex and often contradictory nature of empire-building in the Mediterranean. Cross-border networks and social ties frustrated jurisdictional authority at every turn, prompting officials to elaborate evermore refined legal and national criteria in identifying subjects. Yet as states attempted to consolidate control and push out imperial rivals, they pressed trans-local networks and migrants into service. Empire adapted to the political and social landscape of the region, imposing itself on the dense web of connections linking Africa with the Ottoman world and, in certain instances, generating new flows that imperial authorities did not hesitate to exploit.

III

Efforts to control and instrumentalize migratory flows accompanied more ideologically oriented strategies as well that relied upon different forms of cross-border movement and communication. For instance, Ottoman involvement in émigré politics was consistent with the general turn toward Pan-Islamism by Sultan Abdülhamid in the 1880s. Part diplomatic strategy and part domestic policy, Ottoman Pan-Islamism sought to rally the global Muslim community behind the symbol of the Islamic Caliphate and provide a new basis of social unity and legitimacy for Abdülhamid's declining empire. By encouraging Muslims to look to Istanbul, the sultan intended to overcome his diplomatic isolation among the European powers and curb the aggressive Western imperialism that threatened the very existence of the Ottoman state.³⁵ 'We must strengthen our links with the Muslims of other lands and get closer to each other', Abdülhamid urged his coreligionists. 'The only hope for our future lies in this idea.'³⁶ Outside the symbolic gestures and rhetoric of Muslim unity, Abdülhamid endeavoured to harness Sufi structures to his Pan-Islamic agenda and tap into the networks that cut across Africa and Asia. As channels for influencing and mobilizing Muslim subjects, Sufi networks were envisaged as a potential mechanism for exerting power at the local levels of society. Abroad, they could serve as an arm of Ottoman foreign policy against European encroachment in places such as Libya and the Arabian Peninsula, and potentially exert pressure on Britain in India.³⁷

³⁴ ANOM, GGA/10H/90, 'Emigration en Syrie: Rapport Varnier' (1911).

³⁵ Deringil, *The well-protected domains*; Kamal H. Karpat, *The politicization of Islam: reconstructing identity, state, faith and community in the late Ottoman state* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 174–211.

³⁶ Azim Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877–1924)* (Leiden, 1997), p. 50.

³⁷ Jacob M. Landau, *The politics of Pan-Islamism: ideology and organization* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 51–3; Brian Silverstein, 'Sufism and governmentality in the late Ottoman Empire', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 29 (2009), pp. 171–85; Mostafa Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: empire and diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz* (Stanford, CA, 2016).

While Abdülhamid's policies instrumentalized traditional Muslim social and religious structures, the message employed in doing so was quite novel and spoke to evolving cultural and ideological currents prevalent among Muslim intellectuals of the period. Pan-Islamism was hardly a homogeneous movement directed from Istanbul, and in fact sprang from a variety of sources and divergent aspirations. Calls to Muslim unity (*Ittihad-i İslam*) possessed anti-colonial overtones, but also spoke to broad social and political concerns of the day, fluctuating between 'cultural' and 'political' expression of Islamic solidarity as warranted.³⁸ Confronted with the imposition of modern secular institutions and the ever-present threat of European colonialism, Muslim elites grappled with questions of how to preserve Islamic identity and culture and in what measure. From its origins as a popular revivalist movement, Pan-Islamism registered with an array of Muslim elites across borders. It was based in shared concerns over tradition and how to make Muslim society compatible with the cultural and political forms of modernity.³⁹ According to Cemil Aydin, Pan-Islamism marked a collective effort on the part of Muslim reformers to construct a transnational identity with the power to mobilize communities and influence modernist movements beyond the nation.⁴⁰ It grew out of the loose-knit networks that traditionally connected Muslim societies and provided a context in which reform-minded elites could reimagine these social and cultural bonds through articulations of a shared Islamic cultural identity and 'Muslim cosmopolitanism'.⁴¹

The popular reception of the unity movement had much to do with its forms of transmission. Muslim elites enthusiastically adopted the new printing technologies and methods of dissemination coming from the West, promoting their views in a range of newspapers and pamphlets. The print revolution effectively broke the monopoly of the 'ulamā on authoritative knowledge and religious discourse and armed reformers with a modern style press that could reach larger audiences.⁴² Innovations in print helped construct the very idea of a 'Muslim world' distinct from religiously based understandings of the *ummah*.⁴³ More importantly, it was through journals and print culture that expatriate Muslim communities were kept globally connected. A new Islamic public sphere emerged in which both publications and elites circulated in

³⁸ Adeeb Khalid, 'Pan-Islamism in practice: the rhetoric of Muslim unity and its uses', in Elisabeth Özdalga, ed., *Late Ottoman society: the intellectual legacy* (London, 2005), pp. 201–2; Bernard Lewis, *The emergence of modern Turkey* (London, 1961), pp. 341–2.

³⁹ Karpāt, *The politicization of Islam*, pp. 7–8.

