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France and
the Muslim
Mediterranean,
1880–1918

Empire
UNBOUND



Gavin **MURRAY-MILLER**

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For my mother, Susan Murray

Acknowledgments

I began writing this book just prior to the events that would fundamentally change the interactions and daily rhythms of the way we live. I found it slightly odd to be writing about individuals who crossed borders and circulated across ambiguous spaces at a moment when the world was shutting down, borders were closing, and governments were restricting the movement of citizens to combat the spread of a global pandemic. The globe-hopping and freedom of movement we had taken for granted as part of our modern lives suddenly ground to a halt, presenting a new world characterized by isolation and estrangement that was incompatible with the ways in which most of us chose to conduct our lives.

The various lockdowns that were implemented during the pandemic made travel difficult but provided ample opportunities to write a book. Writing may be a reclusive activity by its very nature, but no book is written alone. Over the course of researching and writing this book I benefited from the input and support of others who deserve recognition.

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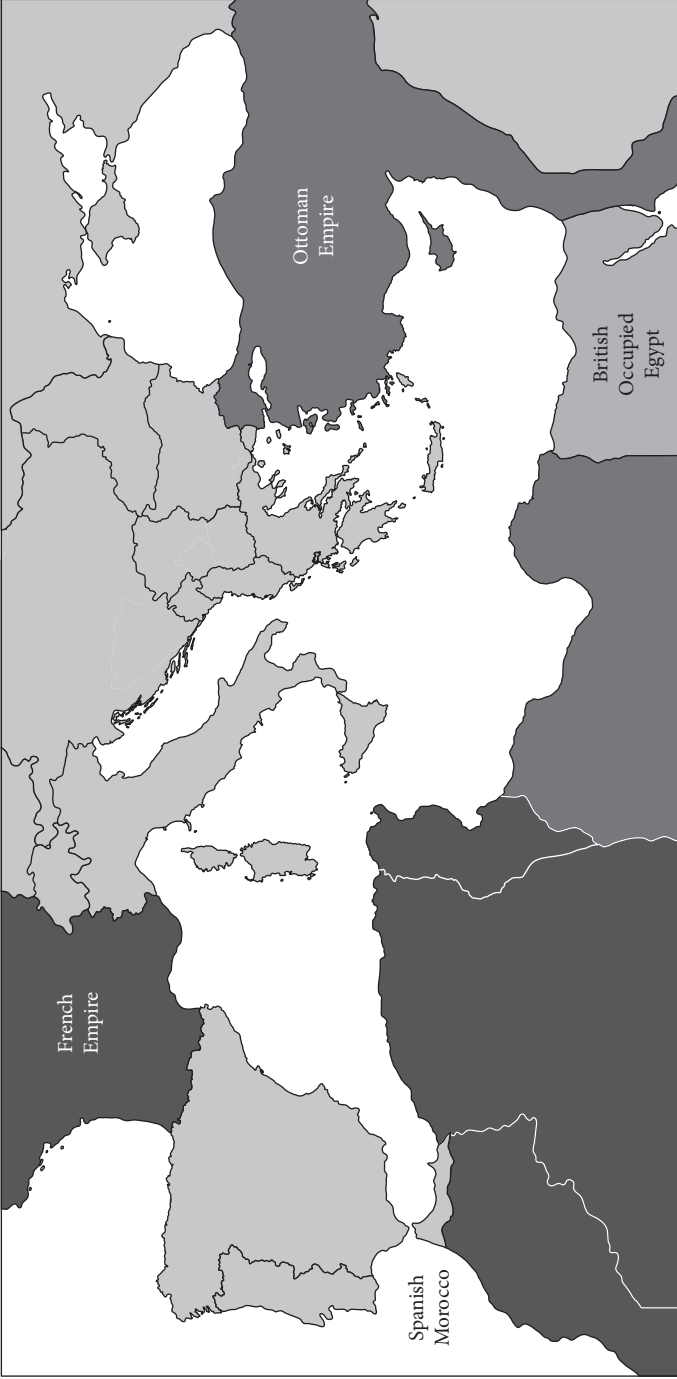
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Map 1. The Mediterranean region



Map 2. Mediterranean empires, early twentieth century

Introduction

France, Empire, and the Muslim Mediterranean

Léon Pervinquière was the first to admit he had grown accustomed to the “immense solitude” of the south-eastern Tunisian landscape. A noted geologist and paleontologist, he had spent a significant amount of time in the region during the mid-1890s while carrying out a series of geological surveys commissioned by the government to determine the natural resource wealth of France’s protectorate. Now, in the spring of 1911, he found himself traveling through the region on camel, headed to the oasis town of Ghadames in the Nalut area of Ottoman Tripolitania. Pervinquière had been called in to resolve a longstanding border dispute between the French and Ottoman Sublime Porte regarding the Tunisian–Libyan frontier. For over fifteen years, authorities had been attempting in vain to agree on the administrative boundary separating France’s protectorate from the Ottoman *vilayet*. Stubborn officials were not the only obstacle to progress. Local Tuareg populations and Chaamba tribesmen routinely crossed the frontier, carrying out raids and freely settling lands to the consternation of authorities. Caravan merchants circulated through the borderland with little regard for administrative jurisdiction or the taxes demanded by local officials. The French had attempted to halt these migrations by erecting a series of “small posts” along the length of border running from Ghadames in the south to Ben Gardane on the Mediterranean coast in the north, but the gesture proved futile. People ignored the markers, conducting their lives as usual. The French Tunisian administration had asked Pervinquière to study the topography and demarcate an authoritative boundary line separating Tunisia from Tripolitania. Pervinquière was aware of the challenges that awaited him as he headed toward Ghadames, noting the “complete anarchy” that seemed to reign throughout the region.¹

What might appear a mundane detail in a period characterized by dramatic imperial conquests and explorations says a great deal about empire. 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. Spain possessed a sliver of northern Morocco while Britain had

¹ Léon Pervinquière, *La Tripolitaine interdite: Ghadamès* (Paris: Hachette, 1912), 1–7.

established a protectorate in Egypt in the 1880s. Italy, largely for reasons of prestige, attempted to carve out its own colony in Libya after 1911, adding a new element to the border disputes taking place between French and Ottoman authorities. 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 southern and eastern Mediterranean was a highly interconnected world where borders often remained opaque, if not “anarchic,” as experts like Pervinquière observed.

How did empires adapt to this environment? What impact did it have on the practices of empire-building as they evolved over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century? French imperialists and colonial authorities were persistently caught up in such questions as they expanded across North Africa and secured their influence throughout the Mediterranean. They delimited borders and made claims to territorial jurisdiction over land and people in an effort to consolidate the so-called *présence française* across the region. To insulate colonies from “foreign” influences, they cracked down on religious and print networks and worked to stanch migratory flows that had a destabilizing effect on localities. These activities even extended to more creative enterprises as officials proclaimed France a “Muslim power” and promoted ideas of a “French North Africa” distinct from its surrounding environs. The rivalries that accompanied the advent of the “new imperialism” in the late nineteenth century created an environment in which control was all the more necessary as powers built up imperial administrations and exploited the strategies of imperial competitors for their own gain. Yet attempts to enforce control and circumscribe France’s North African imperium remained constantly fraught with difficulties. Try as they might to create a bounded imperial state isolated from outside influences, officials found that the French Empire remained an empire unbound.

Many excellent studies have examined France’s colonial encounter with North Africa during the nineteenth century. For the most part, these studies have tended to treat French colonial possessions in isolation.² There are good reasons for taking an insular approach. French colonies and protectorates in the region were subject to different administrative bodies. Colonial officials faced distinct challenges related to governance and broader geostrategic influences that were particular to specific territories. Be that as it may, there is a need to reintegrate places such as Algeria and Tunisia back into a broader history of the Maghreb and

² Notable exceptions are: Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia 1800–1904)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Andrew Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in French West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Mediterranean world.³ The colonial state was an artificial construct that did not necessarily conform to the different geographic relationships and geographies of North African native populations.⁴ “French North Africa,” itself an imperial geographic imaginary, was an interconnected space through which ideas and people constantly circulated in all directions. An intra-imperial perspective can help better clarify the many linkages and relationships that conditioned the evolution of the French Empire at both the administrative-political level and the level of Maghrebi society.⁵ Yet “French North Africa” never existed in a vacuum either. It was perennially subject to the broader push and pull of regional dynamics. Trans-imperial connections and power rivalries exercised an important influence on French colonial policies and impacted events on the ground, sometimes in dramatic ways. Situating France’s North African empire within the broader trajectories of European and Ottoman imperialism brings into relief the various webs of communication and movement that were constantly at work beneath the colonial state.

As a geographic concept, “the Mediterranean” was largely a European creation. It acquired consistency through references to the sea’s Classical past, its geography, and a vision of the region as a frontline in an ongoing struggle between competing Christian and Islamic civilizations.⁶ Europeans of the nineteenth century were not ignorant of the diversity found among Mediterranean societies. Nonetheless, they persisted in seeing it as a space fractured along stark cultural and religious boundaries.⁷ Recent reappraisals have argued for a more nuanced understanding of the sea and its surrounding coastal regions. What is often deemed the “new” Mediterranean history has characterized the sea as a polymorphous zone of encounters shaped by multiple influences and interconnections that transcend borders—cultural, national, or otherwise.⁸ While this shift is

³ James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 30–31.

⁴ Arthur Asseraf, *Electric News in Colonial Algeria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 20.

⁵ Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire*, 16.

⁶ Rolf Petri, “The Mediterranean Metaphor in Early Geopolitical Writings,” *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, 101:348 (December 2016): 671–91; Karen Öktem, “The Ambivalent Sea: Regionalizing the Mediterranean Differently,” in Dimitar Bechev and Kalypso Nicolaidis, eds., *Mediterranean Frontiers: Borders, Conflicts, and Memory in a Transnational World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 19–20; Patricia M. E. Lorcin and Todd Shepard, “Introduction,” in Patricia M. E. Lorcin and Todd Shepard, eds., *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 3–8.

⁷ For example, see the description given in Paul-Albert Simmone, *La Tunisie et la civilisation* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1867), 3–6.

⁸ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, “The Mediterranean and the New Thalassology,” *The American Historical Review*, 111:3 (June 2006): 722–40; Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou, “The Sea, Its People and Their Ideas in the Long Nineteenth Century,” in Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou, eds., *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1–3; Julia Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

a welcome one and has drawn attention to the Mediterranean's complex history, it remains possible to trace the contours of a more expansive idea of the Mediterranean region still further. This requires looking beyond the region's internal diversity to take account of its connections to places such as continental Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Subcontinental Asia. It also entails positioning the Mediterranean within international economic and migratory flows linked to processes of imperialism, labor, and global capitalism.⁹ The Ottoman world of which the Mediterranean was a part sat at the crossroads of Africa, Europe, and Asia. While European powers attempted to constrain these broader trans-regional ties as they built their empires during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, their efforts often met with mixed results. Established genealogies of trade, religious and family networks, and interregional relationships persisted to operate below or alongside the colonial regimes that imposed themselves on North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰

These contrasting geographies also shed light on the imbricative histories that shaped colonial encounters. As European states extended their reach across the southern and eastern Mediterranean, they not only became entangled in existing social and cultural networks. They also had to contend with the administrative, social, and cultural legacies that continued to exercise an influence on the ground. Authorities were forced to work through nomads, itinerant merchants, tribal leaders, and religious authorities in building and managing their empires. Examining empire "from the margins" as well as from the centers of power provides a more balanced perspective that takes account of the actual practices of empire-building and administration.¹¹ Quite often, histories of colonialism present the age of European empire as a definitive break, structuring chronological narratives in accordance with pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. This schema neglects the fact that the Maghreb and Mediterranean were subject to multiple and overlapping "historicities" that did not easily conform to stark categories of "colonizer" and "colonized." In many cases, indigenous, Ottoman, and European influences built upon and co-existed with one another through a process of historical accretion.¹² French, British, and other European colonial officials were

⁹ Edmund Burke III, "Toward a Comparative History of the Modern Mediterranean, 1750–1919," *Journal of World History*, 23:4 (December 2010): 911–12.

¹⁰ James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). For an example of the trans-imperial connections that characterized Islamic societies, see: Engseong Ho, "Empire Through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46 (April 2004): 210–46.

¹¹ Robert S. G. Fletcher, *British Imperialism and the "Tribal Question": Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919–1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1–10.

¹² M'hamed Oualdi, "Une Succession d'Empires: Les Historicités d'une société maghrébine (1860–1930)," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 4:72 (2017): 1057–79; Mohamed Lazhar Ghabri, "L'Historiographie tunisienne de la période moderne et contemporaine et la problème de la

aware of the deep social and historical ties that bound colonial populations to exterior territories and expressed anxieties over the ways in which the Ottoman Empire attempted to exploit these in order to make its presence felt in the colonies and protectorates under their control. In many instances, colonial officials either worked through indigenous legal and administrative structures or adapted them to suit their own needs. The Ottoman past was never effaced, providing channels through which colonial subjects were able to exercise influence and operate under more recent colonial administrations.¹³

Taking note of these legacies and the connections they nurtured across imperial divides can broaden understandings of the Mediterranean, both in terms of the geographic space in which empire-building occurred as well as the historical continuities that influenced imperial projects. In a more specific sense, placing the French Empire in this Mediterranean context sketches a broader purview in which to consider how France built and sustained its presence in the region.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, France, like other European powers, attempted to forge a “Muslim” imperium extending from Morocco to Syria.¹⁴ Both “French North Africa” and the Muslim Mediterranean were products of a growing imperial mentality in the country as diverse groups of intellectuals, pro-imperial factions, diplomats, and colonial officials turned their attention to questions of empire-building. These groups were often small and ideologically diverse. Questions of empire and colonial expansion did not preoccupy metropolitan opinion for the most part, and only in rare instances did colonial issues intersect with moral general discussions on national politics taking place in the metropole. By and large, French metropolitans remained grossly ignorant of their overseas empire and thought little, if at all, of the colonial empire vis-à-vis the nation.¹⁵ Be that as it may, there did exist circles composed of experts, pundits, lobbyists, financiers, and political elites—what has often been referred to as the *parti colonial*—which did take an interest in imperial affairs and leave their mark on French colonial policy.¹⁶ Imperial policymaking developed a particular fixation on the Muslim Mediterranean and wider Islamic world over the course of the

periodisation” in Abdelhamid Hénia, Mohamed-Hédi Chérif, and Hichem Abdessamad, eds., *Itinéraire d'un historien et d'une historiographie* (Tunis: Centre de Publications Universitaire, 2008), 177–86; Isabelle Grangaud and M'hamed Oualdi, “Tout est-il colonial dans le Maghreb? Ce que les travaux des historiens modernistes peuvent apporter,” *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 2:62–63 (2016): 133–56.

¹³ M'hamed Oualdi, “Provincializing and Forgetting Ottoman Administrative Legacies: Sons and Grandsons of Beys' Mamluks Facing French Administrators of Tunisia (1890s–1930s),” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 34:2 (2014): 418–31.

¹⁴ David Motadel, ed., *Islam and the European Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁵ Didier Guignard, *L'Abus de pouvoir dans l'Algérie coloniale (1880–1914): Visibilité et singularité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2014).

¹⁶ Charles-Robert Ageron, *France coloniale ou parti colonial?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978); L. Abrams and J. D. Miller, “Who Were the French Colonists? A Reassessment of the Parti Colonial, 1890–1914,” *The Historical Journal*, 19:3 (1976): 685–725.

century, eliciting questions over France's role in the region and whether the nation should elaborate an explicit Muslim policy (*politique musulmane*) in line with its imperial ambitions.¹⁷ These and other concerns would play a decisive role in the culture, identity, and practice of empire in France.

Yet it is important to recognize that French empire-building was not an isolated phenomenon. While this book focuses on the French Empire, it is not exclusively concerned with France. As it argues, understanding the trajectory taken by French imperial expansion across the Mediterranean requires a comparative analysis. Scholars inclined to work within national narratives tend to ignore the broader connectivities that drove national and imperial polities, often reproducing assumptions that treat space, place, and culture as categories confined within hermetic national frameworks.¹⁸ Such a perspective overlooks the interwoven and complex relationships that modern imperialism produced. Analyzing France's Muslim empire compels an examination of the different strategies and forms of empire-building adopted by imperial rivals just as much as it does the reactions of regional powers. In this respect, assessing France's Mediterranean imperium raises questions that touch upon the very nature of modern empire-building.

Empire studies have witnessed a renaissance in recent decades, prompting scholars to re-evaluate Europe's imperial past as well as its post-colonial present. Calls to place metropole and colony within a common analytical framework and studies emphasizing the performative nature of language in elaborating imperial technologies of rule have revised old assumptions of colonial passivity by focusing on the "tensions" and contradictions that emerged through the constant interplay of national and imperial discourses.¹⁹ Empire, with its logics of difference and asymmetrical power relations, was certainly produced through language, but it was never a wholly discursive construct. Empires may have been products of the mind, but they were always imagined within specific geographic and cultural contexts. Space and the experience of rule were just as important as discursive strategies when it came to empire-building. At present, empire studies are undergoing a "spatial turn" that has come to refine understandings of imperialism in light of new histories of globalization and the "geographical unevenness" it has produced.²⁰

¹⁷ Jalila Sbâi, *La Politique Musulmane de la France: Un Projet chrétien pour l'Islam?* (Paris: Editions CNRS, 2018).

¹⁸ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond Culture: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology*, 7:1 (February 1992): 6–23.

¹⁹ Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Culture in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1–37; Alexei Miller and Stefan Berger, eds., *Nationalizing Empires* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015).

²⁰ Barney Warf and Santa Arias, eds., *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2008); Charles W. J. Withers, "Place and the 'Spatial Turn' in Geography and in History," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 70:4 (October 2009): 637–58.

Imperium, designating “command” or “power,” has always connoted a measure of control over a people or territory.²¹ This definition is revealing given that empires have traditionally been treated as bounded sovereign entities with more-or-less fixed borders and jurisdictions.²² From at least the eighteenth century onwards, regimes endeavored to consolidate their power by drawing borders and redirecting loyalties toward imperial centers. This process intensified during the later nineteenth century as empire-building increasingly came to favor territorial models of rule and states raced to carve up the globe. Yet even before the “new imperialism” of the late nineteenth century, Europeans saw empires as fixed territorial formations. Historians and intellectuals spoke of the “rise and fall” of empires. Cartographers charted empires on color-coded maps with sharp lines and rigidly defined borders. In many respects, empire itself necessitated categories of spatial and social fixity, whether to better conceptualize them historically or enforce colonial forms of rule reliant upon strict hierarchies and authoritative control.

More nuanced appraisals have drawn attention to the territorial ambiguities and varying “degrees of sovereignty” that constituted imperial formations. Empires were not necessarily bordered or bounded entities. On the contrary, they were and remain “macropolities in constant formation” that possess “scaled genres of rule,” as Ann Laura Stoler has argued.²³ Territorialized empires were only one imperial form among others, and even these never functioned as unitary or homogeneous systems of rule. Intra-imperial variations were frequently evident. Coastal territories embedded in trade networks were distinct economically, socially, and politically from imperial interiors and frontier regions. That different “imperial paths” could exist within a single imperial formation suggests that empires were diverse, regionally constituted entities defined by specific networks and disparate forms of sovereignty.²⁴ Geographic factors produced divergent imperial experiences and connected states and populations to different spatial networks and hence different local influences. Taking a region-based approach to empire provides a means of examining imperial formations as complex and multi-layered systems of rule.

Neither fixed nor homogeneous, empires were characterized by various “circuits of movement and mixture” in which lives intermeshed, goods circulated, and information was spread.²⁵ Migratory patterns, missionaries, merchants, and cross-border communities alike played an important role in the construction of global empires. Empire-building was shaped by pressures from below that would

²¹ Anthony Pagden, “Fellow Citizens and Imperial Subjects: Conquest and Sovereignty in Europe’s Overseas Empires,” *History and Theory*, 44:4 (December 2005): 28–46.

²² Lauren Benton, “Spatial Histories of Empire,” *Itinerario*, 30:3 (November 2006): 19–34.

²³ Ann Laura Stoler, “On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty,” *Public Culture*, 18:1 (2006): 128–36.