⁴⁰ Cemil Aydin, *The politics of anti-Westernism in Asia: vision of world order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thought* (New York, NY, 2007), pp. 3–4.

⁴¹ Alavi, *Muslim cosmopolitanism*, pp. 178–9.

⁴² Francis Robinson, 'Technology and religious change: Islam and the impact of print', *Modern Asian Studies*, 27 (1993), pp. 237–9; Adeeb Khalid, 'Printing, publishing and reform in tsarist Central Asia', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26 (1994), pp. 187–200.

⁴³ Cemil Aydin, *The idea of the Muslim world: a global intellectual history* (Cambridge, MA, 2017), pp. 16, 72–3.

greater numbers.⁴⁴ Public Pan-Islamism or 'Muslim cosmopolitanism' was part of this development. It acquired saliency through the new forms of communication and sociability growing up in places like Istanbul, Cairo, and Beirut, and attested to the dynamism of a trans-imperial Muslim public sphere.⁴⁵

Texts migrated across empires. Merchants and the middle classes in Fez, Tangiers, and Rabat were avid readers of Arabic newspapers coming from Egypt and the Near East, as indicated by the high subscription rates in Morocco.⁴⁶ Colonial authorities in Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt kept abreast of foreign newspapers and publications that entered their territories on a regular basis, commonly viewing them as vehicles of Muslim radicalization. A bookstore in the Tunis medina was singled out by French police when it was found selling translations of the Ottoman writer Namik Kemal's poem 'Voice of liberty and the patrie', a work believed to be exercising a pernicious influence on Tunisian students. If this observation was insipid, the book itself is a remarkable artefact. Penned in Anatolia, translated into Arabic in Syria, published in Beirut, and sold on the streets of Tunis, 'Voice of liberty' was one of the many migrating texts that circulated through the Mediterranean at this time.⁴⁷ In 1913, Pierre de Margerie, chief of the African and Eastern affairs sub-department in the ministry of foreign affairs, remarked on the extensive circulation of books and newspapers in the French colonies, especially the high number of books published in Egypt by the 'ulamā and students at Al-Azhar in Cairo. These findings, in his opinion, 'proved the extent of intellectual contact that is maintained between the different countries of Islamic culture'.⁴⁸

French and British authorities persistently agonized over the supposed centrifugal influences exerted by Pan-Islamism. To counter them, officials co-opted local elites and fashioned conceptions of imperial sovereignty through Islamic motifs and symbols.⁴⁹ The press was central in these attempts to territorialize Muslim identities as regimes turned out newspapers and journals in native languages. By the turn of the century, Britain was funding several Egyptian papers supportive of the pro-British Khedival government to compete with newspapers backed by other regional powers. As the French politician Lucien Hubert wryly observed, 'the Egyptian press was free only in its legal formalities; the pens of its editors were the servants of others'.⁵⁰ French authorities could also not help but notice that many of the newspapers

⁴⁴ Gelvin and Green, 'Introduction', *Global Muslims*, pp. 11–14.

⁴⁵ Khalid, 'Pan-Islamism in practice', pp. 203–7.

⁴⁶ Edmund Burke, 'Pan-Islamism and Moroccan resistance to French colonial penetration', *Journal of African History*, 13 (1972), pp. 103–4.

⁴⁷ ANT, E 550, dossier 4–9, 'Note: Direction de la sureté publique', 15 Nov. 1910.

⁴⁸ ANT, E 532, dossier 6/1, minister of foreign affairs to Alapetite, 8 July 1913.

⁴⁹ David Motadel, 'Islam and the European empires', *Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), pp. 831–56; James McDougall, 'The secular state's Islamic empire: Muslim spaces and subjects of jurisdiction in Paris and Algiers, 1905–1957', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 52 (2010), pp. 553–80; Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge, 1972).

⁵⁰ Lucien Hubert, *L'Islam et la guerre* (Paris, 1918), p. 15.

published in Cairo and Alexandria were hostile to French interests in the region, amounting to a veritable check against Britain's primary imperial rival.⁵¹ Yet while officials deployed the local press to channel allegiances toward imperial metropolises and cordon off populations from outside influences, in some instances these attempts highlighted the extent to which empires were enmeshed within trans-imperial webs of connection.

Given its sizeable presence in North Africa, France invested significant resources into nurturing an Arabo-Muslim press favourable to its imperial interests. It subsidized a number of newspapers in Egypt and the Near East, often with the expectations that these papers would circulate back into Algeria and Tunisia and reach their own colonial populations, thereby concealing the hand of French officialdom in their production.⁵² The administration also ran its own Arabic language dailies in the colonies, drawing upon the expertise of prominent orientalist scholars in France as well as an array of Ottoman émigrés residing in Paris and abroad.⁵³ The reliance upon Arab and particularly Syrian Christian exiles in running colonial newspapers influenced the content of the stories that appeared as many of the publicists were proponents of the Arab cultural revival movement, or *Nahda*, coming of age during the period.⁵⁴ As Arab modernists from Egypt and the Levant were pressed into the service of the colonial state, they helped transmit ideas of Arab identity and culture to North African populations, establishing a Near East–European–Maghreb transfer nexus that popularized themes of Arab nationality and Islamic modernization. By the turn of the century, appeals to Arab nationality and cultural revival expounded by *Nahda* proponents found a reception among North African journalists such as Larbi Fékar and other Young Algerians working through an independent Arab press. Fékar's bilingual *El Mischah* would proudly carry the banner 'For France by Arabs' on its masthead, advertising its joint commitment to Arab modernization and imperial loyalty.⁵⁵