²⁴ Cem Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East: Modernity, Imperial Bureaucracy, and Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

²⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 199.

influence imperial polities as well as modern ideas of citizenship and cultural identity.²⁶ By examining the activities of trans-imperial subjects like merchants and migrants, historians have demonstrated not only the fluidity of borders but also the ways in which individuals and groups negotiated their own conceptions of belonging at the margins of empires.²⁷ In a broader context, examining movements and communities that cut across borders opens the possibility of analyzing 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.²⁸ Focusing on the “connected histories” of empire draws attention to the transnational and trans-local dimensions of modern imperial formations.²⁹ It bridges national, regional, and global frameworks, seeing these as interconnected through movements that crossed borders both between imperial states as well as within individual imperial formations themselves.³⁰

Stated simply, empires encompassed a plurality of competing spatial frameworks, reflecting what Jacques Revel has called the *jeux d'échelles*, or “play of scales.”³¹ That said, modern empire-building occurred within a specific historical context. From the seventeenth century onward, Europeans were increasingly operating under a new territorial regime that interpreted bounded states and later nations as the repositories of sovereign authority, loyalties, rights, and identity. Efforts to delimit and enforce territorialized sovereignty marked a global shift in the “production” of space and provided the architecture of the modern state system.³² European imperial imaginaries often reproduced the “simple” space upon which this new territorial regime rested. Yet beneath the homogeneous, abstract space of formal empire always lurked the “gothic complex space” of indigenous

²⁶ Ella Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); James H. Meyer, *Turks Across Empires: Marketing Muslim Identity in the Russian-Ottoman Borderland, 1856–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Resat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

²⁷ Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 11–13.

²⁸ David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 50.

²⁹ Simon J. Potter and Jonathan Saha, “Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 16:1 (Spring 2016): n.p.

³⁰ Fiona Paisley and Pamela Scully, *Writing Transnational History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 35–94; Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, “Translokalisierung als ein Zugang zur Geschichte globaler Verflechtungen,” *ZMO Programmatic Texts*, 2 (Berlin: Zentrum Moderner Orient, 2005), <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-427594>.

³¹ Jacques Revel, *Jeux d'échelles: la micro-analyse à l'expérience* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).

³² Charles Maier, “Transformations of Territory, 1600–2000,” in Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz, eds., *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2006), 32–56; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 279–82.

societies with their overlapping identities and trans-local attachments.³³ These tensions marked a critical aporia at the center of imperial policymaking as European statesmen and officials attempted to exert control over vast swaths of global space and manage the diversity that empire invited. Attempts to control trans-border flows that operated outside the “simple” space of imperial jurisdiction could and did reshape imperial formations, revealing that these dialectical stresses were inherent to processes of empire-building in the nineteenth century.³⁴

Highlighting the connections and connected histories that shaped empires 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.³⁵ Recent studies have begun to re-examine the struggles for Mediterranean supremacy among the European powers beginning in the late eighteenth century.³⁶ Yet contextualizing these forms of “competitive imperialism” requires an understanding of both the overlapping “historicities” and geographies that influenced the paths of empire. Modern state and imperial formations were superimposed over pre-existing commercial and social networks running from the Atlantic coast to South Asia and beyond. European attempts to establish imperial jurisdiction along the southern and eastern Mediterranean littoral had to contend with these actualities. Imperium in a strict sense proved difficult to enforce, as many colonial authorities discovered. In carving out empires and protectorates, European powers had to impose control over mobile populations with ties and loyalties that resisted the type of bounded sovereignty commanded by an imperial state. This was no less true of the late Ottoman Empire itself, which was occupied with centralizing imperial authority and integrating a complex mosaic of multi-ethnic provinces and frontier regions.³⁷

These various trans-imperial flows were disruptive to state-building projects as they developed over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, imperial governments also found ways of pressing them into service. Authorities worked through local networks and regional power brokers to establish their sovereignty, at times exploiting migrants, religious leaders, and trans-local cultural ties.

³³ 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: University Press of America, 1993), 19.

³⁴ See: 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): 149–70.

³⁵ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 14–17.

³⁶ Joshua Meeks, *France, Britain, and the Struggle for the Revolutionary Western Mediterranean* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Julie Kalman, “Competitive Imperialism in the Early Nineteenth-Century Mediterranean,” *The Historical Journal*, 63:5 (2020): 1160–80.

³⁷ Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East*; Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

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 Fez to Cairo and Beirut were able to frame broad political platforms that re-imagined the bounds of their respective communities.³⁸ 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. Trans-imperial currents were never divorced from processes of empire-building. 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. Situating the French imperial experience within this panorama reveals the need for a more complex understanding of how empires were forged and how pressures from within and without, as well as from above and below simultaneously accommodated and challenged processes of empire-building in the modern period.

This book argues that between 1880 and the end of the First World War, France developed a program to create a Muslim empire as it responded to imperial rivalries and changing circumstances across the Mediterranean and broader Islamic world. This process hardly followed a unidirectional path. It witnessed various acts of negotiation, adaptation, and reinvention along route as France became entrenched in the regional and global politics of empire. Attempts to territorialize France's North African empire and extend its reach into the Levant and eastern Mediterranean underscored the connected trajectories of European imperialism. While empire-building engaged a familiar cast of politicians, diplomats, and colonial officials, it also relied upon an array of other actors, including émigrés, exiles, local elites, and Muslim activists. These groups had their own agendas, and frequently sought to pursue them through French imperial designs. More to the point, even as French officials sought to insulate the empire from "foreign" influences and the machinations of imperial rivals, they persistently engaged with trans-imperial networks and movements with the potential to erode the very imperial sovereignty they desired to ensure. The realities of empire-building were often contradictory as ideologues sought to create a territorialized empire that could command authority and allegiance across the Muslim world.

³⁸ Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press: Experiments in Slow Reading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); James L. Gelvin and Nile Green, eds., *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

Examining how France and other states constructed empires in the Mediterranean region entails both working through the documentary evidence produced by colonial bureaucracies and reading against the so-called “colonial archive.” Over the past decades, scholars have drawn attention not only to the practices that underpinned colonial government but also to the ways in which administrators organized and contextualized the details of colonial life. While European officials were charged with attending to subject populations, they relied upon a collective body of ethnographic surveys, anthropological studies, and other official investigations to do so. “Facts” about subject populations and the reports drafted by colonial bureaucrats remained closely tied to strategies of rule.³⁹ In other words, colonial regimes produced their own truths, and these epistemic categories in turn furnished the “symbolic capital” and authoritative knowledge that buttressed colonial rule.⁴⁰ Rather than a set of specific documents, therefore, the “colonial archive” constitutes a self-referential body of texts and reports conveying the organizational and thought processes that informed the “official mind” of empire.⁴¹ Surveillance and intelligence reports commonly reflected the underlying logics and suppositions of colonial authorities just as much as the discourses they employed. Yet reading into these reports also provides a means of tracking individuals and reconstructing the tangled social networks they operated within, extracting them from the eminently colonial contexts in which they were initially inscribed.⁴²

The colonial archive has also been instrumental in establishing the chronologies and periodizations that have routinely guided histories of colonialism. In assembling a base of documentary knowledge and evidence, European historians and experts effectively provided organizing rationales that distorted or completely effaced the Ottoman legacy in territories, reinforcing the notion of a colonial break with the past.⁴³ Colonialism not only changed societies; it fundamentally altered perceptions of the past that continue to have implications for the way historians write about the southern and eastern Mediterranean today.⁴⁴ Distinctions

³⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form,” in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michael Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh, eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 92–93; Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁴⁰ Edmund Burke III, *The Ethnographic State: France and the Invention of Moroccan Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 6–7.

⁴¹ On the “official mind” of empire, see: Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961).

⁴² Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire*, 18; Odile Moreau, “Introduction: Trajectories of Subversives and Mavericks in the Muslim Mediterranean,” in Odile Moreau and Stuart Schaar, eds., *Subversives and Mavericks in the Muslim Mediterranean: A Subaltern History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 1–3.

⁴³ Isabelle Grangaud, “Prouver par l’écriture: propriétaires algérois, conquérants français et historiens ottomanistes,” *Genèse: Sciences sociales et histoire*, 74:1 (2009): 25–45.

⁴⁴ Oualdi, “Une Succession d’Empires,” 1057–59; Simone Cerutti, “Histoire pragmatique, ou de la rencontre entre histoire sociale et histoire culturelle,” *Tracés: Revue des Sciences Humaines*, 15 (2008): 147–68.

between pre-colonial and colonial rule reflect the logic of the colonizing process. Yet the abundance of archival documentation available testifies to the continuities and sustained connections that continued to exert an influence in post-Ottoman societies during the age of colonial rule. Movements such as Pan-Islamism were only the most dramatic manifestation of these cultural and social attachments. Reports and intelligence briefings illuminated the many religious, economic, and social ties that ceaselessly frustrated colonial officialdom to no end. The Ottoman past remained present in the forms of mobility and the alleged “foreign” influences that ran counter to prescribed forms of imperial control.

Muslim imperium was not the only—or even predominant—way the French saw their empire. Yet for those invested in Mediterranean colonial expansion, the idea exercised a profound influence on the imagination and would serve to guide imperial policies in North Africa and the broader Islamic world in the age of high imperialism. The importance of Islam and the Mediterranean in French imperial imaginaries has, moreover, possessed a lasting influence. Today, France continues to grapple with its imperial legacies in the region. Issues relevant to immigration, foreign policy, and notions of *Françafrique* demonstrate that the relationships forged through empire have had an afterlife, one which persists to inform visions of the post-colonial nation and its connections to the broader world.

1

Power Politics and the Imperial Mediterranean

In late April 1881, a mixed crowd of Europeans and Arabs gathered around the quays at the Algerian port of Bône eager to catch a glimpse of the French transport ships arriving from Marseille. They watched as a steady stream of soldiers disembarked and congregated about the docks in their colorful uniforms. One particularly enthusiastic artilleryman had painted the red *Croix de Genève* on the back of his uniform and was proudly brandishing a loaded revolver tucked into his crimson belt. “A Florence Nightingale and Fra Diavolo all at once!” a correspondent for *Le Figaro* quipped, noting the evident fervor among the troops as they prepared to cross the border and enter Tunisia.¹

The arrival of French forces at Bône marked the latest episode in a series of mounting diplomatic tensions between Paris and Tunis occurring that spring. French policymakers had expressed interest in the Regency of Tunisia for some time. Over the years, the Tunisian government had borrowed heavily from European investors. By 1880, it had racked up a considerable debt of 125 million francs (\$730 million by today’s equivalent), the majority owed to France. “From the point of [financial] interests alone, we have reasons to consider Tunisia ours,” remarked the lawyer and foreign policy analyst Edmond Desfossés.² Finances aside, however, the French government had deeper concerns when it came to the territory directly across the border from Algeria, the veritable “jewel in the crown” of France’s colonial empire. The growing population of Italians among Tunisia’s European residents was a cause for alarm. It was no secret that Italy had designs on North Africa, provoking fears that Rome might potentially use the strong numerical and commercial presence of Italian migrants in the Regency to lay claim to the area.³ Britain, which already held Malta, was also exhibiting renewed interest in the Mediterranean region. Having snatched Cyprus from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, policymakers in London were increasingly emphasizing

¹ “L’Expédition de Tunis,” *Le Figaro*, 2 January 1882.

² Edmond Desfossés, *Affaires d’Orient: La Question Tunisienne et L’Afrique Septentrionale* (Paris: Challamel Aîné, 1881), 18–19.

³ Mark I. Choate, “Identity Politics and Political Perception in the European Settlement of Tunisia: The French Colony Versus the Italian Colony,” *French Colonial History*, 8:1 (2007): 100–01; Mary Dewhurst Lewis, “Geographies of Power: The Tunisian Civic Order, Jurisdictional Politics, and Imperial Rivalry in the Mediterranean, 1881–1935,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 80:4 (December 2008): 802–03.

the strategic importance of the Suez Canal for British trade with its subcontinental empire. Mounting calls to protect “John Bull’s India house” augured a more pronounced British presence in the eastern Mediterranean that France would ineluctably have to contend with in the near future.⁴ Given these calculations, France was determined to ensure its hold over the Tunisian Regency in 1881, using military force to do so if necessary. In a world rife with potential imperial competitors, to delay could be fatal.

The mounting sense of antagonism evident in the early 1880s was reflective of changing outlooks not only among French policymakers, but among European states in general. The decade marked a period of increased imperial competition as European nations endeavored to carve out global empires on a vast scale. The French invasion of Tunisia would inaugurate a new era of expansion across the African continent as states sought to lay claim to territories and augment their presence on the world stage. The next year, Britain clamped down on Ottoman Egypt while other leading European powers successively advanced into the African interior. These land grabs dramatically altered the international status quo and with it the very idea of empire in the European imagination. “The struggle of races and of peoples has from now the whole globe as its theatre: each advances towards the conquest of unoccupied territories,” the French travel writer and explorer Gabriel Charmes explained in 1882. “Soon all the places will be taken.”⁵ With imperial competition ramping up and the field becoming increasingly crowded with competitors, policymakers were inclined to place greater emphasis on occupying territories and administrative control, giving rise to a novel imperial etiquette backed by international agreements and law.⁶ Over the next two decades, expansion and imperial consolidation became the guiding principles of an aggressive brand of European empire-building that would become associated with the “new imperialism” of the late nineteenth century. A French illustrated magazine with the provocative title *L’Expansion Coloniale* started in 1891 summed up the prevailing mindset perfectly. “The European powers seek to create new outlets on every coast. France, although already endowed with a rich empire, is no less inclined to follow this irresistible movement for expansion.”⁷

It is commonly assumed that the new imperial mindset of the late nineteenth century came to favor territorial models of empire that ran counter to earlier imperial formations characterized by “informal” mechanisms of control and

⁴ Edwin De Leon, *The Khedive’s Egypt, or the Old House of Bondage Under New Masters* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1877), 9.

⁵ Quoted in Martin Thomas and Richard Toye, *Arguing About Empire: Imperial Rhetoric in Britain and France, 1882–1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 48.

⁶ Mieke van der Linden, *The Acquisition of Africa (1870–1914): The Nature of International Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); C. C. Eldridge, *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 85–105.

⁷ “Supplément Gratuit: L’Expansion colonial,” *Le Matin*, 21 February 1891.

degrees of imperial sovereignty.⁸ This change in outlook was noticeable in both the rhetoric and practice of empire after the 1880s as states abided by policies of “effective occupation” and took a more direct role in administering dependent territories. Yet while historians remarking on the “liberal turn” toward empire in the nineteenth century have argued that the century saw a tactical shift from informal to formal domination, this transition was hardly straightforward.⁹ The acceptance of this new imperial *modus vivendi* was far from unconditional and typically applied to the specifics of African colonialism. Territorial empires always existed alongside other imperial models reliant upon informal power relations and oblique forms of control that found their rationale in emergent notions of economic intervention and international peacekeeping efforts.¹⁰ Although concepts of informal and territorial empire provide easy typologies to categorize and assess, they were never mutually exclusive. If the two were conceptually opposed to one another in theory, in practice they often operated simultaneously and fed into imperial strategies in places where colonial officials continued to rely upon local networks and connections that occasionally created synergies with imperial politics in other regions. This was especially true of North Africa, which was hardly a *terra incognita* for Europeans.¹¹ Longstanding trade and diplomatic relations with the region entailed that European states had various pre-existing channels through which to work and exercise their influence. These dynamics entailed that Mediterranean empire-building encompassed varying strategies and policy initiatives that defied strict typological classifications.

Yet even as European states continued to ply their influence through established channels, it was difficult to deny the changes wrought by the new imperial mentality as the century progressed. North Africa was progressively brought under European control as heightened competition and the imperatives of African empire-building reformulated conceptions of European empire *tout court*. The new imperial contest in the region also brought about changes in the rhetoric and cultural identity of European empires as well. Even as the spirit of rivalry intensified among Europe’s foremost imperial powers, states like France and Britain found themselves entangled in new ways as they became entrenched in North African politics. The rhetoric of fierce opposition emanating from Paris and London was never the entire story.

⁸ Stoler, “On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty,” 125–46.

⁹ David Todd, “Transnational Projects of Empire in France, c.1815–c.1870,” *Modern Intellectual History*, 12:2 (2015): 266–67; Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ John Darwin, “Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion,” *The English Historical Review*, 112:447 (June 1997): 614–42; Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance: Protecting Aborigines Across the Nineteenth-Century British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Norman Etherington, ed., *Mission and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹¹ Ann Thomson, *Barbary and Enlightenment: European Attitudes Toward the Maghreb in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1987).

Rivalry between equals left ample room for negotiation when it came to the struggle for global hegemony, just as it left ample room for comparative reflection.¹² Empire-building was marked by various acts of copying and imitation that highlighted the connections as well as the divisions imperialism engendered as discourses, ideas, and practices circulated across imperial frontiers.¹³ The new imperial contest of the late nineteenth century not only transformed the regional geopolitics of the Mediterranean; it also transformed imperial powers, both ideologically and in practice.

Empire-Building at a Crossroad

“For France, the path of its destiny opens onto the Mediterranean,” the writer Paul Bruzon explained. “Inheritor of the Greek genius and Latin might, it has a duty to itself to preserve its absolute empire on the Classical sea.”¹⁴ Penned in 1912, Bruzon’s imperial apologia could hardly be considered original. It reiterated a familiar theme that had been central to French imperial imaginaries for nearly a century. Critics and policymakers were routinely inclined to claim a special role for their nation when it came to the Mediterranean basin. In the late eighteenth century, Napoleon had marched into Egypt with the intention of making it a colony from which France would spread its “civilization” throughout the Near and Middle East. The mission failed, but it encouraged a certain vision of empire among French elites disposed to see the Mediterranean Sea as nothing more than a “French lake.” Over the coming years, French agents worked to discipline local elites across North Africa and the Levant through a mix of commercial and military force. Naval campaigns against marauding corsairs secured the waters for French shipping vessels while regional rulers were coaxed into submission, eroding the traditional forms of sovereignty that had sustained the Ottoman Empire’s tenuous hold over the Maghreb and Ifriqiya.¹⁵ In 1830, French naval forces bombarded the Algerian coast following a longstanding diplomatic dispute

¹² Thomas and Toye, *Arguing About Empire*, 10–11; James R. Fichter, ed., *British and French Colonialism in Africa, Asia and the Middle East: Connected Empires Across the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Véronique Dimier, *Le gouvernement des colonies: regards croisés franco-britannique* (Brussels: Editions de l’Université Bruxelles, 2004); Alan Sharp and Glyn Stone, eds., *Anglo-French Relations in the Twentieth Century: Rivalry and Cooperation* (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹³ Paul A. Kramer, “Imperial Histories of the United States in the World,” *American Historical Review*, 116:5 (December 2011): 1351–52.

¹⁴ Paul Bruzon, “Suprématie Méditerranéenne,” *L’Islam*, 8 October 1912.

¹⁵ Ian Coller, “The Revolutionary Mediterranean,” in Peter McPhee, ed., *A Companion to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013), 419–34; Thierry Couzin, “L’Europe sans rivages: La Méditerranée (1798–1878),” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 78 (2009): 281–90; Dzavid Dzanic, “The Civilizing Sea: The Ideological Origins of the French Mediterranean Empire, 1789–1870” (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2016).

with the Dey of Algiers. The sudden collapse of the Dey's regime that summer opened a power vacuum in the Ottoman province that France would steadily fill over the next twenty years. The creation of a French Algerian settler colony under military administration gave France a decisive stake in the region, fortifying what authorities liked to refer to as the *présence française* in North Africa.¹⁶

This "presence" was, however, never confined to stark force and outright conquest. In many ways, the Algerian campaign was an exception. The top-down military rule and state sponsored settler colonialism that occurred in Algeria was distinct from conventional forms of empire-building developed over the early modern period. For much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European powers exerted influence abroad through a blend of hard and soft power. Local intermediaries and merchant firms rather than occupying armies more-often-than-not constituted the long arm of European imperial expansion.¹⁷ This model of "empire without sovereignty" was the basis for what David Todd has called France's "velvet empire," which saw French statesmen and agents employ financial institutions, loans, and cultural capital to sustain French power across the globe.¹⁸ Empire-building rarely accompanied centralized control or state-building policies. Rather, it worked through informal channels and asymmetrical power relationships. Even as the French military seized large swaths of North African territory and directly incorporated Algeria into a new French empire during the 1830s and 1840s, France continued to use more traditional strategies in territories abroad where its *présence* remained strong.