The irony of course was that in combatting the centrifugal influences of Muslim cosmopolitanism and Ottoman Pan-Islamism, French authorities became more reliant on trans-imperial networks and brokers like the Syrian Christians. Imperial regime not only recognized the important role journals and social networks played in the region; they equally utilized and supported them, employing locals and émigrés across a public sphere that spanned

⁵¹ ANT, E 532, dossier 9/2, 'Note: Secrétariat général, bureau de la comptabilité', 15 Feb. 1899.

⁵² AMAE, Tunisie NS 16, 'Note pour le ministre', 18 July 1887.

⁵³ Alain Messaoudi, *Les Arabisants en la France colonial, 1780–1930* (Paris, 2015), pp. 235–9, 411–15; Rouchdi Fakkar, *L'influence française sur la formation de la press littéraire en Égypte au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1972).

⁵⁴ Khuri-Makdisi, *The eastern Mediterranean*, pp. 41–54; Albert Hourani, *The emergence of the modern Middle East* (Berkeley, CA, 1981), pp. 103–23.

⁵⁵ *El Mischah*, 3 June 1904. Also see Bénali El Hassar, *Les jeunes Algériens et la mouvance moderniste au début du XXème siècle: les frères Larbi and Bénali Fekar* (Paris, 2013).

empires. These currents were not simply a one-way channel either. As the Ottoman and Egyptian regimes clamped down on liberal and radical reform movements in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Arabs, Syrians, and Turks fled to Europe, creating exilic communities abroad that transformed European capitals into centres of Muslim activism.⁵⁶ During the 1860s and 1870s, Young Ottoman exiles ran newspapers such as *Hürriyet* (London) and *Muhbir* (Paris) that regularly commented upon political affairs in the Ottoman Empire and promoted a brand of nascent Pan-Islamism critical of the sultan.⁵⁷ Ottoman authorities were wary of these foreign activities and worked through diplomatic channels to shut them down. According to the Ottoman ambassador in London, the Young Ottoman opposition was ‘encouraged by the impunity which they believe themselves assured of in England’, and requested George Villiers, then foreign secretary, to take action ‘with all the force of the law’.⁵⁸ By the time the government acted, the publishers had fled the country and relocated to Paris.⁵⁹ In the coming decades, the French capital became an epicentre for Ottoman periodicals reflecting a range of ideological positions. Journals like *L’Abeille du Bosphore*, *Le Libéral Ottoman*, and *Turquie Contemporaine* brought Ottoman and Muslim politics directly into the centre of Parisian political life. Papers debated issues relevant to Islamic governance, Pan-Islamism, and France’s role in the East. They lambasted enemies and engaged in sparring matches with rival newspapers in their columns, generating an Ottoman press war in the heart of the French empire. Istanbul also attempted to shut down the Francophone Ottoman press, although French courts proved less amenable than the British government to oblige these requests.⁶⁰

Journalistic and political debates encouraged trans-border political organizations as well. In 1895, a Turko-Syrian committee was formed in Paris headed by leading émigrés like Khalil Ghanem, a Syrian Catholic and stalwart defender of imperial decentralization and liberal Ottomanism. The committee soon merged with the Paris-based Union and Progress movement organized by the Young Turk activist Ahmet Riza and progressively established links with opponents of Abdülhamid in Egypt.⁶¹ When the Young Turk revolution erupted in 1908, Syrian émigrés once again came to the fore. Shukri Ghanem, brother

⁵⁶ Mohamed-Fehri Chelbi, ‘Les journaux arabes de Paris, 1859–1919: étude historique et sociologique’ (Ph.D. thesis, Université de Lille, 1986); Nikki E. Keddie, *An Islamic response to imperialism: political and religious writing of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī* (Berkeley, CA, 1983), pp. 4–8; Abdul Azim Islahi, *Economic thinking of Arab Muslim writers during the nineteenth century* (New York, NY, 2015), pp. 58–9.

⁵⁷ Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, p. 35.

⁵⁸ The National Archives, Kew (TNA), FO 78/3197, Ottoman Imperial Embassy in London to the earl of Clarendon, 19 Jan. 1870.

⁵⁹ TNA, FO 78/3197, note to A. F. O. Liddell, 16 Mar. 1870.

⁶⁰ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in opposition* (New York, NY, 1995), p. 111.

⁶¹ Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), pp. 42–3.

of Khalil, and Georges Samné, a Greek Melchite doctor from Damascus, set up the Association des Amis de l'Orient in Paris to serve as an advocacy group for Syrian and Lebanese emigrants.⁶² Armed with a newspaper, the organization committed itself to promoting good relations between Europe and the new Ottoman regime in order to 'establish and maintain the intellectual *patrie* of humanity between Orientals and Europe, and especially France', as Samné claimed.⁶³ In November, Shukri went further and announced the creation of an Ottoman League movement intended to steer the ongoing revolution from abroad and promote a liberal brand of Ottomanism consistent with the empire's multi-ethnic and multi-confessional composition. 'Some might find the creation of this Ottoman league in Paris strange, but nothing is more justified than this choice', he stated. 'Paris is the crossroads of the world.'⁶⁴ Shukri had ambitions of establishing international sections or 'sister leagues' in America, Africa, and the Middle East which would draw together liberal patriots to 'instruct the people and prepare them for their new role' as Ottoman citizens.⁶⁵ '*Liguons-nous, liguons-nous donc* is the song heard from Paris to Peru, from Japan to Rome and across the two Americas', Shukri wrote as he chronicled the success of the league movement in early 1909.⁶⁶ The imagined geography in which Shukri conceptualized the Young Turk revolution validates Isa Blumi's conviction that conceptions of Ottomanism did, indeed, 'go global' by the twentieth century.⁶⁷

Whether Shukri's envisaged Ottoman Leagues sprouted up around the world 'like mushrooms' as he imagined is doubtful. Yet the political activities in Paris that accompanied the Young Turk revolution were further proof of the broader links connecting Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and the Mediterranean by the early twentieth century. The reach and power of modern print media gave movements such as Pan-Islamism and Ottomanism a broad saliency, rendering them trans-imperial in scope. Through these ideologies, imperial agents, reformers, and émigré communities repurposed older social and religious networks or created new ones to facilitate cross-border political activism. In doing so, their activities linked metropolises and colonial peripheries in new ways, frequently defying the simple space prescribed by imperial jurisdiction to expose the entanglements that mutually abetted and destabilized imperial sovereignty.

⁶² Martin Thomas, 'Information and intelligence collection among imperial subjects abroad', in *The French Colonial Mind: Mental Maps of Empire and Colonial Encounters* (2 vols., Lincoln, NA, 2012), 1, p. 151.

⁶³ 'France et Turquie', *Correspondance d'Orient*, 1 Nov. 1908, p. 80.

⁶⁴ Chékri Ganem, 'Une Ligue Ottomane', *Correspondance d'Orient*, 1 Nov. 1908, p. 74.

⁶⁵ 'Appel aux Ottomans', *Correspondance d'Orient*, 1 Nov. 1908, p. 76.

⁶⁶ Chékri Ganem, 'Macédonie', *Correspondance d'Orient*, 1 Jan. 1909, p. 212.

⁶⁷ Isa Blumi, 'Reorienting European imperialism: how Ottomanism went global', *Die Welt des Islams*, 56 (2016), pp. 290–316.

IV

As the Ottoman League movement suggested, trans-imperial currents had the potential to feed into forms of trans-politics enabled by a public sphere that broadened the field of political action for those operating between empires. This phenomenon became more pronounced in the years after the Young Turk revolution as a series of crises erupted throughout the Mediterranean region. France's creeping expansion into Morocco in the early twentieth century provoked local revolts and encouraged the Moroccan sultanate to solicit foreign aid for the purposes of anti-colonial resistance. The Italian invasion of Ottoman Cyrenaica and Tripolitania (soon to be dubbed Libya) and the ensuing Balkans Wars further destabilized the region, generating a humanitarian crisis that invigorated Pan-Islamic sympathies and solidarities on a global scale. These theatres of action provided a context in which cross-border political movements and ideologies flourished.

In this environment, Ottoman personnel purged from the military after the Young Turk revolution found a new calling as mercenaries and freelance military advisers to sovereigns in need of military assistance. In 1909, 'Aarif Tahir, an officer recently exiled to Egypt by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) for his participation in political demonstrations against the government, answered the call for foreign fighters in Morocco and led an unofficial military mission to assist in training native Moroccan forces. The Moroccan sultan summarily dismissed Tahir and his men under pressure from France, but members of the team remained in the country and maintained communication with ex-officers in Cairo.⁶⁸ During his brief tenure in Morocco, Tahir assisted in creating a Pan-Islamic youth group (Young Maghrib) and upon his return to Egypt played a vital role in organizing North African students. French authorities watched with alarm as students in Tunis began forming secret societies and noted the evident parallels these had with the activities of Maghrebi students residing at Al-Azhar. As the diplomatic chargé François Charles-Roux remarked in 1910, 'Even when they are not explicitly co-ordinating, the intelligence coming to me from different sources attests to a recrudescence of the Pan-Islamic movements in Cairo at present, especially among Muslims coming from the Maghreb.'⁶⁹

In Cairo, students, prominent journalists, and itinerant military men like Tahir came together to form the Maghreb Unity Society (al-Ittihād al-Maghribī). Assembled amid the Italian invasion of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in 1911, the society organized recruitment drives and dispatched fighters to the Moroccan and Libyan fronts. Its anti-colonial activities fed into

⁶⁸ Burke, 'Pan-Islamism', pp. 106–9; Olide Moreau, 'Aref Taher Bey: an Ottoman military instructor bridging the Maghreb and the Ottoman Mediterranean', in Olide Moreau and Stuart Schaar, eds., *Subversives and mavericks in the Muslim Mediterranean: a subaltern history* (Austin, TX, 2016), pp. 60–1.