In Egypt officials and independent actors cultivated ties to the court of Muhammad Ali Pasha and encouraged the ruler's ambitions of transforming the Ottoman province into a quasi-independent dynastic kingdom. A sovereign Egyptian state created with French support would, policymakers assumed, provide a valuable ally in the region, extending French influence further into the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁹ Diplomatic overtures were accompanied by cultural and economic policies designed to strengthen ties between the two countries as well. Much as the Saint-Simonian Émile Barrault argued in 1835, French culture could be deployed as a tool in carving out a sphere of influence in the East. "Rather than planting a flag, [France] imprints everywhere the seal of civilization,"

¹⁶ Jennifer E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonization in Bône, 1870–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁷ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 117–215; Rothman, *Brokering Empire*; L. H. Roper and B. van Ruymbeke, eds., *Constructing Early Modern Empires: Proprietary Ventures in the Atlantic World, 1500–1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Brian J. Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁸ David Todd, *A Velvet Empire: French Informal Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 25–71.

¹⁹ Jacques Frémaux, *La France et l'Islam depuis 1789* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), 66–67.

he claimed.²⁰ “Moral” or cultural imperialism was considered just as important—if not more effective—than formal territorial conquest. France had a “civilizing mission” to fulfill in the world, critics insisted, and this mission could be used to establish its imperium on a global scale.²¹ In the first half of the century, French backers assisted with building schools in Egypt and set up academic exchanges that brought Egyptian students to Paris.²² Parisian financiers were among the chief sponsors of Egyptian economic modernization, encouraging a dependency on foreign credit that would have catastrophic results for the country later in the century. Unsurprisingly, the Suez Canal, opened in 1869, came about primarily through the efforts of the French-dominated *Compagnie Universelle de Suez* while French urban planners were contracted to draw up and carry out public works projects in Cairo, making the new capital a “Paris of the Orient” as the popular saying went.²³ Sauntering around the Uzbakeya district of Cairo in the 1870s, the diplomat and writer Edwin De Leon could not ignore the new buildings and arcades “in imitation of those of the Rue de Rivoli at Paris” that dotted the urban landscape. Port Said was no different with its Hôtel du Louvre and shabby cafés giving the city an overtly “French” appearance.²⁴

The *présence française* was no less absent in the Levant to the north-east. There, France found a means of establishing itself by working primarily through local merchant elites and the Christian Maronite community in Lebanon.²⁵ French Catholics were receptive to the appeals of Levantine Christians who complained of the abuses suffered under Muslim Ottoman rule. France, as one of the foremost Christian powers, had a moral obligation to assist with the “regeneration of the Arab people,” Catholic spokesmen claimed.²⁶ In 1860, as sectarian conflict tore Lebanon apart, French public opinion came out in support of the Maronites, urging intervention and even liberation if necessary.²⁷ The government responded, with Emperor Napoleon III exerting pressure on the Ottoman Empire and organizing an international peacekeeping force to quell the unrest. With French backing, Maronite autonomy was secured in Lebanon and France assumed a more direct role as the protector of Levantine Christians, establishing the “long peace”

²⁰ Émile Barrault, *Occident et Orient: Études politiques, morales, religieuses* (Paris: A. Pougin, 1835), 243.

²¹ Todd, “Transnational Projects of Empire in France,” 267–77.

²² Archana Prakash, “Reappraising the French Role in Nineteenth-Century Egyptian Education,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 54:4 (2018): 537–54.

²³ Zachary Karabell, *Parting the Deserts: The Creations of the Suez Canal* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

²⁴ De Leon, *The Khedive’s Egypt*, 17, 50.

²⁵ Chantal Verdeil, *La Mission jésuite du Mont-Liban et de Syrie, 1830–1864* (Paris: Editions Les Indes Savants, 2011).

²⁶ For example, see: Eugène Vayssettes, *Trois mois sous le tente et Régénération du peuple arabe par l’instruction* (Algiers: A. Bourget, 1859).

²⁷ See: Alfred Poissonnier, *La Nouvelle croisade: Expedition de Syrie* (Paris: E. Ledoyen, 1860); Louis de Baudicour, *La France en Syrie* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1860).

in the region that prevailed until the First World War.²⁸ By emphasizing moral and cultural affinities with Syrian Catholics, French spokesmen and women laid claim to what Andrew Arsan has described as an “affective empire” in the Levant.²⁹ Over the coming years, French policymakers would use these emotional ties to strengthen relations with Ottoman Syria and gain an entry point into the eastern Mediterranean.³⁰ As with Egypt, this “Christian policy” was distinct from the top-down administrative rule common to territorial empires and testified to the many diffuse channels that bolstered French imperialism across the Mediterranean world.

These details suggest that French imperial expansion never conformed to a well-designed blueprint. Empire-building was varied, often contingent, and reflected diverse ideological currents.³¹ Commercial and cultural ties provided effective means for wielding influence abroad and occasionally offered pretexts for intervention on humanitarian grounds. Yet if Algeria had been considered an exception to this general pattern in the 1840s, by the late 1860s anxieties over France’s slow population growth and respective military weakness compared to rising powers like Germany presaged a rethinking of imperial politics among certain circles. Colonies would provide France with much-needed natural resources and offer a space for the French population to expand and flourish, critics insisted.³² “The day will soon come,” prophesized the liberal writer Lucien-Anatole Prévost-Paradol in 1868, “where our citizens, installed in our African France and spilling over into Morocco and Tunisia, will finally establish the Mediterranean empire which will not only satiate our pride but will certainly serve as the last resources of our grandeur in the near future!”³³ Such exhortations became all the more urgent in the coming years as France suffered a series of national misfortunes.

In 1870, the nation was left traumatized as the Prussian military lay siege to the country and occupied Paris, toppling the authoritarian government of Napoleon III in the process. The republican regime brought to power during the Franco-Prussian conflict confronted a second tragedy the following year as a vicious civil war between the government and Parisian radicals tore the country apart. Taken

²⁸ Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Engin Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1920* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993).

²⁹ Andrew Arsan, “There is, in the Heart of Asia . . . an Entirely French Population: France, Mount Lebanon, and the Workings of Affective Empire in the Mediterranean, 1830–1920,” in Lorcin and Shepard, *French Mediterraneans*, 84–97.

³⁰ Henry Laurens, “La Projection chrétienne de l’Europe industrielle sur les provinces arabes de l’Empire Ottoman,” in Pierre-Jean Luizard, ed., *Le Choc colonial et l’Islam: les politiques religieuses des puissances coloniales en terre d’Islam* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006), 42–55.

³¹ Christina Carroll, “Imperial Ideologies in the Second Empire: The Mexican Expedition and the Royaume Arabe,” *French Historical Studies*, 42:1 (2019): 67–100; David Todd, “A French Imperial Meridian, 1814–1870,” *Past and Present*, 210 (February 2011): 155–86; T. W. Roberts, “Republicanism, Railway Imperialism, and the French Empire in Africa, 1879–1889,” *The Historical Journal*, 54:2 (2011): 401–20.

³² Todd, “Transnational Projects of Empire,” 290–91.

³³ Lucien-Anatole Prévost-Paradol, *La France nouvelle* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1868), 416.

together, the Third French Republic endured a painful birth, leaving the government to grapple with the twin challenges of national rehabilitation and reconciliation.³⁴ It was, moreover, uncertain whether the infant regime would even survive. For much of the 1870s, the Third Republic was a republic in name only. Conservative notables and monarchist parties continued to wield significant power in the country. The republican ascendancy at the tail end of the decade eased fears of a monarchist coup, but republican politicians had their work cut out for them. They needed to “republicanize” France’s political and judicial institutions and consolidate their hold over the country as they rehabilitated a defeated nation. Relations with the military were particularly fraught with tensions as republicans battled against entrenched conservative elites for control of the armed forces. Imperial politics had something to offer in this process, a select group of republican politicians wagered. As France recovered, political elites tied empire to their platform of national renewal, seeing it as a means of re-establishing France among the ranks of the great powers. Support for imperial expansion also held out hope of a rapprochement with the military establishment. Conquest in foreign lands and the acquisition of territory could be used to draw military elites closer to the national government, rendering them partners in a new republican empire-building project.³⁵

These considerations weighed heavily on French politicians as they confronted the evolving Tunisian question in 1881. A quick war with territorial gains could achieve a much-needed victory for the beleaguered government and rally supporters to the republic. That spring, the prime minister Jules Ferry and his republican allies found cause for intervention when members of the Khmir tribal federation harbored in Tunisia carried out a series of cross-border attacks on Algerian territory, killing five French military personnel. The minor incident provoked outcries among politicians and journalists who denounced the Khmir’s flagrant “act of aggression” and called for a military response.³⁶ Security was a “capital consideration” when it came to Tunisia, Edmond Desfossés argued. “What predominates is the protection of our borders and the tranquility of Algeria.”³⁷ Raids by groups like the Khmir exposed the inability of the Tunisian government to rein in unruly tribes and command authority on the Tunisian–Algerian

³⁴ J. P. T. Bury, *Gambetta and the National Defense: A Republican Dictatorship in France* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1971); Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870–1871* (London: Routledge, 2001); John Merriman, *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

³⁵ Thomas and Toye, *Arguing About Empire*, 20–26; James J. Cooke, *French New Imperialism, 1880–1910: The Third Republic and Colonial Expansion* (Hamden: Archon, 1973), 13–22; Philip G. Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 2–5; James R. Lehning, *To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early Third Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1–34.

³⁶ Henry Lemonnier, *L’Algérie* (Paris: Librairie Central des Publications Populaires, 1881), 143.

³⁷ Desfossés, *Affaires d’Orient*, 18.

frontier. “We have a right and a duty . . . to demand from the Bardo that it police its frontiers and not compromise our security,” the former diplomatic agent Charles Albert Maugny charged.³⁸ If the Tunisian Bey could not provide the security, France would. It was a perfect pretext for a colonial intervention, and Ferry did not hesitate to act. That April he authorized the deployment of French ground forces and sent naval ships to blockade Tunisian ports, not bothering to subject the measure to a vote in the National Assembly. Unknown to Ferry and other republicans at the time, the Tunisian venture would mark the start of a new chapter in France’s African exploits that would alter the path of empire irrevocably. A new age of empire was about to commence.

Toward a “Uniform Doctrine” of Imperial Acquisition

Over the course of a week, the French military rolled across northern Tunisia, suppressing local resistance as they moved onward toward the capital. By early May, General Pierre Léon Muraud entered the Bardo Palace in Tunis and imposed a treaty on the ailing Bey Muhammad as-Sadiq that granted France extensive powers over the Regency. To soften the blow of occupation, critics enumerated the many benefits that would come with French supervision, citing economic improvement, stability, and the suppression of “fanatical” Islamic clerics resistant to reform. In a hastily written pamphlet released just as the French were wrapping up diplomatic negotiations in Tunis that spring, the colonial explorer Henri Duveyrier provided the occupation with a film of moral justification. “With the beneficent hand of France imposing order on its administration, Tunisia will resolutely experience a rebirth,” he assured.³⁹ In light of French largess, the president of the chamber of deputies, Léon Gambetta was confident that Tunis welcomed the arrangement. “The Bey has regarded the French not as enemies but as friends,” he remarked without irony.⁴⁰

Others were not as sanguine. British opinion resented the fact that “Tunis should be handed over to a group of Parisian usurers” eager to exploit the Regency like a new colony.⁴¹ When the British foreign secretary George Leveson-Gower saw the treaty signed with the Bey, he balked. “It can hardly be doubted that the treaty with Tunis goes far beyond any question of the security of the frontier, and amounts practically to a Protectorate,” he informed the French ambassador in London.⁴² Italy was livid at seeing its own plans for Tunisia unravel and averred

³⁸ Charles Albert de Maugny, *La Question de Tunis* (Paris: Kugelmann, 1881), 4–5.

³⁹ Henri Duveyrier, *La Tunisie* (Paris: Hachette, 1881), 141.

⁴⁰ “The Campaign in Tunis,” *The Standard*, 2 December 1881.

⁴¹ “The Tunisian Scandal,” *The Standard*, 3 November 1881.

⁴² Lord Granville to Challemeil-Lacour, 20 May 1881 (no. 285), *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Documents Diplomatiques: Affaires des Tunisie (April–May 1881)* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1881), 57.

that it could not abide French naval ships being stationed two hundred miles off the Sicilian coast. Officials in Rome demanded that the invasion be subject to international arbitration and a power-sharing arrangement. With boots already on the ground, however, France was in no mood to bargain with Italian politicians holding a losing hand. As Desfossés contended, Italy's claims to Tunisia were flimsy at best. It was even doubtful whether Italy could be a modern colonial power. The kingdom was heavily in debt and lacked the military resources to hold Tunisian territory. Italy's own national economy and agricultural sector were grossly under-developed, Desfossés added for good measure. "Before thinking to colonize Tunisia, Italy would do better to colonize itself," he scoffed.⁴³ All said, it was evident that France would now be calling the shots in the Regency, establishing a protectorate that projected French power further into North Africa.

According to the military surgeon Jean-Pierre Bonnafont, the taking of Tunisia would be "proclaimed with no less patriotism than [the taking of Algeria] in 1830" by all citizens "whose hearts are truly French."⁴⁴ To say the least, his confidence was premature. Despite the relatively quick military victory that spring, the anticipated swell of patriotism did not follow. In fact, the venture proved immediately damaging to Ferry and the *bloc républicain*. The brusque manner with which Ferry had handled the invasion generated a political backlash that brought down his government in late 1881. Opponents criticized the unauthorized invasion and demanded parliamentary oversight of the occupation. The government braced against these retorts, insisting that pressing security concerns along the Tunisian border validated the unsanctioned invasion. Yet these explanations did little to stifle the hostility. The "incoherent tumult" coming from the National Assembly made government impossible, Gambetta, the incoming prime minister, complained.⁴⁵ This chaotic atmosphere was all the more troubling as political violence erupted in Tunisia later that year and events further afield in Egypt began to demand a French response which the shaken government was ill-positioned to give.

Much as in Tunisia, the European powers had vested financial and strategic interests in the Ottoman *eyalet* of Egypt. Coming to the throne in 1863, the Egyptian khedive Isma'il Pasha had entertained grand ambitions of reform. Although technically a vassal of the sultan in Istanbul, Isma'il aspired to rule over an independent Egyptian state free of Ottoman control. Rapid modernization and economic self-sufficiency were the means to achieving this end, he believed. Upon taking power, he announced a series of plans to improve infrastructure and develop Egypt's booming cotton industry. To attract foreign investors, Isma'il made vague promises of liberalizing the government, presenting himself as the

⁴³ Desfossés, *Affaires d'Orient*, 32.

⁴⁴ Jean-Pierre Bonnafont, *Quelques réflexions sur les événements actuels de l'Afrique* (Creusot: A. Temporal, 1881), 6.

⁴⁵ S. A. Ashley, "The Failure of Gambetta's Grand Ministère," *French Historical Studies*, 9:1 (Spring 1975): 108–13.

type of forward-looking constitutional ruler that Europeans could do business with. The ploy worked. Foreign investment began to pour into the country and economic growth was sustained through foreign loans backed primarily by French and British bondholders. On the surface, Isma'il's effort to create a modern Westernized Egypt appeared a success. Yet beneath this façade, problems were evident.⁴⁶

Modernization placed an unequal financial burden on the Arabic-speaking peasantry, the *fellahin*, who faced conditions of extreme poverty. To native Egyptians, the ruling elite class of Ottoman soldiers and administrators—collectively referred to as “Turks”—had always appeared foreign, and the growing inequalities between the two groups only served to exacerbate divisions. Under these circumstances, a rising generation of Egyptian nationalists began to speak out openly against the corruption and authoritarianism of the Egyptian state. The precarious financial position of the state by the mid-1870s only compounded these rising political tensions. Isma'il had wagered that fast-paced economic development would pay for itself, but when the cotton market contracted Isma'il found it impossible to pay back his European creditors, let alone raise new revenue through further loans. In 1876, France and Britain were called in to manage the debt and set up an international Debt Commission that effectively gave European financiers control of the Egyptian economy. Responsible to investors rather than the Egyptian people, the commissioners proceeded to impose austerity measures on the country that did nothing to ease mounting social pressures. Riots and mutinies erupted as crowds directed anger at European residents in Egyptian cities. In late 1881, protestors found a champion in Ahemd 'Urabi, a military officer who had climbed from the ranks of the *fellahin*. Under the slogan “Egypt for the Egyptians,” he formed a nationalist party and began pressing demands for a constitution on the unwilling khedive. These street brawls and political agitations had all the tell-tale signs of an impending revolution, and with revolt in Cairo and Alexandria paralyzing the state France and Britain suddenly faced the prospects of losing complete control of Egypt and, with it, the money owed them.⁴⁷

Preoccupied with Tunisia and embattled at home, the French government hesitated to intervene in the evolving Egyptian crisis. Britain, on the other hand, was not about to stand by idly as its citizens were attacked and the Egyptian government defaulted. British “prestige” was on the line, and in July 1882 the

⁴⁶ Dominic Green, *Three Empires on the Nile: The Victorian Jihad, 1869–1899* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 11–41; Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, “The Porte and Ismail Pasha's Quest for Autonomy,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 12 (1975): 89–96.

⁴⁷ Juan R. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); John Newsinger, “Liberal Imperialism and the Occupation of Egypt in 1882,” *Race and Class*, 49:3 (2007): 54–75; M. E. Chamberlain, “The Alexandria Massacre of 11 June 1882 and the British Occupation of Egypt,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 13:1 (1977): 14–39.

government unilaterally resolved to put an end to the crisis.⁴⁸ Dispatching gunships to Alexandria, the British navy bombarded the port. Over the next two months, ground forces suppressed the nationalist movement and placed the weak-willed khedive Tawfiq on the throne as a puppet ruler. The Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid, nominally the sovereign authority in Egypt, was relegated to an onlooker as Britain occupied the province.⁴⁹ The British declared the occupation a “temporary” measure as they worked to restore order in the country. However, within a year, critics were already warning of the dangers that an expeditious withdrawal would pose. Confronted with the herculean task of reforming a corrupt “Oriental” despotism, Britain was in Egypt for the long haul. “If we were not resolved to create something like permanent order in Egypt, why did we go to Egypt at all?” asked the foreign correspondent Mackenzie Wallace in 1883.⁵⁰ French critics vocally protested the occupation, reminding that Egypt was not an “independent nation” and belonged to the Ottoman sultan.⁵¹ When such arguments failed to persuade British authorities to evacuate, French politicians doubled down and insisted that London could not treat Egypt as it did other parts of its empire. All the major European powers had a stake in the Ottoman province, making exclusive British rule inconceivable. “Egypt does not belong to Britain or France,” Ferry reasoned in 1884. “It is an international and European territory.”⁵² Whatever arguments French critics marshalled, it did not change the simple fact that Britain had secured a strategic foothold in the eastern Mediterranean, setting the stage for a new Anglo-French imperial rivalry.

Changes in the geopolitical landscape of North Africa brought with them corresponding changes in the internal politics of the region. The Bardo Treaty signed by the French established a protectorate over Tunisia, leaving the ruling Bey the nominal head of state. Yet the arrangement preserved the “appearance of power” only, the diplomat Paul Cambon assured. All political decisions would be subject to the French Resident General installed in Tunis, reducing Beylical authority to a mere formality.⁵³ “The efforts of the French charged with reorganizing the country will only be effective if they are submitted to a single direction,” a draft proposal laying out French intentions stated. “The Resident, representing the government of the Republic and interpreting the common views of the ministers, *must give it*.”⁵⁴ In theory, the Bey would govern over native affairs, continuing to collect taxes and appoint local officials as before. This arrangement promised

⁴⁸ Dan Halvorson, “Prestige, Prudence, and Public Opinion in the 1882 British Occupation of Egypt,” *Australian Journal of Political History*, 56:3 (2010): 423–40.

⁴⁹ Selim Deringil, “The Ottoman Response to the Egyptian Crisis of 1881–82,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 24 (1988): 3–25.

⁵⁰ Mackenzie Wallace, *Egypt and the Egyptian Question* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 377.

⁵¹ Pierre Lermite, *Les Brigands en Égypte: Solution de la crise internationale* (Paris: E. Plon 1882), 7.

⁵² “La Déclaration de M. J. Ferry sur les affaires d’Égypte,” *La Justice*, 24 June 1884.

⁵³ AN 20020495/18, “Reorganisation de la Tunisie” (22 April 1882), 7.

⁵⁴ AN 20020495/18, “La Ligne de conduite à suivre les affaires de Tunis,” 24 March 1882.

empire on the cheap, as politicians sought to avoid costly services like the Algerian Native Affairs Bureau and reduce military expenditures. In reality, the protectorate government exhibited many traits of a colonial regime and came to take an active role in the political and economic affairs of the Regency. It reorganized the justice system, adopting measures directly from the Algerian system as an expedient.⁵⁵ It had a direct hand in shaping education reforms and developing a French curriculum in schools. The Director of Public Instruction was even given powers to “monitor, direct, and inspect Arab teaching offered in the mosques and mad-rassas,” flouting any semblance of native control.⁵⁶ Officials amended landholding agreements and property rights to appease European investors and encourage French settlement. There was a clear correlation between “colonization, the development of lands, and our establishment in the Regency,” administrators claimed, and they proposed measures accordingly.⁵⁷ Despite initial expectations to eschew direct colonial control and rule through a weak native sovereign, the protectorate tended to be just as heavy-handed as its Algerian equivalent. “What is a true protectorate?” the Resident General René Millet asked years later. “It is a hand of iron in a velvet glove.”⁵⁸

Watching these developments from Egypt, the British consul-general Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, insisted that France had practically “annexed” Tunisia. “Scarcely a semblance of native authority remains. . . . Tunis is just as much a part of France as the Department of the Seine.”⁵⁹ In comparison, the British liked to think they were acting differently when it came to Egypt. The government made it a point to emphasize it was “reorganizing” Egyptian finances, and nothing more. Yet such claims were an exercise in self-delusion. In 1883, British commissioners reordered the Egyptian government, creating provincial councils and a rubber-stamp legislative assembly to sustain the fiction of native rule. Financial “advisors” wielded a significant amount of power while an international Commission of Public Debt controlled state revenues and allocated them as they saw fit. Colonel Herbert Kitchener, officer in the British army, was appointed Inspector-General of the Egyptian police and from this position exacted an administrative hold over the interior of the country. British officials monitored local life, organized public works projects, and assisted in putting down local resistance movements that threatened the class of landowners and merchants who collaborated with occupation forces. “All the work of administration has been entrusted to a number of English officials,” the writer Edward Dicey claimed in 1907. “The native element

⁵⁵ AN 20020495/18, “Project de Loi,” 1893.

⁵⁶ Louis Machuel, *L'Enseignement Public dans le Régence de Tunis* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1889), 64.

⁵⁷ AN 20020495/18, Report submitted to the Minister of Justice, 29 May 1885.

⁵⁸ René Millet, *La Conquête du Maroc* (Paris: Perrin, 1913), 159.

⁵⁹ Evelyn Baring, Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 2: 284–85.

has been gradually eliminated from all posts not of a subordinate character.”⁶⁰ Through policing, controlling, and administrative reorganization, Britain transformed Egypt into a “veiled protectorate.”⁶¹ Goals of restoring public order in Egypt blended seamlessly into new and more ambitious objectives of democratization and state-building as the years went on. Patience and persistence were key to achieving these ends, Dicey insisted, because “self-government is not an art that can be taught by foreign supervision and control.” It had to be nurtured and developed over a generation.⁶² It was a familiar colonial logic, one which seemingly justified the indefinite presence of British administrators in the country.

By the time Dicey wrote, increased emphasis on jurisdictional and administrative control was part and parcel of the new imperial mindset. These changes came about as European states funded African explorations and expanded their reach further into the interior of the continent. Already by the mid-1880s, governments were expressing concerns over what unbridled imperial expansion might entail for Europe. That competing territorial claims could ignite military conflicts was not unimaginable. Belgian advances into the Congo and the mounting Anglo-French rivalry were taken as signs that an international accord governing imperial expansion was needed. In 1884, therefore, the leading European powers convoked a conference in Berlin to formalize colonial practices under international law. Attendees agreed to abide by policies of free trade and navigation in Africa and affirmed their commitment to spreading “civilization” among African natives. More specifically, representatives laid out precise criteria for recognizing territorial claims, equating sovereignty with “effective occupation.” Whereas in the past, powers had claimed authority over areas through alliances contracted with local tribes or by setting up improvised trading outposts along coasts and rivers, “effective occupation” outlined more stringent rules for claiming territory. Powers were now required to demonstrate “the necessary elements to ensure the permanent exercise of its authority” in a territory by “establishing and maintaining a sufficient jurisdiction” over an area.⁶³ Simply stated, imperial powers had to occupy territories and formally administer them to have their sovereignty recognized.⁶⁴ “Simply planting a flag, posts, or emblems does not suffice to create or support a claim to the exclusive possession of a country,” Ferry contended.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Edward Dicey, *The Egypt of the Future* (London: William Heinemann, 1907), 47.

⁶¹ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 97–98; Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Harold Tollefson, *Policing Islam: The British Occupation of Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Struggle Over Control of the Police, 1882–1914* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999).

⁶² Edward Dicey, “Egypt, 1881 to 1897,” *The Fortnightly Review*, 63:376 (1 May 1898), 698.

⁶³ *Rapport adressé au ministre des affaires étrangères* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1885), 23, 27.

⁶⁴ Mostafa Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 49.

⁶⁵ Jules Ferry to Baron de Courtcel, 8 November 1884 (no. 4), *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Documents Diplomatiques: Affaires du Congo et de l’Afrique Occidentale* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1885), 52.

The Berlin Conference sanctioned what the diplomat Alphonse Chodron de Courcel called “a uniform doctrine in matters of occupation.”⁶⁶ The ensuing “scramble for Africa” revised basic practices associated with empire-building. If European powers had been able to ply their influence through informal networks connected with trade and confessional policies in the past, “effective occupation” encouraged a more direct approach emphasizing jurisdictional control and the maintenance of hard borders. While this change in outlook had been gradually emerging over the years, the Berlin Conference enshrined it in law. By necessity, imperialists were coming to think in terms of sharp lines and rigidly defined boundaries as European powers crowded out rivals and set up administrations ahead of competitors. New imperialism not only inaugurated a new age of antagonistic imperial conquest. It signaled a fundamental shift in both the concept and practice of nineteenth-century empire-building.

“We Are by Necessity a Muslim Power”

While European diplomats were broadly re-conceptualizing European imperial practices, France and Britain were reflecting on what expansion and the shifting geopolitical landscape meant for their own respective empires. French republicans had inherited an empire with territories scattered across Africa, Asia, and the Americas, and the simple fact France possessed an empire put republicans in an awkward position. How could political elites championing ideals of liberty and equality feasibly defend a system of rule built upon oppression and the subjugation of peoples? By the early 1880s, French republicans had yet to devise an official policy when it came to the empire, and many republican ideologues were questioning how and if their universalist, egalitarian principles could accommodate the realities of imperial domination. Politicians like Jules Ferry spoke in broad terms of spreading “civilization” to benighted societies and outlined a brand of colonial republicanism that was theoretically consistent with republican values, but these claims were by no means unanimously accepted.⁶⁷ Some republicans were skeptical as to whether imperial expansion was even desirable at all. With a newly formed German Empire dominating Europe, cautious political elites wondered whether imperial adventurism might drain military and financial resources needed to combat the German threat directly across the Rhine.

⁶⁶ “Rapport de la Commission chargée d'examiner le projet de Déclaration relative aux occupations nouvelles sur les côtes d'Afrique” (annexe au protocole no. 8), 25 January 1885, *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Documents Diplomatiques: Affaires du Congo et de l'Afrique Occidentale*, 213.

⁶⁷ See: Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Nicholas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Françoise Vergès, *La République coloniale* (Paris: Pluriel, 2006).

British Liberals faced a similar quandary. Prior to 1882, many Liberals had taken a cautious approach to empire, believing, as the prime minister William Ewart Gladstone declared, that the country already had its “hands too full” with pressing domestic issues. “It is my firm conviction . . . that, as a general rule, enlargements of the Empire are for us an evil fraught with serious, though possibly not with immediate dangers,” he contended.⁶⁸ Critics of empire warned about imperial overreach and the impact conquest would have on core national values of tolerance and constitutional rule. “England is not herself, whilst she is forced thus to keep anxious and suspicious watch across Africa and Asia,” contended the jurist Frederic Harrison, a radical who abhorred empire on principle.⁶⁹ Liberals evinced a certain cynicism when questioning whether the nation’s liberal traditions were compatible with what the writer Harold Frazer Wyatt deemed the “ethics of empire.”⁷⁰ In an environment characterized by renewed imperial expansion, fundamental questions regarding the nature and character of imperial polities became evident. To meet the challenges posed by the new imperial culture emerging, political elites were compelled to develop new forms of rhetoric that could validate claims to territory and allow policymakers to claim the moral high ground.⁷¹ Imperial self-fashioning went hand in hand with imperial acquisition, especially as French and British imperialists attempted to assert influence beyond their immediate borders.

The Egyptian crisis broke at a pivotal moment for Britons. Taking account of the nation’s vast territorial holdings in India and its changing relationship with the Ottoman Empire, imperial critics and apologists had begun rethinking the cultural identity of their empire. Once imagined as a scattered domain of white settler colonies, Britain’s empire was fast becoming recognizable as a massive Asiatic continental empire populated by Hindus and Muslims.⁷² During the build up to the Egyptian invasion, journalists and politicians cautioned that occupying a portion of the Ottoman Empire might have unforeseen repercussions across Britain’s Asiatic territories. How would Indian Muslims look upon an attack against the foremost Muslim world power? “We must be careful to remember that besides being a great European, we are also a great Mussulman Power as well,” Henry Chaplin warned his cohorts assembled at the Junior Conservative Association in 1882. “[We] must not do anything by which the feeling of the Mussulman world would permanently be estranged from us.”⁷³ Even certain Liberals evinced a

⁶⁸ William Ewart Gladstone, “Aggression on Egypt and Freedom of the East,” *The Nineteenth Century*, 2:6 (August 1877), 151.

⁶⁹ Frederic Harrison, “Empire and Humanity,” *The Fortnightly Review*, 158 (1 February 1880), 297.

⁷⁰ H. F. Wyatt, “The Ethics of Empire,” *The Nineteenth Century*, 41:671 (April 1897), 518–29.

⁷¹ Thomas and Toye, *Arguing About Empire*, 3–10.

⁷² Jonathan Perry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity, and Europe, 1830–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 186–91; Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 123–61.

⁷³ “Sheffield Junior Conservative Association,” *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (14 October 1882), 2.

guarded attitude as the situation in 1882 steered Britain toward conflict with Cairo and Istanbul. A “resolute and independent British policy” was needed to safeguard Britain’s interests at the Suez Canal, Sir Henry Hoare reasoned, and this required coming to a solution in conjunction with the Ottoman sultan rather than pushing a resolution on the khedive. “Considering that we are a great Mussulman Power with 40,000,000 Mohammedan subjects in India,” Horace contended, an aggressive stance was hardly desirable.⁷⁴

These admonitions did little to prevent Britain from shelling Alexandria and crushing the patriotic resistance that summer with blatant disregard for Ottoman sovereignty. Yet even this forceful gesture found its rationale in the conviction that Britain was a Muslim power. As “a great Mussulman Power,” Britain had an obligation to defend the khedive and safeguard Islamic sovereigns from usurpers like ‘Urabi, Francis Charteris explained before the House of Commons.⁷⁵ This apologia for the British occupation could only ring hollow in Istanbul where British diplomats had been feeding the Porte the same line to assuage any fears of British ill-will. Meeting with Ottoman dignitaries in 1879, the ambassador Sir Austen Henry Layard had made assurances of Britain’s friendship and explicitly alluded to Queen Victoria’s “one hundred million Muslim subjects” as proof of the amity that existed between the two powers. Britain was “in one respect a Mussulman Power,” Layard stated, and this status incurred a responsibility to uphold legitimate Muslim authority internationally.⁷⁶ That this logic could be turned against the Ottomans was not surprising since it was persistently tied to a vision of the British Empire and its hegemonic position in a colonial world.⁷⁷

France was not about to abandon Egypt to Britain. Nor was it willing to let Britain claim authority as a “Muslim power” and project itself as a “friend” to Muslims across North Africa and the Middle East. The official government journal, *République Française*, spelled out its position clearly in 1882 as the Egyptian situation broke. “France, as well as England, is a Muslim Power,” it asserted. “It is not just at the moment in which Islam is in a state of dangerous effervescence that we could contemplate with an indifferent eye an undertaking which would only encourage Muslim fanaticism.”⁷⁸ Others agreed. As Gabriel Charmes insisted, Egypt was a “moral colony” for France. Since the Napoleonic expedition, it had been a center of French ideas and cultural influences that had served to connect France to the Orient. Indifference in the current situation would signal the defeat of France’s long-term Eastern policy and jeopardize its standing in the Mediterranean, an outcome France could not abide. “Whether we regret or celebrate it, France is a

⁷⁴ “Egypt and the Government,” *The Morning Post* (10 July 1882), 3.

⁷⁵ “Yesterday’s Parliament,” *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 26 July 1882.

⁷⁶ “Sir H. Layard in Syria,” *The Morning Post* (23 October 1879), 5.

⁷⁷ Faisal Devji, “Islam and British Imperialist Thought,” in Motadel, *Islam and the European Empires*, 254–58.

⁷⁸ “England and France,” *The Morning Post* (23 February 1882), 5.

great Muslim power and the only Arab power of Europe after Turkey,” Charmes stated bluntly. “Since the day that we went down and installed ourselves on the coast of Algeria, we ceased to be exclusively a Christian country. We became in addition an Islamic nation.”⁷⁹

As Britain took control of Egypt, French critics increasingly responded with accusations of British insincerity and duplicity. According to the political journalist Jean Lemoine, Britain’s stated desire to uphold the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as a “Muslim power” was a charade. “By the integrity of the Ottoman Empire they mean the substitution of English for Mussulman domination. It is on this account that they style themselves the greatest Mussulman Power in the world.”⁸⁰ When Britain sought to formalize its control in Egypt through an international agreement in 1887, the French foreign minister Émile Flourens accused Britain of trying to cut off Egyptian Muslims from their rightful sovereign, the Ottoman sultan. As the leading Muslim power in the Mediterranean, France could not permit such an egregious affront to Islam. *The Times* scoffed at this posturing. “France, in virtue of her Algerian colony, is to pose before the Mussulman world as a Mussulman Power, while England, whose Indian Empire numbers more Mussulmans than the whole population of France, is to pass as a Power in whom the same Mussulman world may see nothing Mussulman.”⁸¹ French efforts to subvert British dominance in Egypt inaugurated competition within diplomatic circles to lay claim to great Muslim power status, and for British commentators it was not a contest the French could win. “It is practically impossible that France, even assuring that her most extravagant hopes of African conquest were fulfilled, could ever be the first Mussulman Power,” the *Glasgow Herald* boasted in 1892. “That position, not altogether an enviable one, belongs definitely to Great Britain, which has between fifty and sixty millions of Mohammedan subjects in India alone.”⁸²

France persistently maintained a “sentimental” attachment to Egypt, Edward Dacey claimed.⁸³ It was vain to believe that it would relinquish its presence there and recognize British power. As one French journalist expounded, “Egypt is a French question because in Egypt the French have moral, financial, industrial, commercial, political, and colonial interests.”⁸⁴ Unwilling to concede Egypt, France was determined to match Britain point for point in the contest for Mediterranean dominance. If Britain proclaimed itself a “Muslim power,” France would stake its own claims to this status. Expansion into the Muslim Mediterranean inaugurated a new type of imperial politics as European states attempted to fashion themselves as “Muslim powers” and “Muslim nations.” These claims not only sought to strengthen loyalties among existing Muslim subjects in places like Algeria,

⁷⁹ *Journal des Débats*, 5 July 1882.

⁸⁰ *Journal des Débats*, 19 August 1886.

⁸¹ “The Egyptian Convention,” *The Leeds Mercury*, 2 August 1887.

⁸² *Glasgow Herald*, 26 May 1892.

⁸³ Dacey, *The Egypt of the Future*, 35.

⁸⁴ “La Tunisie en la Question d’Égypte,” *La Dépêche Tunisienne*, 25 September 1897.

Tunisia, and Egypt. They were part of a broader regional strategy committed to winning influence abroad through the “protection” and even advancement of Islam. “In the Muslim world, certain people follow the progress of our work with a favorable eye,” Cambon wrote to Ferry in 1884. “They compare our administrative procedures to those of the English in Egypt and the comparison is to our advantage.”⁸⁵ As colonial officials were coming to see it, besting Britain and sustaining the *présence française* in the region necessitated establishing moral claims to rule over subjects as a putative “Muslim” empire.

“The possession of Algeria by our army made this country a second France, but a Muslim France,” the senator Émile Combes affirmed in 1891. “Our protectorate in Tunisia confirms and expands this new character of our domination. We are by necessity a Muslim power . . . The cause of Islam is in part our cause.”⁸⁶ It may have been shocking to hear republican secularists asserting that France was a “Muslim power,” but many elites appeared willing to overlook such inconsistencies as the imperial contest with Britain was ratcheting up. The irony of course was that despite growing hostilities between the two powers, British and French imperial ideologues were coming to speak a similar language. Arguments and concepts circulated freely between the two empires, and policymakers readily appropriated and reinterpreted them as warranted to fit particular national contexts. As the Anglo-French rivalry intensified, the two empires paradoxically became more equivalent in their outlooks and appearance.

Tunisia, Egypt, and the Colonial Press

French and British attempts to lay claim to great “Muslim power” status demonstrated that the rivalries stemming from the imperial contests of the late nineteenth century were never solely confined to controlling geographical space. Wars for territory were more often than not played out as a “war of words,” revealing the discursive strategies that accompanied territorial conquest.⁸⁷ Imperial rivalry encouraged a creative re-imagining of imperial sovereignty as European states attempted to shore up allegiances among colonial subjects and combat the lure of imperial competitors. Yet reformulating imperial cultural identity was never solely a defensive tactic. It could also be offensive and aimed at populations across imperial borders. While policymakers were increasingly coming to define empires as bounded, territorial entities, cultural strategies commonly resisted this conception

⁸⁵ AN 20020495/21, Cambon to Ferry, 9 August 1884.

⁸⁶ AN F19 10934, “Rapport fait au nom de la commission chargée d’examiner les modifications à introduire dans le législation et dans l’organisation des divers service de l’Algérie” (1894), 277–78.

⁸⁷ Thomas and Toye, *Arguing About Empire*, 5.

of empire and created contexts for cross-border exchange and collaboration as rivalries were played out in the domain of the colonies.

Bringing the “war of words” directly to the colonies required effective organs of propaganda, and in this department France believed it had a leg up on Britain. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the French took an active role in producing newspapers aimed at Arabic-speaking audiences. During the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt, the military government had run Egyptian newspapers in an effort to win support among the local populations. The attempt failed miserably, but it did not prevent French policymakers from replicating these policies in the subsequent conquest of Algeria three decades later. From the start of the occupation, the military used bilingual publications to communicate with native elites and, it was hoped, encourage durable links with North African populations in the region.⁸⁸ Pro-colonial and missionary circles engaged in similar enterprises over the years, seeking to influence an imagined North African readership. The short-lived *L’Aigle de Paris* run by Abbé Bourgade and translated by the Tunisian notary Soliman al-Haraïri explained the objective behind these endeavors, remarking in 1860, “To change the ideas of a people . . . it is necessary to speak with them.”⁸⁹

As to whether the paper did, in fact, speak to Arab readers was questionable. Most of these Arab language periodicals were short-lived. One exception was *El Mobacher* (*Al-Mubashir*), an official organ launched by the Algerian administration in the 1840s. Run by military interpreters and a small group of natives who cooperated with the colonial regime, *Mobacher* was one of the first newspaper intended explicitly for a Muslim audience. The government assumed all expenses for running the paper and later rented out a five-room apartment on the Rue Bruce in Algiers to house the editorial office and provide a semblance of distance from the administration.⁹⁰ For the most part, the columns of *Mobacher* were filled with administrative decrees and directives, making for dull reading that failed to attract readers.⁹¹ “The Arab reader finds in its pages no interesting facts, no news that attracts his attention or which speaks to his thoughts,” one official noted. It was no wonder that Algerians preferred reading the newspapers coming from Egypt and Tunisia.⁹² However, content was not the only problem. Written in high literary Arabic, the paper was incomprehensible to potential readers who spoke vernacular forms of Arabic. “If one bothers to take account of the fact that the vast majority of *talebs* know only common Arabic,” one prefect advised, “they would come to admit, I believe, the need to employ the usual style which natives

⁸⁸ Alain Messaoudi, *Les Arabisants et la France coloniale, 1780–1930* (Lyons: END Editions, 2015), 233–45.