⁶⁹ ANT, E 550, dossier 30/4, Charles Roux to Stephen Pichon, 19 Oct. 1910.

broader Pan-Islamic journalistic and political networks, revealing the widening sphere of political activism provoked by the Libyan crisis.⁷⁰ In the summer of 1912, a French civil controller outside Tunis noted the surge in Pan-Islamic propaganda stemming from the Italian–Ottoman war raging in the east. ‘The inhabitants are convinced that the issue of this war will be favourable to their coreligionists and that Italy cannot hold out against them’, he reported. ‘All their sympathies go to the contingents that are struggling against the Italians.’⁷¹ It did not help that North African émigrés were actively mobilizing public opinion across borders. The Central Committee for the Society of Algerian and Tunisian émigrés set up in Istanbul made an open appeal for Muslims to boycott the Italians and apply pressure on the European powers to condemn the occupation.⁷² That the violence in Libya might spill over into Tunisia where a large Italian population lived alongside Muslims was not unthinkable, threatening to draw French North Africa into the regional instability.

Newspapers read by Italian émigré communities in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria bolstered nationalist sentiments in favour of Italy’s imperial gambit. Corrado Masi, Tunis resident and editor of the popular newspaper *L’Unione*, played a central role in inciting Italian settlers in Tunisia to action and fuelling Italian–Muslim communitarian tensions that erupted in street brawls and violence.⁷³ French authorities were later convinced that Masi was in the pay of the Italian political bureau in Tripolitania and that his émigré newspaper was an organ of the Italian government in the French colony.⁷⁴ Tunisian Muslims did not remain passive, and French journalists balked at displays of Muslim political activism, complaining of the growing ‘turkophile’ tendencies in the colony. ‘For the last few years we have permitted a Young Turk party with the aim of Islamic unity to establish itself and prosper in Tunisia’, protested one journalist.⁷⁵ These reactionary explanations flagrantly discounted the emotive response of Muslims who followed the Italian invasion in the press or within their local communities. ‘In Tunisia, as well as almost everywhere, the current war impacted Muslims emotionally’, claimed the Young Tunisian reformer Ali Bash Hamba. ‘Could anyone, in all justice, ask us to remain impassive before the massacre of our Tripolitanian brothers?’⁷⁶

The Ottomans capitalized on the emotional resonance triggered by the Italian invasion to fight the war. They allied with the Sanusiyya Sufi order entrenched in Cyrenaica to recruit local resistance fighters and mobilized foreign fighters coming from Africa and Asia through appeals to Pan-Islamic

⁷⁰ Christelow, *Algerians without borders*, p. 62.

⁷¹ ANT, E 550, dossier 30/1, Le contrôleur civil de Grombalia to Alapetite, 25 June 1912.

⁷² ‘L’agitation islamique’, *Le Temps*, 30 Oct. 1911.

⁷³ ‘Entre Arabes et Italiens’, *La Tunisie Française*, 2 Nov. 1911.

⁷⁴ Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes, 1TU/1/V/998, ‘Note: sûreté publique’, 6 Dec. 1919.

⁷⁵ Valmeroux, ‘La manifestation Turcophile’, *La Tunisie Française*, 6 Feb. 1912.

⁷⁶ ‘Lettre de M. Back Hamba’, *Le Temps*, 9 Apr. 1912.

solidarity and jihad.⁷⁷ If Ottoman Pan-Islamism had previously been oriented toward ideas of inter-imperial peace and Islamic modernization, the Libyan and Balkan conflicts between 1911 and 1913 infused Pan-Islamic rhetoric with a marked anti-Western and militant element.⁷⁸ Shakib Arslan, a Syrian Arab and committed Pan-Islamic Ottomanist, explicitly saw the conflict as an opportunity to rally the Muslim community around the Caliphate and against European imperialism, and took a leading role in publicizing its importance as a patriotic struggle against Western domination. 'We will defend our fatherland, hoping that our efforts will increase the self-confidence of Islam and attract martyrs to its cause', he asserted in 1911.⁷⁹ Muslim organizations across the globe staged protests and anti-Italian demonstrations in support of the Ottoman Empire. 'There is no Mohammedan in this world today who could say that he has not a very deep pain in his heart through this uncivilized action of Italy against Turkey', a statement drafted by Muslims in Cape Town explained upon hearing the news.⁸⁰ The experience of Muhammad Wali Khan, a journalist from Peshawar, testified to the power such rhetoric had on the imagination and its ability to mobilize support across borders. In 1912, Wali Khan travelled through Tripoli, Istanbul, and Egypt as a war correspondent for the Indian press. In Cyrenaica, he took up arms against the Italians and the following year arrived home with the intention of recruiting fighters and returning to Benghazi. His plans never materialized as he became involved in organizing an Ottoman relief fund and setting up a 'Muslim club' in his native Peshawar.⁸¹ British authorities monitored Wali Khan with trepidation, noting that his experience abroad had radicalized his political outlooks and made him 'addicted to speaking against the English and Europeans'. His ambition was to create 'a Muhammadan republic embracing the whole of the Muhammadan world', he claimed.⁸² Only the Islamic Caliphate could provide this unity, he believed, demanding that 'the Islamic world must assist Turkey and help to maintain her prestige among the nations of the earth'.⁸³