⁸⁹ *L’Aigle de Paris*, 1 (August 1860).

⁹⁰ ANOM, GGA/15H/6, “Note pour M. le Directeur général des affaires civilise et financiers,” 5 August 1875.

⁹¹ Asseraf, *Electric News*, 35–36.

⁹² ANOM, GGA/15H/6, “Rapport au Gouverneur Général” (1895).

use in their correspondence in the editing of the journal.”⁹³ Despite native reluctance to engage with the paper, the government persisted in believing *Mobacher* served an important function. It was indispensable to natives, the Governor General Antoine Chanzy argued in 1873, “because of the official information that it puts in their reach.”⁹⁴ To ensure its continuation, he recommended covering the costs of subscriptions and making the paper obligatory for all administrators and jurists.⁹⁵ By 1877, *Mobacher* was costing the government an average of 9,000 francs (roughly \$40,000) a year, and even this was not enough to keep the publication in the black. To cut costs, officials suggested scaling back the print run to a monthly publication or moving the editorial office to a government building to save on rent.⁹⁶ The team of Arabic translators and scribes the press employed might also be slimmed down, they suggested.⁹⁷

For Fontana and Co., the publisher contracted to print the paper, working with the government proved a nightmare. Government contracts usually implied a steady revenue stream and guaranteed number of subscribers, and for this reason publishers were often eager to work with official circles. However, Fontana’s experience with the Algerian administration failed to meet these expectations. By 1880, printing costs associated with the periodical amounted to 14,000 francs (\$68,000), of which only some 6,000 had been paid.⁹⁸ As well, government guarantees of subscription rates routinely fell short of their prospective targets, leaving questions as to who would cover these shortfalls.⁹⁹ As subscription rates steadily declined over the 1880s, Fontana warned that far from serving to “educate” the natives, *Mobacher* threatened to become “a dead letter.”¹⁰⁰ Even the cost of shipping the newspaper was burdensome, prompting the printer to request government subsidies to cover postage.¹⁰¹ In 1913, Fontana was compelled to take legal action for payment not received and filed suit against the administration in the civil Algerian courts.¹⁰²

Mobacher highlighted the financial and cultural difficulties associated with running a Muslim press in the colonies, and for the most part did not provide a healthy model for other ventures. An alternative to maintaining official organs was backing “independent” newspapers that could speak for France. There was certainly no shortage of applicants seeking to tap into official funds, and the

⁹³ ANOM, GGA/15H/6, Prefect of Algiers to Alexandre Ribot, 17 February 1892.

⁹⁴ ANOM, GGA/15H/6, Gouverneur Général, Circulaire au gouvernement général civil (1873).

⁹⁵ ANOM, GGA/15H/6, “Note pour le général chef d’État-Major Général,” 10 April 1875.

⁹⁶ ANOM, GGA/15H/6, “Rapport au Conseiller d’État, Directeur général des affaires civiles et financières,” 21 September 1877.

⁹⁷ ANOM, GGA/15H/7, “Note pour le général chef d’État-Major Général,” January 1878.

⁹⁸ ANOM, GGA/15H/6, Fontana et Ce., to the Secrétaire Général, 19 March 1881.

⁹⁹ ANOM, GGA/15H/6, Fontana et Ce., to Secrétaire Général du Gouvernement, 25 January 1888.

¹⁰⁰ ANOM, GGA/15H/6, Fontana to Louis Tirman, 17 August 1886.

¹⁰¹ ANOM, GGA/15H/6, “Note à l’Inspecteur Général des Postes et Télégraphes,” 29 January 1909.

¹⁰² ANOM, GGA/15H/7, “Rapport au Gouverneur Général,” 10 July 1913.

heightened Anglo-French imperial rivalry in the 1880s opened new opportunities for individual publicists, as the Syrian exile Khalil Ghanem discovered. A Christian Arab from Beirut, Ghanem had been a proponent of the liberal Ottoman opposition movement of the mid-1870s. Working as a journalist and organizer, he supported demands for constitutional reform and advanced calls for Syrian autonomy as a delegate in the fleeting Ottoman parliament set up in 1876. When the constitutional movement collapsed two years later, he was branded a *persona non grata* by the Ottoman government and fled to Paris. The timing of his arrival in the French capital was propitious. With France advancing into Tunisia, the government was looking for qualified Arabic speakers who could assist in preparing propaganda materials favorable to French interests in North Africa. Given his background, Ghanem fit the bill. In 1881, he received a moderate amount of government funding to run *Al-Bassir*, an Arab language journal primarily intended for distribution in Tunisia and Egypt. Ghanem assured officials that the newspaper would “finally teach the Arabs to love France,” a promise that ultimately failed to materialize.¹⁰³ Most Arab elites saw right through the paper’s pro-French sympathies. Within a year, it was struggling to attract readers and serving primarily as a channel for anti-British propaganda destined for Egyptian readers. It even published articles by the notable Muslim radical Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī in the hopes of lending the paper some credibility. The tactic failed, and the paper soon closed shop.¹⁰⁴

Despite this initial setback, others were not hesitant to offer their services. In 1882, a group of publicists contacted the French government to solicit interest in a new journal established in Paris that summer entitled *L’Astre d’Orient* (*Kawkab al-Mashriq*). As a bi-lingual paper published in French and Arabic, the owners believed the publication had a clear value for France given the new situation it faced. The editorial staff boasted a number of Arab journalists hailing from Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad. As such, they offered a veneer of authenticity that official journals lacked. The owners themselves assured they were interested in “extending French influence in the Orient” and “protecting our interests vis-à-vis the Muslim or Christian native populations.” They intended to maintain their “independence” and were not seeking subsidies “strictly speaking.” Nonetheless, it would be helpful if the French administration could guarantee a certain number of subscriptions in its North African colonies.¹⁰⁵ The proposal made sense to French officials, who saw the utility of backing an Arab journal that could reach an international Muslim audience.

The inaugural issue of *L’Astre d’Orient* set the tone, giving readers a balance sheet of France’s noble intentions toward Muslims. “For fifty-two years, France

¹⁰³ Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and ‘Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), 40.

¹⁰⁴ Aseraff, *Electric News*, 53.

¹⁰⁵ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1459, “Memoire présenté à L. E. le Ministre Résident de France au sujet de l’organisation et du but de la publication franco-arabe L’Astre d’Orient,” 23 September 1882.

has recognized the religion of Islam in Algeria, assisted with pilgrimages, and honored the *‘ulamā* which it has admitted into and called upon in its councils.”¹⁰⁶ Further issues highlighted the amiable relations that existed between priests and muftis in Algeria, challenged claims that colonialism was a new crusade, and insisted the mission of the paper was to “enlighten” all Muslims “that the will of God had placed under the direction of European powers.”¹⁰⁷ In tandem with this objective, articles supported a progressive brand of Islam that resisted “fanaticism” and obscurantism. As one Cairene contributor claimed, far from undermining progress and preaching intolerance, the Qur’an “was in agreement with European beliefs” and its teachings were able to fortify “the union of the great people of Islam with those of the West.”¹⁰⁸ According to Paul Brillouin, the nominal editor of *L’Astre d’Orient*, the paper aimed to provide a “free tribune” where Muslims in Paris and elsewhere could discuss important issues of the day in a constructive and informative atmosphere.¹⁰⁹ A paper for and by Muslims appreciative of what European and especially French modernity had to offer: this was the image that *L’Astre d’Orient* sought to project.

If on the surface *L’Astre d’Orient* appeared a routine organ of colonial propaganda, the circumstances surrounding its production hinted at the complex relations that colonial politics often engendered. Although advertising itself as a forum for Muslim opinion, the paper was in actuality owned by Catholic Syrian émigrés, among them ‘Abd Allāh Marrāsh, an Arab publicist with a hand in various journalistic enterprises in France and England.¹¹⁰ That publicists like Ghanem and Marrāsh would have contacts in France was not surprising. Syrian Christians had an advantage when it came to liaising with the French government. They had a built-in support network and ties to elite circles in Paris through religious and administrative channels. The French government had a history of working with Levantine Christians, typically as intermediaries and translators in the region. While this accord was a mainstay of France’s informal presence in the Near East, it was also one that benefited Maronite and Melchite Catholics as well. For them, France was a valuable foreign protector that could champion reforms beneficial to Arab Christians living within the Ottoman Empire and intervene on their behalf when needed, as had occurred in 1860.

These confessional relationships were not simply an alliance of convenience, however. They were embedded within deeper cultural entanglements connecting France with the Ottoman Near East. Christian Arabs were at the forefront of the print revolution occurring in the eastern Mediterranean at mid-century. They ran

¹⁰⁶ “Notre Programme,” *L’Astre d’Orient*, 24 June 1882.

¹⁰⁷ “L’Astre d’Orient aux Arabes,” *L’Astre d’Orient*, 27 July 1882.

¹⁰⁸ Mahmoud Nouri, “L’Œuvre importante de Cheikh Abou-L-Houda,” *L’Astre d’Orient*, 6 July 1882.

¹⁰⁹ Paul Brillouin, “A nos abonnés,” *L’Astre d’Orient*, 14 December 1882.

¹¹⁰ Ami Ayalon, *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: The Evolution of Modern Arabic Political Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 177.

some of the first independent newspapers and publishing houses in the region, transforming cities such as Beirut, Alexandria, and Cairo into intellectual centers of the Arab world. At the same time, Christians were being exposed to ideas coming from the West through their ties with European merchant firms and missionaries.¹¹¹ As Arab publishing houses were turning out a greater volume of printed materials, French Arabists working in Algeria were busy analyzing texts and codifying the Arabic language “in order that we might relate to the inhabitants of our colony,” as the linguist Auguste Cherbonneau stated in 1862.¹¹² Arab literary production had many sources, but collectively these efforts fed into emergent ideas of an Arab revival or “awakening” (*al-Nahda*) as philologists recovered a “pure” Arabic language and Christian publishers churned out books and newspapers printed in Arabic. The *Nahda* and colonialism were twin currents that often converged and ran together.¹¹³ As they did so, it opened up a space for imagining an Arab cultural identity that would acquire a more pronounced nationalist focus in the years ahead.

Many of these ideas resonated in the pages of *L'Astre d'Orient*. The newspaper never hid the fact that its editorial staff in Paris was Syrian, or “Frenchmen of the Orient” as the paper put it. Nor did it shy away from promoting issues favorable to Ottoman Syria either. As an “Arab journal,” it called for the “awakening of Arab nationality.”¹¹⁴ Its intention was to “remind the Arabs of their past grandeur” and enlighten them, whether those “living under Muslim sovereigns” or those “who by the will of God” had been placed under European rule.¹¹⁵ Articles encouraging the adoption of modern agriculture and commerce were consistent with the modernizing and assimilationist designs of French colonialism, but they remained rooted in broader aspirations for Arab modernization that transcended imperial frontiers. The editors even warmed Muslims to the idea of European “protection” with assertions that “France has never been the enemy of Islam” and “everywhere its flag is raised religion is respected and protection accorded to all,” hinting at the strategic objectives of a Syrian émigré political community in France that might one day countenance a European protectorate over Ottoman rule.¹¹⁶ As *L'Astre d'Orient* revealed, Syrian reform movements could dovetail with French colonial objectives, and émigrés were not reluctant to exploit these convergences in pursuing broader goals across empires. While the French government used publications like *L'Astre d'Orient* to cultivate colonial loyalties and spread French influence in

¹¹¹ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 97–101; Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 41–45; Philip Mansel, *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean* (London: John Murray, 2021), 149–54.

¹¹² Auguste Cherbonneau, *Nouvelles Observations sur le dialecte arabe de l'Algérie* (Paris: Extrait du Journal Asiatique, 1862), 4.

¹¹³ Messaoudi, *Les Arabisants*, 244–45.

¹¹⁴ “Un Dernier mot au Montakheb,” *L'Astre d'Orient*, 26 October 1882.

¹¹⁵ “L'Astre d'Orient aux Arabes,” *L'Astre d'Orient*, 27 July 1882.

¹¹⁶ “La Situation,” *L'Astre d'Orient*, 31 August 1882.

the eastern Mediterranean, Syrian publicists were using the very same medium to promote ideas of Arab autonomy applicable within Ottoman territories. Imperial rivalries engendered these types of trans-imperial connections as they brought together diverse interests and agendas.

The only problem, however, was that independent papers like *L'Astre d'Orient* failed to appeal to their intended Muslim readership. Its claims to represent Muslim opinion were open to criticism, and its evident pro-French sympathies undermined the paper's supposed independent position. Within a year, *L'Astre d'Orient* had ceased publication.¹¹⁷ Over the next two decades, the French government entertained a variety of proposals from independent publishers, all of which had similar flaws. In 1896, Auguste d'Arenberg, president of a Paris-based colonial lobby group, the *Comité de l'Afrique Française*, contacted the Algerian government to alert it to the *Bulletin Arabe* run by his organization. The publication was intended to influence Muslim opinion, Arenberg explained, and he therefore believed it should be distributed to the Algerian natives working within the administration. The Governor General, Jules Cambon thought the magazine useful and prepared a list of shaykhs and religious notables whom he believed should receive the *Bulletin* at the government's expense.¹¹⁸ Others were not as lucky, though. In early November 1897, Eugène Clavel wrote from Cairo introducing himself to the Tunisian administration as a chief editor for the publication *L'Union Islamique*. The paper was run in both French and Arabic and had a mixed editorial staff of Christians and Muslims. Clavel himself was an expert in Muslim law currently working in Egypt. He enclosed the latest issue of *L'Union Islamique*, believing the government would find it of interest. "Such a publication has by necessity an international character but it also has, first and foremost, an essentially French character so as to make Muslims more appreciative of your country," he claimed.¹¹⁹ Tunisian authorities did not share Clavel's estimation. The newspaper was opinionated and filled with useless information. "You will agree without doubt that it is not a genre of literature to encourage and spread among the natives," one official wrote to the Resident General.¹²⁰ The government passed.

Whether coming from Paris or Cairo, there was never a shortage of publicists seeking to tap into official funds. The ability of non-Muslims to turn out a quality product was, however, always in doubt. Journals run by locals stood a better chance of success, and colonial administrators were not blind to this reality. They paid close attention to the journals that circulated through the Maghreb and Near East and instructed local officials to keep an eye out for potential collaborators. In 1889, the Resident General in Tunisia, Justin Massicault, took an interest in Ali

¹¹⁷ Asseraf, *Electric News*, 54.

¹¹⁸ ANOM, GGA/10H/81, Auguste d'Arenberg to Jules Cambon, 30 April 1897, and Auguste d'Arenberg to Jules Cambon, 7 December 1897.

¹¹⁹ ANT, Series E, Carton 533, dossier 2, Eugène Clavel to the Résident Général, 2 November 1897.

¹²⁰ ANT, Series E, Carton 533, dossier 2, "Note pour M. le Résident Général," 24 November 1897.

Bouchoucha, a former interpreter for the regime and a student at the Sadiqi College in Tunis who ran a newspaper entitled *Al-Hadhira*. Given Bouchoucha's previous cooperation with the administration and his standing in the local community, Massicault believed he could prove a reliable ally in the Regency. He hoped to transform *Al-Hadhira* into "a semi-official organ of the government," noting that Bouchoucha and his writers were the type of publicists needed by the colonial regime. They were natives who were "resolute partisans of the Franco-Tunisian regime" while also "attached to their religion and traditions."¹²¹

Local support was needed as France consolidated its hold over Tunisia, but there were also the British in Egypt to consider. Egyptian periodicals and books passed through Tunisia on a regular basis, making them a potential source of British infiltration and subversion.¹²² To guard against this eventuality, the administration placed stricter controls on the press. Under the initial treaty establishing the protectorate, the Bey retained the power to authorize all publications in the Regency. This arrangement was far from ideal and necessitated an official trip to the Bardo Palace every time a new newspaper appeared. In 1884, the government streamlined this process, applying a modified version of the 1881 French press law throughout Tunisia. Political journals were required to give a 6,000 franc deposit in order to publish while attacks on the French administration or royal family were criminalized.¹²³ Eight years later, as the government became increasingly suspicious of Arabic language journals coming from abroad, French authorities expanded their censorship powers, mandating that "any journal or written periodical in the Arabic or Hebraic language should not be published in the Regency without the prior authorization of the Tunisian Government."¹²⁴

Internal control of the press was not, however, the only preoccupation. France worried that its longstanding ties to Egypt might be severed as the British government consolidated its hold over the country. In the past, France had employed a mix of diplomatic support and soft power to court Egyptian rulers and win over local elites. Under British rule, these channels were fast evaporating. From the beginning of the occupation, therefore, the government placed an emphasis on sustaining the *présence française* in Egypt through the use of the press. In addition to supporting newspapers run by French publicists, officials doled out sums of money to trustworthy publicists in Cairo and Alexandria.¹²⁵ As the foreign minister Charles de Freycinet explained in 1885, it was imperative for the government to provide financial support to Egyptian journals "which show

¹²¹ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 16, Massicault to Alexandre Ribot, MAE, 6 November 1891.

¹²² AMAE, Tunisie, NS 16, Massicault to Émile Flourens, MAE, 19 May 1887.

¹²³ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1459, "Loi du 19 Hidje 1301 (8 October 1884)."

¹²⁴ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 16, Blondel to Ribot, MAE, 18 November 1892.

¹²⁵ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 16, "Note pour le ministre," 18 July 1887.

themselves favorable to our policy in the Orient and particularly in Tunisia.”¹²⁶ Over the next decade, France ran a secret press war in Egypt intended to subvert British influence and defend its newly won protectorate from British attacks. “It was evident that the Egyptian press was free only in its legal formalities,” the deputy Lucien Hubert recalled, looking back on the period. “The pens of its editors were the servants of others.”¹²⁷

Due to its proximity to Egypt, Tunisia played a central role in this strategy. Officials were charged with seeking out Egyptian publicists and distributing payments to editors who would publish pro-French articles. The administration saw a potential advantage to this approach, expecting that the Egyptian papers would circulate back into Algeria and Tunisia and reach their own colonial populations, thereby concealing the hand of French officialdom in their production.¹²⁸ Demand for these journals was typically low, prompting the government to pay select Tunisian journalists to import and distribute them in the protectorate. In 1889, the editor Muhammad Besis received money to purchase pro-French Egyptian newspapers and make them available to readers in Tunis. To compensate his efforts, the administration took out a sizable number of subscriptions to his own journal, *El Djouail*, that guaranteed the paper for at least six months.¹²⁹ In this wheeling and dealing, policymakers occasionally found they had to juggle between colonial concerns and broader regional objectives. The two did not always align as neatly as hoped. In 1890, for example, Massicault expressed misgivings about providing support to the paper *Al-Ahram*, a publication founded in Alexandria by two Maronite Christian brothers from Beirut. As he saw it, the paper generally contained “no information of interest” to Tunisian readers. On the other hand, the journal was popular in Syria and its pro-French articles could be of service in the Levant.¹³⁰ More immediate interests had to be balanced with long-term goals, especially as it appeared that the British presence in Egypt would not be disappearing anytime soon.

France was always keen to see the hand of Britain at work in the Egyptian press, but such perspectives were more-often-than-not overly narrow. The fin-de-siècle Egyptian press was dynamic and reflected a wide range of political and cultural interests. Press laws in Egypt were relatively lax, encouraging many Ottoman journalists and reformers to migrate to cities like Cairo and Alexandria. There, they joined established communities of intellectuals and mingled with other expatriate communities consisting of anarchists, Armenian nationalists, and proponents of modernizing movements like the *Nahda*. Islamic modernist reformers

¹²⁶ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1459, Freycinet, MAE to Bompard, Délégué à la Résidence Générale à Tunis, 30 August 1885.

¹²⁷ Lucien Hubert, *L'Islam et la Guerre* (Paris: Augustin Challamel, 1918), 15.

¹²⁸ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 16, “Note pour le ministre,” 18 July 1887.

¹²⁹ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1459, “Traduction,” 16 October 1889.

¹³⁰ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 16, Massicault to Eugène Spuller, MAE, 28 February 1890.

like the Syrian-born Muhammad Rashid Rida ran popular newspapers with broad readerships that often commented on colonial politics of the day. Egyptian nationalists equally had their say, using critiques of French colonialism to attack the British by association. Newspapers backed by the Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid sparred with journalists supported by Khedive Abbas Hilmi as they attempted to win over Muslim supporters, generating feuds that occasionally extended outside the pages of the press.¹³¹ Added to this mix were a small contingent of Tunisian and Algerian exiles critical of the French regime. From Egypt, they ran newspapers “destined to combat our influence,” as the French consul in Cairo Alexandre Ribot reported.¹³² Others contributed to the chorus. In 1893, the Alexandrian paper *Al-Ittihad-al-Masri* (*Egyptian Unity*) took a critical stance on French policies, accusing the administration of hampering the Tunisian press and free expression. It urged journalists to demonstrate their “independence” and “show the faults of French bureaucrats, who are not concerned with any responsibility and know no other obligations and crush underfoot the rights of the country.”¹³³ Colonial politics were part of a wider radicalism and cultural flourishing taking place in Egypt at the turn of the century as exiles, reformers, and dissidents alike promulgated new modernist ideas or called for a nationalist revival.¹³⁴

In this ambience, French papers appeared tame and conventional by comparison, a factor evident in their declining readership. In early 1899, the newspaper *Al-Muqattam* reported on the closure of the *Journal Égyptien*, “the last surviving organ of French opinion in Cairo.” Published regularly since 1893, the journal had been a mainstay of the Egyptian media and provided a counter to pro-British newspapers in the country like *Al-Muqattam*. Its closure was taken as a clear sign of France’s diminishing status in the country. “[French publicists] clearly see that their role is finished,” *Al-Muqattam* gloated. Opposition to the British occupation was not only “useless,” in its opinion, but also “ridiculous.”¹³⁵ According to the Tunisian administration, the writing was now on the wall. “Since the occupation of the Egyptian Sudan by the English, the Arab newspapers subordinate to the English policy show themselves more and more virulent,” it warned in a secret memo.¹³⁶ More alarming still was the prospect that these organs might pose a challenge to French influence in the broader region. British-backed journals

¹³¹ Umar Ryad, “A Printed ‘Lighthouse’ in Cairo: Al-Manar’s Early Years, Religious Aspiration and Reception (1898–1903),” *Arabica*, 56 (2009): 27–60; Arthur Asseraf, “La Société coloniale face à l’actualité internationale: diffusion, contrôle, usages (1881–1899),” *Revue d’Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 63:2 (2006): 121; Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 44–48.

¹³² CADN, 1TU/1/V/989, Ribot, Consulate General in Cairo to Pichon, MAE, 14 January 1910.

¹³³ ANT, Series E, Carton 533, dossier 2, “News clipping” (1893).

¹³⁴ See: Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman, eds., *The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence, Subterranean Resistance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

¹³⁵ ANT, Series E, Carton 532, dossier 9/2, “Extrait du journal égyptien Al-Mokattam,” 27 January 1899.

¹³⁶ ANT, Series E, Carton 532, dossier 9/2, “Note: Secrétariat général, bureau de la comptabilité,” 5 February 1899.

regularly took shots at France, drawing attention to the complaints of Algerian Muslims and asserting that Britain was a far more humane “Muslim power” than its Gallic counterpart. “In the security of its Muslim empire and the loyalty of its Mohammedan subjects, [France] does not possess one-tenth of the confidence that England inspires in its Islamic domain,” one journalist argued, rejecting outright the notion that France might consider itself a Muslim power.¹³⁷ As a new century dawned, French officials had to face facts. They had lost the war for Egypt.

A New Imperialism?

The Anglo-French rivalry was a “war of words” in two respects. At one level, the conflict was played out in the rhetoric familiar to the new imperialism of the late nineteenth century. Diplomats and politicians sparred off against one another in a contest of imperial wills. They buttressed claims for dominance and control on a global scale while rejecting competing positions advanced by adversaries. These disputes, carried out on the floors of parliaments and the pages of the national press, contributed to the impending sense of rivalry that informed great power politics in the period. Yet for all the antagonisms the new imperialism generated, it was difficult to deny that imperialists were operating within a shared discursive universe. They responded to and even appropriated the arguments of their enemies, reinterpreting them to fit new national contexts. Concepts of native sovereignty and “Muslim” imperium were disputed and challenged, but the commonalities evident across arguments suggested that imperialists were drawing upon a common stock of concepts and rhetorical devices shared with their imperial counterparts. Britain and France were, to a large degree, shaped by their mutual engagements.¹³⁸

Yet on another level, the “war of words” occupied an entirely different sphere outside the metropolitan capitals of Europe. Colonial officials engaged the local press in imperial contests, whether by running their own newspapers in vernacular languages or co-opting native publicists willing to speak for French interests. Through these activities they instrumentalized regional print and social networks that cut across imperial borders. These undertakings were often more reflective of the “informal” channels that customarily underpinned European imperialism, even as such practices were adapted to the political context and rhetoric of the new imperialism. In certain instances, these channels brought together disparate political agendas that cohered with great power imperial interests. Syrian émigrés demonstrated an ability to adapt the rhetoric of Muslim empire to projects of Ottoman and Arab reform, promoting ideas central to the *Nahda* in cooperation with French colonial regimes. Officials in Tunis employed Egyptian publicists to

¹³⁷ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1468, “Extrait de Al-Manar,” 30 April 1900.

¹³⁸ Thomas and Toye, *Arguing About Empire*, 3–5.

run papers that were expected to circulate into Algeria and Tunisia carrying favorable accounts of France. “Independent” native publicists benefited from imperial competition and used them to access sources of patronage and funding. These flows and the multiple contexts in which imperial propaganda was embedded exposed that imperial entanglements ran deeper than rhetoric and ideology. The politics of empire drew together a constellation of actors and localities that revealed the connections driving empire-building on the ground.

Europe’s new imperialism may have focused on territorial acquisition, but it gave rise to aspirations for expansion that placed older notions of “moral empire” and cultural influence within new contexts. As a self-proclaimed “Muslim power,” France could seek to exert authority beyond its borders when it came to Africa and the Muslim Mediterranean. Auguste d’Arenberg admitted as much when writing to the Algerian Governor General in 1897. “[France] has in Algeria and Tunisia two large territories populated by Muslims in which it can act freely and show the manner it intends to follow everywhere it plants its flag,” he insisted.¹³⁹ The geopolitics of empire were coming to imprint themselves more forcefully on the broader region, and as Arenberg noted, these currents were not just connecting European metropolises in new ways. Muslim populations in North Africa and the Near East were also subject to the evolutions of empire, raising questions of how colonial authorities would engage with Muslim societies in the new imperial landscape.

¹³⁹ ANOM, GGA/10H/81, Auguste d’Arenberg to Jules Cambon, 7 December 1897.

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Territorialization and Mobility in the Mediterranean

In 1901, Edmond Doutté was given an opportunity he could not turn down. That year, he received notification the Algerian government was sponsoring him to join a French scientific mission carrying out fieldwork in Morocco. Since taking Algeria, the colonial administration had wrestled with the difficulties posed by the tribal confederations and Sufi religious orders that spanned the Algerian–Moroccan frontier. In sending Doutté to assist with gathering data, the government hoped he would provide needed details on the populations and terrain of the volatile region. A rising Islamologist with his sights set on academic advancement, Doutté packed his bags and headed for Marrakesh. Arriving in the country, he took copious notes on the localities he visited and Morocco’s lively religious life, hoping to discover an “authentic” Islam untainted by contact with European civilization.¹ Yet his accounts were also punctuated with reflections on French policies in the region, leading Doutté to believe that colonial officials still had much to learn when it came to North African society. “There is a radical difference between us and Muslims in how the idea of empire is understood,” he observed. “For us, the primary concern is an idea of boundaries, and this notion of boundaries persists in preventing us from understanding exactly what a Maghrebin empire is.”²

Doutté’s observation was trenchant. Moreover, it was one that colonial administrators were beginning to suspect as they became entangled in the politics of empire across North Africa. The Mediterranean was a nexus of social, economic, and religious currents flowing from western Africa to Asia. As European powers expanded their reach across Africa, they discovered that the norms and forms of native societies often conflicted with their own ideas of a fixed, well-ordered colonial dominion. Colonialism itself even encouraged new migratory flows and displacements as Muslims refused to submit to European oversight and took up residence in adjoining Ottoman lands. These migrations would create difficulties for states eager to rein in cross-border ties and cement their control over territories. At the same time, Ottoman territories were characterized by varying forms of layered sovereignty that resisted European notions of statecraft and centralized

¹ Edmond Doutté, *Mission au Maroc: Un Tribu* (Paris: Paul Guthner, 1914).

² Edmond Doutté, *Merrâkech* (Paris: Comité du Maroc, 1905), 8.

authority.³ In many cases, these provincial structures were decentered and at odds with the neat jurisdictional boundaries superimposed on the region by imperial governments. Enforcing imperial forms of sovereignty would require disciplining the flows that had historically connected the Ottoman world and revising existing legal and cultural identities that posed an obstacle to European imperium. Sovereignty was not merely a question of space in the abstract. It entailed imposing specific territorial regimes on an area characterized by a variety of trans-regional entanglements.⁴

Authorities were not ignorant of these complex relationships, nor were they averse to working through them. In seizing control of Tunisia and Egypt, French and British officials had to contend with the administrative structures and byzantine legal systems in place. Coming to grips with the Ottoman legacy in these areas, they attempted to adapt forms of legal pluralism and layered sovereignty to an administrative, hierarchical order amenable to imperial rule.⁵ The struggles that ensued over jurisdictional and territorial control revealed that navigating these composite systems had a tendency to fracture the colonial order just as much as fortify it. Europeans, natives, and colonial subjects alike operated between competing legal and administrative regimes, revealing that the colonial order remained in a constant state of construction and was subject to numerous negotiations and compromises.⁶ Imperial rivalries and pre-existing structures complicated processes of empire-building and generated disruptions on numerous levels, whether colonial, imperial, or international. In all of this, however, it was evident that the legal and administrative battles waged during the second half of the nineteenth century were slowly altering the traditional structures and norms of the Ottoman Mediterranean as concepts such as nationality and extraterritorial legal jurisdiction reoriented the region.

Imperial governmentality reflected a tension between controlling cross-border movements and instrumentalizing them for the purposes of colonial rule and expansion. These tensions hinted at the fact that imperialism was never confined to a fixed set of practices or spatial imaginaries, even as authorities came to formalize techniques of imperial rule and embed them within international law. Imperialism encompassed a diverse range of practices that adapted to varying social and political topographies. As such, imperial forms of power were

³ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 17.

⁴ Pierre Robert Baduel, "La production de l'espace national au Maghreb," in Pierre Robert Baduel, ed., *Lieux d'autonomie et centralisation étatique. Etat, territoire et terroirs au Maghreb* (Paris: Editions CNRS, 1985); Bertrand Badie, *L'Etat importé. Occidentalization de l'ordre politique* (Paris: Fayard, 1992).

⁵ Lauren Benton, "Colonial Law and Cultural Difference: Jurisdictional Politics and the Formation of the Colonial State," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41:3 (July 1999): 563–88.

⁶ M'hamed Oualdi, "Le 'pluralisme juridique': Au fil d'un conflit de succession en Méditerranée à la fin du XIXe siècle," *Revue d'Histoire du XIXe Siècle*, 48 (2014): 93–106.

constantly being recreated and modified to fit local circumstances.⁷ This versatility exposed a number of contradictions within colonial regimes. Officials attempted to constrain extraterritorial and trans-local connections, but they often used these exact mechanisms to establish influence elsewhere. As these details suggest, empire constantly engaged with numerous and competing spatial and territorial frameworks, creating policies that pursued contradictory objectives. Over the nineteenth century, the southern and eastern Mediterranean became an imperial space. However, as state-building initiatives progressed, French and British authorities were forced to contend with and adapt to the realities of a mobile world that constantly undermined the very control and sovereign authority they desired. While the colorful maps produced in the nineteenth century featured a world composed of well-defined imperial enclaves and rigid borders traced across the surface of the globe, the reality was anything but neat. As administrators learned, the space of empire was never absolute.

A Mobile World

“Sovereignty implies space,” the French social theorist Henri Lefebvre once remarked.⁸ What he meant was not only that power acts upon physical space. Power creates the very space in which it operates; it territorializes in order to control. For many nineteenth-century imperialists, this maxim was taken for granted. In the new imperial contest, space was at a premium as statesmen spoke of expansion and endorsed policies of “effective occupation.” Imperial strategists dreamed of creating empires running from “Cape-to-Cairo” and forging “comprehensive blocs” across Africa. Bright color-coded maps proudly displayed the imperial reach of nations, dividing the world into imperial territories and those yet to be conquered. Carving up global space in this fashion was nothing new, even if the scale was now more ambitious. Colonial cartographers and explorers had been tracing lines and borders across the surface of the earth for over a century. Colonies like Algeria and India were imperial creations demarcated by European mapmakers and given spatial definition by colonial authorities. It was not surprising that geographic societies across the continent were closely linked to European colonial ventures during the century, nor was it uncommon for geographers to participate in colonial lobby groups.⁹ At base, colonial

⁷ David Ludden, “The Process of Empire: Frontiers and Borderlands,” in Peter Fibiger and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Tributary Empires in Global History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 133.

⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 280.

⁹ Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Morag Bell, Robin Butlin, and Michael Heffernan, eds., *Geography and Imperialism, 1820–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Dominique Lejeune, *Les sociétés de géographie en France et l'expansion coloniale au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel,

empire-building was concerned with the construction, delimiting, organization, and exploitation of global space. It created new territories through the drawing of political and administrative borders, imagining sovereignty as something bounded and territorialized.¹⁰ These concepts and practices familiar to European nation-building projects on the continent created new geographies across the extra-European world. In no uncertain way, imperialism amounted to a process of re-spatialization. It proposed a novel spatial framework for imagining the world in terms consistent with European hegemony and control.

The problem was that this mental map of European empire did not always conform to realities on the ground in the Mediterranean. Islam operated according to a completely different spatial regime. Across North Africa and the Middle East, imperialists encountered a world that did not conform to the territorial and political frameworks adhered to by European officials and colonial administrators. The expanse of territory extending from Morocco to the shores of the Levant might have encompassed part of a general Mediterranean geography for European observers, but for Muslims it was attached to a larger Islamic world bound by trans-local networks of exchange and interaction spanning Africa and Asia. What Muslims referred to as *dar al-Islam* comprised an expansive geography characterized by common religious and cultural practices, social and family ties, and movement. People, goods, and texts circulated across this space, entailing that the predominantly Sunni Muslim world stretching from the Maghreb to the Asian subcontinent was a mobile one.

It was not uncommon for Muslim elites to go abroad to complete their education. Leading centers of learning such as al-Qarawiyyin in Fez and al-Zaytuna in Tunis attracted an international cohort of students annually. Al-Azhar in Cairo was the most prestigious of the universities with a student body consisting of Tatars, Arabs, Turks, Kurds, and Indians coming from across the Islamic world. Students were organized into *riwâq* (colleges) in which they socialized with others coming from their home region. They also had opportunities to mingle in Cairo's cosmopolitan urban life. These types of organizations provided a sense of cohesion for a diverse student body and offered channels for sociability and idea sharing that played an important role in one's intellectual development.¹¹ Upon completing their studies, these religious scholars (*'ulamâ*) were expected to

1993); Jeffrey C. Stone, "Imperialism, Colonialism, and Cartography," *Transactions of the Institute for British Geographers*, 13:1 (1988): 57–64.

¹⁰ Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law, 1800–1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 148–79; Krishan Kumar, "Nation States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States: Two Principles, One Practice?" *Theory and Society*, 39:2 (March 2010): 119–43.

¹¹ CADN, ITU/1/V/989, André Ribot to Stephen Pichon, MAE, 6 May 1910. Also, see: André Raymond, "A Divided Sea: The Cairo Coffee Trade in the Red Sea Area During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century," in Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Modernity and Culture from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 51.

staff the top religious, judicial, and bureaucratic posts in their home localities. They were hardly parochial functionaries and often retained connections with other regional and foreign elites across Africa and the greater Middle East.¹² For this reason, institutions like Al-Azhar had an importance in the Islamic world that could not be understated. “From this famous religious university centered in Cairo come perhaps the greatest number of ‘ulamā and muftis who after twelve years of study, return to their country to preach the holy word,” a French consul in Egypt explained.¹³

As a group, the ‘ulamā played a central role in the functioning of Muslim societies. Yet they were also religious and social authorities that gave societies a patently Islamic character. While the Qur’an served as a guide for believers, the ‘ulamā were the ones that interpreted Quranic law, oversaw the judicial system, and ran the schools. Above all, they defended and preserved Islamic knowledge and culture, serving as guardians of the Islamic tradition and ensuring that society conformed to Islamic principles as they understood them. Given their religious expertise, the ‘ulamā furnished Muslim political leaders with the necessary legitimacy required to rule, typically giving their decrees religious backing and validity. In this capacity, they exercised a great deal of moral and political influence, albeit indirectly.¹⁴ Despite their connections to the centers of power, scholars were autonomous and comprised a distinct social group within Muslim society due to education, common cultural practices, and a shared social environment.¹⁵

Parallel with established religious scholars, Sufis and popular religious organizations were also a factor that stitched together networks and connected localities. Sufi orders ran lodges and affiliated spiritual centers (*zāwiya*) linked through social and cultural ties. Those initiated into specific *tariqa* (orders) traveled between centers and benefited from the schools and mosques run by respective orders.¹⁶ Some of these *tariqa*, like the Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya, had a substantial scope of action, with networks extending from subcontinental Asia to Morocco.¹⁷

¹² Mustafa Tuna, *Imperial Russia's Muslims: Islam, Empire and European Modernity, 1788–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 21–35.

¹³ CADN, ITU/1/V/990, Fouchet to Poincaré, MAE, 10 October 1912.

¹⁴ Ismail Kara, “Turban and Fez: Ulema as Opposition,” in Elisabeth Özdalga, ed., *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy* (London: Routledge, 2005), 163–64; Adeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 24–33; Allan Christelow, *Muslim Law Courts and the French Colonial State in Algeria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 8–9.

¹⁵ Arnold H. Green, *The Tunisian Ulama, 1873–1915: Social Structures and Response to Ideological Currents* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 6–16.

¹⁶ B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

¹⁷ Butrus Abu-Manneh, “The Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya in the Ottoman Lands in the Early 19th Century,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 22:1/4 (1982): 1–36; Ira M. Lapidus, *Islamic Societies to the Nineteenth Century: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 283–84; Anne K. Bang, *Islamic Sufi Networks in the Western Indian Ocean (c.1880–1940): Ripples of Reform* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012).