Muhammad Wali Khan was only one of many Muslim writers and activists to answer the call for international support coming from Libya and the Balkans. A report drafted for the Indian Office in March 1914 attested to the growing number of Indians residing in Cairo and insisted that upon returning home these individuals would harbour strong pro-Ottoman sympathies that might

⁷⁷ Lisa Anderson, *The state and social transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830-1980* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), pp. 114-32.

⁷⁸ Aydin, *The Muslim world*, pp. 97-117.

⁷⁹ William L. Cleveland, *Islam against the West: Shakib Arslan and the campaign for Islamic nationalism* (Austin, TX, 1985), p. 21.

⁸⁰ 'Cape Muslims and the war', *Cape Times Weekly Addition* (11 Oct. 1911), p. 1.

⁸¹ India Office Records (IOR)/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), Kitchener to E. Grey, 16 Feb. 1913.

⁸² IOR/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), 'Criminal Intelligence Office: history sheet of Qazi Andul Wali Khan up to May 1913', pp. 1-3.

⁸³ IOR/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), Kitchener to E. Grey, 16 Feb. 1913.

compromise British control in the Raj. 'The defeat that Turkey suffered these last three years at the hands of the European powers stirred up in the hearts of Indian Moslems a strong hatred to Europeans and increased their love for Turkey', the report concluded.⁸⁴ The same was true of Maghrebi, Syrian, and Egyptian activists who similarly took up pen and arms against the latest manifestation of Western imperial aggression and appealed to an imagined international Muslim community to resist. As the Ottomans came to rely on mobilizing Muslims for reasons of defence, it was evident that this new militarized environment provided opportunities for trans-border political organization and radicalization. While commanding Ottoman forces in Libya and the Balkans, the general Enver Paşa co-ordinated efforts with local powerbrokers like Ahmad al-Sharif al-Sanusi and liaised with local volunteers and Pan-Islamic activists. In the coming year, he would amalgamate these informal networks and revolutionary groups into the Teşkilat-i Mahsusa, a covert paramilitary and intelligence agency maintained by the CUP with cells in Africa and the Middle East. These networks would subsequently be deployed during the First World War as part of the unsuccessful Ottoman war strategy to foment anti-colonial jihad within the Entente empires.⁸⁵

If the Libyan war brought into sharp relief a new constellation of trans-political solidarities fused together through jihadist ideology, the conflict itself served to reconceptualize the very meaning of jihad. As Ahmad al-Sharif al-Sanusi assumed leadership of the Bedouin tribes of Cyrenaica in 1912, he was urged to use his spiritual clout to attract foreign support for the defence. To this end, he published *The desire of the helper*, a pamphlet laying out theoretical arguments for jihad and the obligations of the mujāhid. Written in the context of the ongoing war, *Desire of the helper* recounted legal and scriptural justifications for religious duties, arguing it was permissible for Muslims to wage 'jihad with money' and fulfil their obligations by funding the war effort and associated charitable causes. Al-Sharif even invoked Shafi'i legal precedent, despite his affiliation with Mālikite Islamic rites, insisting rulers could impose taxes and borrow money from infidels to fund jihad if necessary.⁸⁶ In no uncertain terms, al-Sharif's prescriptions sought to change the context of jihad in order to enlist the efforts of the broader Muslim community beyond Libya and North Africa.

The conflicts in the eastern Mediterranean spurred independent and semi-official Islamic charitable and care networks into action. The Red Crescent Society, created in 1877 and reconstituted in 1911, was deployed by the Ottoman state as an auxiliary to the medical units of the Ottoman army and

⁸⁴ IOR/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), 'Notes on the Panislamic movement and its effect on political agitation in India', 19 Mar. 1914, pp. 2–3.

⁸⁵ Moreau, 'Aref Taher Bey', pp. 66–7.