A report drafted in 1862 by the Arab Offices in Algeria noted the strong influence the Qadiriyya exercised in the Maghreb, insisting that it formed “a society which has different members of adepts in all the countries of Islam.”¹⁸ While many of the orders and *ikhwān* (brotherhoods) were built upon kinship and family lineages, they typically cut across tribal lines and had the capacity to incorporate communities into broader trans-local networks. In various places, they operated at contested border zones between local sovereigns and encroaching colonial powers, providing public services and quasi-state functions for communities on the fringes of empires.¹⁹ Orders were also linked to prominent merchant families, entailing that Sufi missionary work went hand-in-hand with expanding access to commercial centers and lucrative caravan routes. Wherever orders gained a foothold, it opened up economic opportunities for family members and further embedded Sufi orders within the trade networks spanning North Africa and the Indian Ocean.²⁰

Religious pilgrimage, most significantly the annual hajj to Mecca, similarly served to connect peripheral regions to Islamic centers. Cairo and Beirut were popular stopping places for North African pilgrims heading to Mecca, and for certain travelers a visit to Istanbul completed the return itinerary. Sufi orders commonly facilitated these types of religious travel, providing lodges along pilgrimage routes that serviced the needs of travelers coming from various locations. Naqshbandi lodges in Istanbul housed Uzbeks, Bukharan, and Chinese Turkistani travelers while the Tijāniyya had a string of *zāwiya* across the Sudan travel route that acted as a pilgrimage highway running from present-day Nigeria to Egypt.²¹ Algerian and Tunisian pilgrims en route to the Middle East often took temporary shelter in Libya where the Senusiyya order was predominant. At these lodges they encountered Egyptians and other Maghrebi Muslims passing through.²² Lodges across Africa and Asia became places where pilgrims socialized, discussed politics, and interacted, transforming hajj routes into sites where cross-community networks were forged and sustained. Moreover, as states and European travel companies began managing pilgrimage traffic on a greater scale for reasons of public health, surveillance, or profit during the nineteenth century, a wider section

¹⁸ ANOM, Alger/2U/22, “Rapport à Monsieur le Conseiller d’Etat, Directeur Général, Préfet d’Alger,” 18 April 1862.

¹⁹ R. S. O’Fahey and Bernd Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered,” *Der Islam*, 70:1 (January 1993): 76–81; Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization and Resistance, 1830–1932* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 32.

²⁰ Ulrike Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 89–128, 187–99; Anne K. Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860–1925* (London: Routledge, 2003).

²¹ Irit Back, “From West Africa to Mecca and Jerusalem: The Tijāniyya on the Hajj Routes,” *Journal of Middle East and Africa*, 6 (2015): 1–15; Lâle Can, “Connecting People: A Central Asian Sufi Network in Turn-of-the-Century Istanbul,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 46:2 (2012): 374–78.

²² ANT, Series E, Carton 550, dossier 4–9, “Feuille de Renseignements” (1889).

of the Muslim public took part in the hajj, turning it into a mass phenomenon.²³ With cities such as Cairo, Istanbul, and Mecca constituting nodal points within familiar migratory patterns, events like the hajj served to bring pilgrims into contact with a global Muslim community and consequently transformed these urban centers into sites of cross-community interaction and engagement.²⁴

Participation in the hajj gave Muslims a greater sense of belonging to a shared supra-national Islamic community, or the *ummah*. It also provided the impetus for diaspora and relocation across the *ummah* as well. Maghrebi natives who left French-controlled Algeria or Tunisia might never return, resettling in Egypt or Syria where they could live under the rule of a Muslim sovereign. Indonesians escaping Dutch oversight preferred Cairo to Jakarta and created a small émigré community on the banks of the Nile. Indian Muslims alienated by the growing British commercial and administrative presence on the subcontinent were no different. They left for Mecca and subsequently settled in places like the Hijaz, Egypt, Syria, and Istanbul, carving out small expatriate communities across the Near and Middle East. These communities were not isolated enclaves in host countries. Émigrés were often politically active and, in some cases, introduced radical anti-imperialist ideologies into the places they settled and merged them with pre-existing local tensions.²⁵ “The Hijaz harbors many men who having become obnoxious to the government of their own countries have sought refuge in the province,” a British consular agent concluded.²⁶ The hajj itself acquired a more prominent political dimension as diaspora and colonialism forged trans-imperial links and generated common social and political concerns among Muslims.

European authorities persistently feared that religious travel and pilgrimage could breed radical Islamic movements that would travel back and wreak havoc in their own empires. “Muslims of all nationalities are now in close contact with each other and political events are reported to all the leaders,” a British consul in Zohrab reported in 1879, warning that the hajj was being used by Muslims to plot subversive acts. “The organization seems complete and the union perfect.”²⁷ The British India Office took these reports seriously, and called for greater scrutiny of all Muslim pilgrims, insisting, “it is chiefly through them that communications with the Mussulmans in India are carried on.”²⁸ French observers shared roughly

²³ Michael B. Miller, “Pilgrim’s Progress: The Business of the Hajj,” *Past and Present*, 191 (May 2006): 189–228; Eileen Kane, *Russian Hajj: Empire and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 7–8.

²⁴ Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism*, 23, 135–36.

²⁵ Luc Chantre, *Pèlerinage d’Empire: Une histoire européenne du pèlerinage à la Mecque* (Paris: Editions de la Sorbonne, 2018), 87; Michael Christopher Low, “Empire and the Hajj: Pilgrims, Plagues and Pan-Islam under British Surveillance, 1865–1908,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 40:2 (May 2008): 277; Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism*, 18–19; Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds* (London: Routledge, 2003), 114–41.

²⁶ Quoted in Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism*, 126.

²⁷ Quoted in Chantre, *Pèlerinage d’Empire*, 88.

²⁸ BNA, FO/881/4341, Austen Henry Layard to Secretary of Foreign Affairs, 26 April 1880.

the same opinion, warning that pilgrimage facilitated the “meetings of secret Islamic religious societies” that would destabilize French territories in North Africa.²⁹ As one Algerian colonist warned in 1873, “They go [to Mecca] to whet their fanaticism and fortify their prejudices against Christians.”³⁰ Europeans took active measures to stem the tide of this perceived Islamic radicalism coming from the Middle East. They introduced more stringent passport systems to monitor the movements of colonial subjects and assumed a wider role in coordinating the pilgrimage through preferred shipping companies that operated along pre-established travel routes. Yet as European powers progressively “colonized” the hajj and exerted more control over Muslim subjects, anxieties over the international purview of Islam grew.³¹ A more detailed knowledge of pilgrimage and religious travel only seemed to confirm what European authorities suspected all along: Islam posed an international threat.

The hajj was only the most prominent and visible example of the mobility that Europeans came to distrust. Pilgrimage, caravansaries, religious networks, and centers of learning were all part of a common Islamic geography that bounded notions of *dar al-Islam* or the *ummah*. These details revealed that Muslim societies did not necessarily conform to territorialized understandings of state or empire. Common cultural and religious institutions were embedded within a dense web of trans-local networks and connections that spanned Afro-Eurasia. These networks operated largely outside the control and supervision of imperial authorities, and for this reason they were suspect.

Colonial Authority and Emigration

The question was how to govern and control this mobility. For France, this question had been present from the beginning of the Algerian conquest in the 1830s. During the initial phase of the invasion, the military combated resistance aided from Morocco and led by Sufi leaders who successfully mobilized supra-tribal movements across communities with support from the local ‘ulamā. These connections built upon pre-existing commercial, religious, and tribal ties between western Algeria and the ‘Alawī sultanate across the Moroccan border, and the resistance itself borrowed from established jihadist discourses central to Sharifist state-building.³² Turkish notables in the east similarly battled against French forces, appealing to the Ottoman Empire for support. From the outset, the French

²⁹ *La Presse*, 31 October 1865.

³⁰ *Les Arabes et la colonisation en Algérie* (Paris: A. Pougin, 1873), 23.

³¹ Low, “Empire and the Hajj,” 286.

³² Amira K. Bennison, *Jihad and its Interpretations in Pre-Colonial Morocco: State-Society Relations during the French Conquest of Algeria* (London: Routledge, 2002); James McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 60–73.

invasion revealed the connections between regional centers and the Maghreb's enduring links with the Ottoman world. Rather than a sharp break with the past, France's entrance in North Africa marked a chapter in a longer history of the Maghreb that would highlight the interconnected paths and histories of the Mediterranean and broader Islamic world.³³

The Algerian resistance left its mark on the colonial administration and would shape prevailing ideas of Islam among French experts. Officials emphasized the dangers and security hazards associated with a "fanatical" religion possessing a trans-regional orientation. Islam was a political threat, they contended, one that needed to be isolated and closely monitored if French control was to be achieved. To this end, officials clamped down on Muslim cultural institutions in the colony. They took charge of Algerian Islam, employing a model similar to the *concordat* in France. Muftis and imams were vetted by the government. French authorities appointed Islamic judges (*qadis*) and subjected them to state oversight. The colonial administration even assumed responsibility for maintaining mosques and supplying materials needed for religious worship. The costs associated with these various functions were paid directly out of Islamic religious endowments (*waqfs*), which were also placed under French control.³⁴ The Algerian religious establishment was made completely dependent upon the state, and intentionally so. French authorities centralized Algerian Islam in the hands of the colonial administration, using it as an instrument of colonial rule. This feature gave Algerian Islam a unique character when compared with other Muslim societies where religious organization tended to be local and decentralized. "In no other Muslim state is there a clergy as regularly constituted as ours," observed Edmond Doutté. "This is certain, but we can only win in the condition where we administer by having a well-organized clergy entirely in our hands."³⁵

In its effort to seal off Algeria from surrounding areas and secure its colonial borders, the French administration found itself intervening in various aspects of native social and cultural life. It imposed controls on travel and movement, requiring Muslims to seek out official permission from prefects to leave their localities or go abroad. Algerian natives were subject to a special legal system—the *Code de l'Indigénat*—which gave colonial authorities broad powers to arrest and convict Algerian Muslims for a variety of crimes and misdemeanors that did not apply to European colonists.³⁶ When it came to administrative controls on the Algerian religious establishment, colonial officials in the Native Affairs Bureau

³³ Noureddine Amara, "1830: Les servitudes ottomanes de la possession française d'Alger," *NAQD*, 2:3 (2014): 67–94.

³⁴ Oissila Saaidia, *Algérie coloniale, Musulmans et Chrétiens: le contrôle de l'État, 1830–1914* (Paris: Editions CNRS, 2015); Christelow, *Muslim Law Courts*.

³⁵ Edmond Doutté, *L'Islam algérien en l'an 1900* (Algiers: Giralt, 1900), 116.

³⁶ McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, 86–129; Charles-Robert Ageron, *Les Algériens Musulmans et la France, 1871–1919* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 1: 354–61.

were compelled to seek out trustworthy authorities for posts and keep records on potential elites to staff the religious and native bureaucracy.³⁷ Often, French administrators were drawn into local disputes and rivalries that they would just as much prefer not to deal with. In 1867, a qadi in Bône petitioned the state to request that one of his pages be dismissed on the grounds he was taking bribes, prompting the French *procureur général* to launch an investigation and determine whether pursuing criminal charges was a viable option.³⁸ This was not an isolated incident. On various accounts, authorities were called upon to investigate matters regarding local corruption and charges leveled against native officials by enemies within their community. They also had to appease Muslim opinion when it came to the upkeep and integrity of the mosques, cemeteries, and holy shrines for which the state was responsible. In one of the most flagrant cases, Muslims in Jijel launched a protest in 1897 when a brothel was opened across from a local mosque in the town. Municipal officials were forced to move the brothel to a different location to avoid conflict.³⁹ These were just some of the many mundane issues the French government was forced to contend with as it clamped down on Algerian native society.

While seizing control of Algerian Islam was successful in creating a salaried clergy and “building up a [Muslim] clientele” in the colony, it was “a monstrosity in the eyes of believers,” as the orientalist Henry de Castries observed.⁴⁰ Algerian Muslims protested over French intervention in their religious affairs. The extent of influence wielded by religious officials associated with the state was also questionable.⁴¹ By and large, the Sufis outside the state had greater influence over native communities and commanded authority at the local level. Setting up an “official” Islam did little to draw Muslims away from Sufi leaders in the colony. Moreover, as the administration clamped down on Islamic cultural institutions, some Algerians protested with their feet, provoking the very border-crossing and migratory movements the government was attempting to thwart.

Algerians, and later Tunisians, left their homes and joined existing communities abroad in Tripoli, Egypt, Istanbul, and most prominently Syria. The government received requests annually for permission to leave, mostly from natives with few resources and no landholdings.⁴² With the initial migrations of the 1830s and 1840s establishing a permanent émigré community in the Ottoman territories of

³⁷ See for example: AN F19 10934, D. Buret to Ministre des Cultes, 13 August 1898; ANOM, GGA/17H/8, “Presentation du premier président et du procureur général, candidat Si Mohamed Larbi den-Aldi ben-Mami,” 1888.

³⁸ ANOM, GGA/17H/7, Procureur Général to Patrice MacMahon, 24 July 1867.

³⁹ AN F19 10934, Office of the Governor General to the Garde des Sceaux, 19 October 1897.

⁴⁰ Henry de Castries, *L'Islam: Impression et études* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1907), 224.

⁴¹ Raberh Achi, “L'Islam authentique appartient à Dieu, L'Islam Algérien à César: la mobilisation de l'association des oulémas d'Algérie pour la separation du culte musulman et de l'État (1931–1956),” *Genèses*, 69:4 (2007): 50–51.

⁴² ANOM, GGA/10H/90, “Rapport sur l'Emigration en Syrie,” 4 December 1898.

the eastern Mediterranean, by 1910 it was estimated that some 17,500 Algerians were living in Syria, with significant clusters located in Damascus and Galilee. Many left the colony in secret, traveling via land routes or by the more expedient shipping lanes connecting the North African coast to the port cities of the eastern Mediterranean.⁴³ Émigrés remained in “permanent contact” with family members and communities back home through a variety of channels. Religious authorities hostile to the government moved through Tunisia and Syria sending missives and encouraging others to follow. Newspapers published in Istanbul or Beirut carrying émigré testimonials were read aloud at the *cafés maures* in Algerian cities. Sufi networks and ethnic Turkish communities in French colonies also provided conduits through which émigré letters extolling the Ottoman sultan’s generosity and favorable treatment circulated.⁴⁴ These migratory trends, while confined to a relatively small section of the population, revealed the enduring emotional and social attachments Maghrebin Muslims possessed toward the Ottoman world.

French officials, however, took these communications for propaganda, drawing attention to the close relationship between the Ottoman government and the *agence d’émigration* established in Damascus. One official insisted that the Ottoman provincial administration in Syria was encouraging emigration in the hopes of bolstering the Muslim population in the region and diminishing the influence of Christian communities. Émigré activities were organized by the Syrian vilayet via Tunis, where agents on the ground assisted with disseminating pro-Ottoman propaganda across the Algerian frontier and coordinating travel arrangements for prospective migrants.⁴⁵ Ottoman complicity in this process was never as direct as colonial authorities charged. Reports overlooked the fact that Europeans in Algeria had a hand in trafficking émigrés across the border. Colonists catered to Muslim fantasies of a better life in the Ottoman Empire, profiting from their gullibility.⁴⁶ These activities were, moreover, part of a broader clandestine “emigration industry” that cut across the region. Various intermediaries and profiteers took a hand in arranging illegal transport for those seeking opportunities abroad, assisting potential migrants with procuring steamship tickets or bypassing port authorities. While Algerians heading east frustrated French officials, the Ottomans were just as exasperated by Syrians leaving for Europe, Africa, or the Americas. Migration threatened to drain skilled laborers and the tax revenues they provided. Émigrés also had a nasty habit of spreading rumors of government malfeasance abroad to the discredit of the Porte, as some officials noted. Much like their

⁴³ Julia Clancy-Smith, “Migrations, Legal Pluralism and Identities: Algerian Expatriates in Colonial Tunisia,” in Patricia M. Lorcin, ed., *Algeria and France: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 5–6; Asseraf, *Electric News*, 81.

⁴⁴ ANOM, GGA/10H/90, “Rapport sur l’Émigration en Syrie,” 4 December 1898.

⁴⁵ ANOM, GGA/10H/90, “Émigration en Syrie: Rapport Varnier” (1911).

⁴⁶ Asseraf, *Electric News*, 82.

French counterparts, therefore, Ottoman imperial authorities had an interest in stemming these migratory flows and actively monitored Syrian ports and borders to do so.⁴⁷

As with Syrians leaving the country, disgruntled and resentful Algerian émigrés abroad posed their own set of problems for the French administration. Consular authorities complained that Algerians fleeing infidel rule disseminated anti-Christian propaganda, fueling old sectarian divisions within Syria. If they were permitted to continue, the fragile communitarian peace in the region secured by the French after 1860 might be imperiled, requiring French intervention on behalf of their Christian clients, officials warned.⁴⁸ It could also not be overlooked that émigrés coming from French colonies were often vocal critics of France and its treatment of Muslim subjects. Émigré critics maligned the Algerian administration in public. They spread stories that “Muslims submitted to the French government are subject to the most revolting iniquities,” a governmental report drafted in 1898 claimed.⁴⁹ To prevent these allegations from circulating, the author of the report recommended declining all requests for emigration and halting the flow of asylum seekers. It was not only the colonial regime that officials worried over either. Algerian expatriates could have a damaging impact on France’s reputation throughout the broader region, jeopardizing its informal influence and appeal among Muslims. “Not only is it a great humiliation for France, but also a great danger for French influence in the Orient, since one can assume that these voluntary exiles... have little intention of cultivating love for France over there,” the economist Charles Gide observed.⁵⁰

In 1913, a spokesperson for the Mission Laïque Française spelled out these dangers clearly. Syrians had historically admired French culture, he claimed, and this admiration was one of the principal arms of France’s *présence* in the eastern Mediterranean. Yet a visit to the Near East by members of the group in 1913 indicated this affection might be waning as reports of abuse and oppression coming from Algerians tarnished France’s reputation among Muslims. As a non-profit organization committed to spreading French language and culture internationally, the Mission Laïque took France’s global reputation seriously. Considering the impact the Algerian situation had on international opinion, the organization had to wonder whether it might be time for France to reconsider its colonial policies. “[The Syrian Muslims] will soon resume [their affections] if French democracy demonstrates its intentions of being as liberal in Algeria as the English are in

⁴⁷ Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire*, 37–38.

⁴⁸ ANOM, GGA/10H/90, “Emigration en Syrie: Rapport Varnier” (1911).

⁴⁹ ANOM, GGA/10H/90, “Rapport sur l’Emigration en Syrie,” 4 December 1898. The document is dated 1889, but this is inaccurate as it makes reference to works published in 1898.

⁵⁰ Charles Gide, “La Coopération des français et des indigènes dans l’Afrique du Nord,” *L’Islam*, 25 April 1913; reprinted from *La Revue Bleue*.

Egypt,” the secretary of the Mission Laïque insisted. “On that day, the moral prestige of France will be without rival in the Levant.”⁵¹

As Algerians left their homes and acquired a voice abroad, critics speculated on what their protests indicated for France’s international reputation and its standing in the Muslim world more specifically. It was not unimaginable either to believe that these criticisms might spur calls for colonial reform at home or provide Algerians in the colony with a platform for attacking the administration. The fact that Muslims were leaving the colony to escape the unequal laws and taxes imposed on them was an embarrassment and had the potential to complicate foreign policy aims in the broader Mediterranean. Émigrés were not just a nuisance for colonial officials. They were a constant reminder of the injustices propping up France’s colonial system and its disgraceful treatment of Muslim subjects. In a world defined by mobility and trans-imperial exchanges, Algerian politics were never an isolated affair. Yet it was also difficult to deny that the Algerian emigration had been one of French making. Its efforts to control Algerian Islam and restrict its scope of influence had strengthened links between Maghrebi Muslims and the Ottoman Empire as migrants left their homes and resettled in lands under the sway of *dar al-Islam*. Migratory flows connecting French colonies with the Ottoman world could threaten French imperial interests as Muslims relocated elsewhere and took up oppositional politics in the eastern Mediterranean.

Claiming Subjects and Jurisdiction in the Ottoman Empire

Outspoken Algerians abroad posed a problem for France, but some officials saw a silver lining. For all its headaches, the Algerian emigration did create opportunities that crafty officials might exploit if given the chance. Consular authorities noted the potential value high-ranking émigrés in Syria could offer as French spokesmen and advised providing such individuals with aid and state pensions to win their affection. Family members of the Algerian resistance leader Abd al-Qādir who had taken up residence in Syria after the 1850s were especially helpful in this respect. Emir Abdullah al-Jazairi, grandson of Abd al-Qādir, was singled out by the French consul in Damascus as one such prospective ally. He was highly regarded among the Muslim population in the city and was known to have Francophile sympathies. “It is incontestable that the clients of the emir contribute greatly to giving us a situation without equal in the Muslim world [*milieux musulmans*],” he reported in 1911.⁵² In short, officials recognized that Algerians living

⁵¹ “Les Musulmans de Syrie et la France,” *Le Temps*, 13 February 1913.