⁸⁶ Knut S. Vikør, 'Religious revolts in colonial North Africa', in David Motadel, ed., *Islam and the European empires* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 181–2.

navy. It ran field hospitals for the wounded and bolstered Ottoman patriotism as medical professionals and public servants demonstrated their service to the Ottoman nation (*vatan*) and Muslim community.⁸⁷ Between 1911 and 1914, various Islamic organizations were set up to facilitate co-operation and aid-related activities, among them the Benevolent Society of Islam (Cemiyet-i Hayriye-yi Islamiye) centred in the Ottoman Empire. Prominent international activists such as Shakib Arslan, Salih al-Sharif Tunisi, Said Halim Paşa, and Abd al-Aziz Shawish were all associated with it. The organization would serve as a conduit for Pan-Islamic mobilization during the First World War, and it was therefore not surprising that many of its members were leading Ottomanist publicists with close ties to the CUP leadership and secret service.⁸⁸

War also elicited sympathetic outpourings of support from imperial subjects who continued to profess loyalty to European colonial governments. Algerians and Tunisians organized charitable collections for the wounded, with journalists urging co-religionists to donate to the Red Crescent and help their suffering brethren.⁸⁹ ‘The élan of charity which has manifested itself in Muslim countries in favour of our brothers, victims of the Tripolitanian events, imposes upon us a duty to call upon the noble sentiments of the colony to alleviate the long martyrdom of those who are suffering’, the editors of *L’Islam*, an organ of the emergent Young Algerian movement, stated.⁹⁰ Themes of martyrdom and sacrifice prevalent to jihadist rhetoric were reinterpreted to accommodate colonial loyalties and expressions of public support. Benali Fékari, an Algerian residing in Lyon, commended the strong demonstration of ‘Muslim solidarity’ that had come forth in his native Tlemcen for the victims of the Libyan war, noting ‘the population has bled itself white in assisting the Ottoman wounded!’⁹¹ In total, the Algerian subscription campaign raised 410,000 francs (roughly \$1.7 million today) with separate funding campaigns run by Algerians in Tunisia and the M’zab.⁹² Indian fundraising was even more impressive. Between 1912 and 1914, donations to the Ottoman Red Crescent raised roughly £168,000 (over \$17 million in today’s value).⁹³ As Zafar Ali Khan, the pioneer of Urdu journalism, stated in early 1913, ‘The great living heart of Islam in India has been stirred to its innermost depths as it has never been

⁸⁷ Ibrahim Başağaoğlu and Adnan Ataç, ‘Activities of the Ottoman Hilal-i Ahmer (Red Crescent) Association in the Ottoman–Italian War (1911–1912)’, *Marmara Medical Journal*, 15 (2002), pp. 139–43; Nadir Özbek, ‘Defining the public sphere during the late Ottoman Empire: war, mass mobilization and the Young Turk regime (1909–18)’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 43 (2007), p. 805.

⁸⁸ Aydın, *Politics of anti-Westernism*, p. 109.

⁸⁹ ‘Pour les blessés turcs’, *L’Echo du Bourgeois*, 17 Mar. 1912.

⁹⁰ ‘Souscription au profit des blessés victimes du conflit Italo-Turc’, *L’Islam*, 18 Feb. 1912.

⁹¹ Benali Fékari, ‘Notre loyalisme’, *L’Islam*, 25 Feb. 1912.

⁹² Christelow, *Algerians across borders*, p. 85.

⁹³ Michael O’Sullivan, ‘Pan-Islamic bonds and interest: Ottoman bonds, Red Crescent remittances and the limits of Indian Muslim capital, 1877–1924’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 55 (2018), p. 184.

stirred before.⁹⁴ With the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, Indian doctors and journalists formed their own Red Crescent Society and led a medical mission to run field hospitals on the frontlines.⁹⁵ The India Office characteristically viewed these activities with suspicion, seeing humanitarian activism as a cover for international political organization. 'Almost every Indian who [visits] Constantinople [goes] back to his country fully prepared to serve the Turks by helping to spread the principles of Panislamism', the memo claimed.⁹⁶

Such accusations failed to recognize the ideological lure of Muslim unity and its trans-imperial orientation as Indians came to project their own anxieties and aspirations onto the Ottoman Empire and Caliphate.⁹⁷ Nor did they accurately convey the regional and even global dimensions of Pan-Islamic humanitarianism at the turn of the century. Charitable remittances were often sizeable and their collection and transfer required knowledge of international finances as well as access to international banking institutions run by European firms. As Michael O'Sullivan has shown in his study of India, the participation of local merchant elites, consular intermediaries, and journalists was all essential to managing the 'religious and financial economy of Pan-Islamism'. A host of intertwining financial and social networks cutting across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe connected the isolated village to the larger Muslim community, demonstrating that Pan-Islamic humanitarianism was actualized through the structures of imperial governance and global finance.⁹⁸

Studies highlighting the importance of the eastern Mediterranean in the origins of rights-based and minority humanitarian campaigns have chiefly focused on European responses to Ottoman 'atrocities' against Christian populations.⁹⁹ The efforts of Muslim activists hint at the broader regional implications for histories of humanitarianism as well as the non-European contexts that fostered them.¹⁰⁰ More specifically, humanitarian efforts engaged groups and individuals outside of traditional state bureaucracies and religious charities, signalling the rise of trans-imperial and non-governmental networks that were made possible through the Muslim press and public activism. These

⁹⁴ Zafar Ali Khan, 'The struggle in the Near East and the Muslim feeling in India', *Islamic Review*, 1 (1913), p. 29.

⁹⁵ Syed Tanvir Wasti, 'The Indian Red Crescent mission to the Balkan Wars', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45 (2009), pp. 393–400.

⁹⁶ IOR/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), 'Notes on the Panislamic movement and its effect on political agitation in India' (19 Mar. 1914), p. 1.

⁹⁷ Takashi Oishi, 'An enquiry into the structures of Pan-Islamism in India: the phase of the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars, 1911–1913', *Minamijakenkyu*, 8 (1996), pp. 58–89; Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*.

⁹⁸ O'Sullivan, 'Pan-Islamic bonds and interest', pp. 213–16.

⁹⁹ Gary J. Bass, *Freedom's battle: the origins of humanitarian intervention* (New York, NY, 2009); Davide Rodogno, *Against massacre: humanitarian intervention in the Ottoman Empire, 1878–1914* (Princeton, NJ, 2011).

¹⁰⁰ For efforts to rethink histories of humanitarianism, see Abigail Green, 'Humanitarianism in nineteenth-century context: religious, gender, national', *Historical Journal*, 57 (2014), pp. 1157–75.

undertakings indicate a shift toward the ‘organized compassion’ associated with modern humanitarianism as publics took part in subscription campaigns and aided fellow Muslims across borders.¹⁰¹ They also indicated the extent to which the Libyan war and the trans-political movements it encouraged were coming to crystallize cross-border solidarities rooted in emotional and real relationships forged in the crucible of a militarized humanitarian crisis.

V

By the eve of the First World War, the loose-knit and mobile world of the Muslim Mediterranean looked different than it had a century before. The trans-local religious institutions and social bonds that had once characterized Muslim societies in the region had acquired novel political and cultural meanings as imperial politics, modern forms of media, and global financial institutions transformed established networks and generated new flows that both altered communities and created new social constellations. In the years ahead, political actors in the region would increasingly seek to instrumentalize these trans-imperial flows as militarized conflict and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire tied the Mediterranean more closely to the rhythms of Europe’s global empires.¹⁰²

Empire-building created – or rather sought to impose – a new spatial order on the Muslim Mediterranean. In consolidating their power, imperial states endeavoured to assert control over communities that were decentred and connected through various forms of cultural and commercial activity. Certainly, the imposition of empire generated ruptures in these relations, but it also exposed continuities as well. The continued movement of people and ideas across familiar geographies revealed the fluidity of nineteenth-century imperial formations even as states attempted to impose control from above and solidify their respective imperial dominions. Empire was never bound within the ‘simple’ space prescribed by the European imperial imagination. Imperial states were persistently subject to the push and pull of outside regional forces, and even attempted to harness these forces for their own ends when possible. No doubt, a certain irony becomes evident. In the search to consolidate empire, imperialists came to utilize the very dynamics from below that threatened to destabilize the imperial edifice and erode the ‘hard’ borders of imperial jurisdiction.

Examining the connected histories of empire can help us analyse the inner workings of these complex processes, highlighting the ways in which cross-border phenomena shaped and complicated practices of modern state-building.

¹⁰¹ Keith David Watenpugh, *Bread from stones: the Middle East and the making of modern humanitarianism* (Berkeley, CA, 2015), pp. 4–5, 10.

¹⁰² Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The First World War in the Middle East* (Oxford, 2014); Sean McMeekin, *Berlin–Baghdad Express: the Ottoman Empire and Germany’s bid for world power, 1898–1918* (New York, NY, 2011); Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French mandate: insurgency, space and state formation* (Cambridge, 2012).

As a category of historical analysis, empire traverses multiple contexts ranging from the local to the global, often drawing them together in interesting configurations.¹⁰³ Deviating from a strict metropole–periphery model presents opportunities to consider how local and regional entanglements connect a plurality of locations, how these connections can foster new cultural and political discourses, and ultimately how they can unsettle or reconfigure established spatial imaginaries. This conclusion is no less relevant today as a post-imperial Europe debates issues pertaining to migration, security, and Islamic trans-politics stemming from the Mediterranean region.¹⁰⁴ Syria and Libya are once again sites of trans-political ferment that have raised questions surrounding migration policies and the ability of states to monitor and control borders. Examinations of the Mediterranean in a trans-imperial framework provide an historic backdrop against which ongoing processes of jurisdictional authority and cross-border communitarian ties can be analysed and assessed. In a broader context, it underscores both the tensions and dialogic relationships that have historically bound Europe to Africa and Asia, situating the Mediterranean at the nexus of larger regional and global influences that have yet to run their course.

¹⁰³ Simon J. Potter and Jonathan Saha, ‘Global history, imperial history and connected histories of empire’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 16 (2016), n.p.

¹⁰⁴ Marium Haleh Davis and Thomas Serres, eds., *North Africa and the making of Europe: governance, institutions and culture* (London, 2018).