⁵² ANOM, GGA/15H/7, “Consul général, chargé du consulat de France à Damas à M. Cruppi, Ministre des affaires étrangères,” 18 March 1911.

in the Ottoman Empire could serve as an arm of French policy in the region, a fact to which wary Ottoman officials were not blind.

Despite its tacit support for Muslim emigration, the Porte had reservations when it came to their new guests. Istanbul had never formally recognized the French annexation of Algeria. Officially, the province remained part of the Ottoman Empire. This fantasy could be sustained in rhetoric and speech, but it was more difficult to ignore French domination when it came to policy. In January 1869, France pushed the issue when it clarified its position on Algerian subjects living abroad. Identified as French subjects, Algerian “nationals” were to be subject to French jurisdictional authority and entitled to consular legal protections under the law.⁵³ That year, some 4,000 Algerian émigrés in Syria openly declared themselves “French,” gaining exemption from Ottoman military conscription and certain state taxes. Naturally, Ottoman authorities were reluctant to validate these claims. However, it soon became apparent that those with French subject status posed other dangers aside from lost revenue. Protected by French consuls, Algerians were less hesitant to speak out against the corruption and venality of local Ottoman officials. They could even request French consular authorities to intervene on their behalf if needed. Émigrés had greater freedom to print newspapers in Damascus and Beirut or declare their support for reform programs and Syrian autonomy.⁵⁴ As French foreign subjects, Algerians acquired exemptions and liberties that had the potential to generate frictions with their Ottoman hosts.

Such conflicts were an all too familiar aspect of European–Ottoman relations. The Ottoman Empire was traditionally built upon forms of legal pluralism in which non-Muslim subjects, identified by confessional identity, were organized into self-regulating *millets* with their own courts and community leaders.⁵⁵ This brand of “tolerance” provided the framework for governing the diverse multi-ethnic empire presided over by the Ottoman dynasty. Foreigners—primarily European merchants and diplomatic officials residing in the empire—also received special legal consideration. Under various treaties and bilateral agreements collectively known as the “capitulations,” European nationals and consular officials benefited from extraterritorial privileges exempting them from Ottoman law and taxation. Given these freedoms, consuls were notorious for making demands on native authorities and threatening military intervention should their wishes be refused.

⁵³ Nouredine Amara, “Etre algérien en situation impériale, fin XIXème siècle-début XXème siècle: L’Usage de la catégorie ‘nationalité algérienne’ par les consulats français dans leur relation avec les algériens fixes au Maroc et dans l’Empire Ottoman,” *European Review of History*, 19:1 (February 2012): 60–63.

⁵⁴ Pierre Bardin, *Algériens et Tunisiens dans l’Empire Ottoman de 1848 à 1914* (Paris: Editions CNRS, 1980), 27–37; Allan Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders: The Making of a Global Frontier* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 60–61.

⁵⁵ Karen Barkey, “Aspects of Legal Pluralism in the Ottoman Empire,” in Richard J. Ross and Lauren Benton, eds., *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 83–107.

They had their own military retinues and administrations immune from state oversight and it was not uncommon that consular agents assumed roles as power-brokers in their localities. In no uncertain terms, consular agents operated a state within the state, exercising significant authority in cities such as Alexandria, Beirut, and Istanbul where large émigré European populations existed. As their power grew, European officials took liberties in extending legal “protections” to Christians and clients in the region, furnishing select Ottoman subjects with the same rights and proprietary protections enjoyed by European nationals.⁵⁶ These networks of clients and protégés offered consuls numerous pretexts for intervening in Ottoman affairs and undermining state authority. Extraterritoriality amounted to one more weapon in the European imperial arsenal, constituting a form of “legal imperialism” that Ottoman officials were hard pressed to avoid.⁵⁷

Traditionally, the capitulations were applied to Christian protégés given immunity from Sharia law courts. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, consular authorities were seeking to extend their jurisdiction over other sections of the imperial population. As European states established protectorates across Africa and Asia, Europeans demanded that Muslims be included under the capitulatory legal regimes as well, a prospect that Ottoman authorities were loath to acknowledge. French demands to have Algerian émigrés legally recognized as French subjects in 1869 were followed by claims on Tunisian nationals. Under the Treaty of Bardo that established the French protectorate, French consular and government officials were given the right to “protect” Tunisians abroad. Istanbul had a small community of Tunisian merchants as did Cairo. A larger community existed in Ottoman Libya, where some 8,000 Tunisian merchants and artisans had settled.⁵⁸ Henceforth, these individuals were to be considered French protégés whether the Ottoman government liked it or not.

These North African migrations were indicative of a larger trend occurring during the nineteenth century that made the extraterritoriality issue more acute. Over the century, the Ottoman Empire had become home to various Muslim refugees and migrant communities coming from areas subject to European colonialism. Indian and Central Asian populations had an established presence in the empire. Added to these groups were more recent arrivals like the Crimean Tatars and Caucasian Muslims fleeing Russian military occupation or Bosnians and Maghrebi Arabs who refused to live under infidel rule. Muslim emigrants were generally not perceived as a threat by the state. The government even assisted with resettlement in many cases. In 1860, the state created an Ottoman Migration

⁵⁶ Maurits van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls, and Beraths in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Feroz Ahmad, “Ottoman Perceptions of the Capitulations, 1800–1914,” *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 11 (2000): 1–20; Mansel, *Levant*, 102–03.

⁵⁷ Turan Kayaoğlu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

⁵⁸ Bardin, *Algériens et Tunisiens dans l'Empire Ottoman*, 19–20.

Commission that set aside land for immigrants in under-developed areas like Rumelia and the Black Sea region and provided subsidies for farmers.⁵⁹ This liberal immigration policy said much about the Ottoman Empire itself. As a multi-confessional state defined by various degrees of legal pluralism, the empire traditionally made categorical distinctions between Muslims and *dhimmi*s (Christians and Jews). Adherence to Sunni Islam and loyalty to the sultan were typically enough to claim Ottoman subjecthood. Although coming from diverse ethnic backgrounds, Muslims were not looked upon as “foreigners” (*ecnebi*) in a legal sense.⁶⁰ Ottoman identity was a fluid and ambiguous category, but the strong link between Islam and the state was never in doubt. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Islam provided a criterion for imperial inclusion above and beyond ethnic and national considerations.⁶¹

European attempts to lay claim to Muslim protégés in the empire altered the traditional relationship between the state and its various Muslim communities. As Britain made claims on Afghan and Indian Muslims residing in the empire and French consular agents insisted that North Africans of Algerian or Tunisian origin were “their” Muslims, Ottoman authorities were forced to consider the possibility of “foreign” Muslims for the first time. The government had a legitimate fear that foreign powers might use Muslim subjects to infiltrate the empire and further erode Ottoman sovereignty.⁶² Individuals were not passive subjects manipulated by European consuls in this process either. In various instances, subjects recognized the advantages that extraterritoriality offered and manipulated their legal identities accordingly in order to maximize access to rights and privileges.⁶³ These maneuvers frustrated authorities to no end as individuals claimed European or Ottoman status at will to circumvent taxes or gain exemption from military service. It was clear that the power of European officials to intervene in Ottoman internal affairs had to be curbed and a more explicit means of identifying Ottoman subjects devised to plug the many loopholes that the capitulations allowed. “No power should concern itself with protecting [Ottoman] natives in order to create an influence within the empire,” a government circular charged.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Başak Kale, “Transforming an Empire: The Ottoman Empire’s Immigration and Settlement Policies in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50:2 (2014): 253–58.

⁶⁰ Michael Christopher Low, “Unfurling the Flag of Extraterritoriality: Autonomy, Foreign Muslims, and the Capitulations in the Ottoman Hijaz,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, 3:2 (November 2016): 308–09.

⁶¹ See: John McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983); Kemal Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post Ottoman Era,” in Kemal Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 640–41.

⁶² Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 181–82.

⁶³ Ziad Fahmy, “Jurisdictional Borderlands: Extraterritoriality and Legal Chameleons in Post-Colonial Alexandria, 1840–1870,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55:2 (2013): 305–29.

⁶⁴ “Mémoire du Gouvernement Ottoman,” in Pierre Arminjon, *Étrangères et Protégés dans l’Empire Ottoman* (Paris: A. Chevalier-Marescq, 1903), 1: 340.

Addressing these issues, however, meant rethinking the very confessional and civil identities that organized Ottoman society. The “protection question” had implications for Ottoman state–society relations on a broad scale.⁶⁵ In 1863, the government took the first step toward addressing the problem when it passed a law compelling protégés to either naturalize as foreign subjects or submit to Ottoman law. Six years later, a more comprehensive Ottoman Nationality Law was drawn up as statesmen attempted to give concrete legal definition to Ottoman subjects. The law 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. Stamping fellow Muslims with national difference was a responsive strategy intended to restrict the prerogative of European consuls and reinforce Ottoman imperial sovereignty.⁶⁶

As the 1869 Nationality Law suggested, the push and pull of trans-imperial migrations and power relationships played a key role in Ottoman empire-building and centralization. European officials deployed nationality as a “mode of governmentality” in their imperial exploits. By claiming Muslims as subjects, consular authorities manipulated the legal provision of the capitulations to consolidate influence abroad.⁶⁷ Ottoman authorities struck back against the flagrant abuses of the system, reformulating imperial identity in the process. The state devised new criteria governing Ottoman imperial belonging that made the idea of a “foreign Muslim” (*ecanib-i müslimin*) imaginable for the first time. The complex legal regimes in Ottoman and post-Ottoman territories became “inter-imperial battlegrounds” for jurisdictional control and sovereignty as states attempted to construct empires and expand their reach across the region.⁶⁸

Imperial Subjecthood: An Ambiguous Concept

Using capitulatory laws to “colonize” other imperial states was never a clear-cut policy. By nature, it was calculated and context dependent. It required negotiating with clients on the ground and wrangling with imperial officials unwilling to relinquish their authority over populations. Moreover, manipulating capitulatory regimes could and did cut both ways, and European officials knew it. The Anglo-Egyptian government was constantly subject to complications stemming from the many legal regimes and power sharing arrangements in place within the country. By the 1880s, some 100,000 Europeans resided in Egypt, most of them falling

⁶⁵ Lâle Can, “The Protection Question: Central Asians and Extraterritoriality in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 48 (2016): 679–99.

⁶⁶ Will Hanley, “What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, 3:2 (November 2016): 277–98.

⁶⁷ Amara, “Etre algérien en situation impériale,” 66.

⁶⁸ Low, “Unfurling the Flag of Extraterritoriality,” 310.

under foreign jurisdictions. French residents were particularly numerous, followed by significant Greek and Italian populations. By comparison, the British presence in Egypt was small, counting a mere 6,000 individuals, of whom most were Maltese. Aware of these demographic realities, the French insisted upon the maintenance of all existing capitulatory laws in the country. French magistrates were able to exercise considerable authority through the so-called “international courts” to reverse British rulings and exempt protégés from legal formalities.⁶⁹ Having refused to establish a formal protectorate over Egypt, Britain inherited the “international shackles” that had previously fettered the Egyptian state, as Alfred Milner, the under-secretary of Egyptian finances, stated.⁷⁰ At a moment when Britain was attempting to remodel the Egyptian political system and make the government solvent, the Anglo-Egyptian administration was faced with European authorities resistant to change and protégés skirting taxes. “The large and growing foreigner population of Egypt is practically outside the law, and the Capitulations are naturally regarded by the foreign residents as a sort of Magna Carta of their rights, liberties, and privileges,” Edward Dicey complained. Consuls unscrupulously pushed the capitulations “to their utmost limits...with the object of defrauding the Egyptian revenue.”⁷¹ In Dicey’s opinion, the “Anglification of Egypt” was not only desirable but essential if Britain expected to achieve any measure of success in its Egyptian venture.⁷² Trying to run the administration, Cromer persistently found himself boxed in by European magistrates and the international Public Debt Commission that oversaw state finances. “Administrative internationalism may be said to tend towards the creation of administrative impotence,” he grumbled.⁷³

French authorities knew full well the impediments to effective rule that nationals wielding extraterritorial rights could create and sought to use them to maintain their informal presence in the Ottoman province. Eager to defend the prerogatives of French consular courts in Egypt, they were, however, averse to extending these same privileges to British Maltese and Italian subjects who were “protected” under the capitulation treaties previously negotiated with the Bey of Tunis.⁷⁴ “I hardly need to describe the formidable political actions that a consul armed with such protégés can exercise and the complications they can generate in a country that is not yet pacified,” the acting Resident General Paul Cambon wrote to the foreign ministry in 1882. If the capitulations were preserved, he warned, it would be “impossible to hope that our authority can make itself

⁶⁹ Will Hanley, *Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria, 1880–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 284–85; David Todd, “Beneath Sovereignty: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” *Law and History Review*, 36:1 (February 2018): 125–34.

⁷⁰ Alfred Milner, *England in Egypt* (London: Edward Arnold, 1894), 35.

⁷¹ Dicey, *The Egypt of the Future*, 57–58.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷³ Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, 2: 304.

⁷⁴ Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 9–20.

respected in the Regency.”⁷⁵ Cambon correctly understood that the capitulatory legal regime established a veritable “*imperium in imperio*” in Tunisia that had to be revised if France did not want to be subject to dangerous foreign interventions. Authorities had to be wary of what the politician Camille Pelletan described as the “unscrupulous Levantines” abounding in Mediterranean port cities and capitals. These “bloodsuckers of the East,” as Pelletan called them, ingratiated themselves with foreign consuls and acted as their “creatures of support” on the ground.⁷⁶ Of course, French consuls had their own “creatures of support” in Ottoman and North African territories and never hesitated to defend their extraterritorial privileges when it served their interests. Nevertheless, imperial authorities were less inclined to acknowledge these concessions in their own protectorates where capitulatory laws remained in place. As European powers exerted control over former Ottoman territories, “borderlanders” and “legal chameleons” posed a problem for regimes seeking to insulate colonies from outside influences and exert *imperium* over newly conquered subjects.⁷⁷

Despite the political disputes that occurred, European powers could be negotiated with, as France made evident three years later when it hashed out agreements with Britain and Italy limiting the scope of their influence in the Regency. Muslim subjects were a different matter, though. As France settled its differences with Britain and Italy, the question of how to deal with Tunisia’s Muslim population took precedence. Given that Tunisia was home to an Algerian émigré community, it was evident that questions relevant to “foreign” Muslims in the Regency were bound to touch upon broader colonial considerations, since Algerian Muslims were also French subjects. Maurice Bompard, an advisor to the Resident General, was under no illusions what this situation augured. “The questions to resolve today in Tunisia are no longer international but colonial,” he claimed in 1895.⁷⁸

The Tunisian protectorate resembled an illiberal colonial state in many respects, but its system of dual sovereignty was nonetheless unique. Tunisian natives were subjects of the Bey and did not suffer the same administrative oversights and restrictions imposed on Algerians just across the border. Unlike the colonial administration that claimed sole authority in Algeria, Tunisia possessed a variety of competing legal systems applicable to Tunisians and European residents that reflected all the complexities and ambiguities of the capitulatory laws found in other Ottoman territories.⁷⁹ Much as in Ottoman territories, natives were not above exploiting these complexities when they could, as the case of

⁷⁵ AN 20020495/18, “Reorganisation de la Tunisie” (22 April 1882), 9.

⁷⁶ “The Campaign in Tunis,” *The Standard*, 2 December 1881.

⁷⁷ Meyer, *Turks Across Empires*, 1–47.

⁷⁸ AN 20020495/18, Bompard to Freycinet, 10 October 1895.

⁷⁹ Oualdi, “Le pluralism juridique,” 95; Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 44–78.

Algerian émigrés made apparent. Although legally classified as French nationals since 1865, Algerian natives remained subject to unequal laws under the *Indigénat* which barred them from equal rights vis-à-vis the European colonists. Yet the *Indigénat* only applied to Algeria. Algerians residing in Tunisia were recognized as French subjects under the existing legal categories in place. “The rights attached to French nationality belong to [the Algerians],” as the minister of justice proclaimed. By crossing the border, Algerian natives could evade the repressive *Indigénat* which had no legal standing in Tunisia.⁸⁰ Colonial officials were well aware of the problems this legal twist could generate. In Tunisia, Algerians could theoretically enjoy the same rights as Europeans, setting a dangerous precedent that could completely undermine the hierarchies ordering colonial society.⁸¹ For many Algerians, however, the situation was a welcome one.

Crossing into Tunisia, Algerians were able to skirt the detested legal abnormalities and unequal taxes imposed on them by the Algerian regime. “The Arabs escape everything,” the Resident General Justin Massicault complained in 1889. In Tunisia, Algerians were placed “on a perfectly equal footing with French citizens” and enjoyed “an individual liberty without any restrictions.” Moreover, the issue ran deeper than just Algerians trying to manipulate these circumstances to their benefit. While Algerians were eager to pass themselves off as Tunisians to escape the *Indigénat*, many Tunisians attempted to pass as Algerians and claim “French” status in order to escape paying taxes to the Tunisian state and gain exemption from the local courts.⁸² Massicault repeatedly grumbled over the abuses of capitulatory privileges, citing various instances where identification documents had been purchased or forged. The administration did not have the resources to verify all the claims presented, and many of the cases that were handled turned out to be disingenuous.⁸³ A “definitive ruling” on how to deal with the status of foreign Muslims in Tunisia was needed, Massicault pleaded to the foreign ministry in 1891. Despite his urgings, however, clarifying “native” and “European” categories was never clear-cut and the administration found itself bogged down in drawn-out legal disputes over the next decade as officials attempted to verify claims and authenticate documentation regarding claims to Algerian and Tunisian identity.

The ability of Algerians to claim a “French” status in the Regency had other implications as well that extended beyond escaping the *Indigénat*. Algerian émigré communities in Tunisia found their relationship with the state altered in fundamental ways as the French clamped down on the Regency. Unlike Tunisian subjects, Algerian émigrés could appeal to French administrators or demand

⁸⁰ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 116, Minister of Justice to Freycinet, MAE, 10 August 1885.

⁸¹ Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 69–76; Clancy-Smith, “Migrations, Legal Pluralism and Identities,” in Lorcin, *Algeria and France*, 6–10.

⁸² AMAE, Tunisie, NS 116, Massicault to Spuller, MAE, 10 April 1889.

⁸³ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 116, Massicault to Ribot, MAE, 1 April 1891.

protégé status. To deal with the Algerian-Tunisian community, the Resident General was given powers to recognize Algerian community leaders (*shaykhs*), creating formal mechanism through which they could liaise with the protectorate administration. Receiving official recognition was a means of augmenting individual authority within the émigré community and even held the potential of accessing new sources of income. It also opened up new mechanisms for expressing grievances and challenging the authority of local leaders that Algerians had not previously possessed. In some cases, these arrangements had a habit of transplanting Algerian tribal and family disputes across the border, as the tensions surrounding the Algerian community from Ouargla made evident in the early 1890s. Consisting of some 350 inhabitants residing in Tunis, the Ouargla community had been established in the city prior to the creation of the protectorate. In 1891, the Resident General appointed Hadj Khemis Bel Hadj Ahmed Rauch as the community shaykh, believing him to be a solid French ally. The decision may have seemed a routine appointment for administrators, but it drew sharp criticism from a section of the Ouarglais who believed Hadj Khemis was using the post to pursue his own family interests. French officials were sensitive to the tribal factionalism dividing the Ouarglais and the civil controller in Tunis was not averse to dismissing Hadj Khemis and replacing him with someone more amenable to the Ouarglais. The problem, however, was that it was “impossible to find a shaykh who is agreed by all the people of Ouargala,” he reported.⁸⁴ Over the next year, French authorities sought in vain for a suitable candidate who could appeal to the various tribal factions within the community, never managing to satisfy either side.

It was clear Algerian Tunisians looked to the protectorate for support and expected the administration to intervene when necessary. They wrote to the government to influence appointments and have their allies nominated as shaykhs, exercising their protégé status.⁸⁵ While community members might turn to the administration to circumvent traditional power structures and express support for their own leaders, tribal heads equally solicited the administration on various occasions. In 1903, for example, Mohammed Ben Guerrache, a member of an Algerian community from Oran established in Tunis, wrote to the government seeking to be nominated as shaykh. In applying for this post, he cited his family’s long service to France, noting his relatives had fought in the Crimean War and Italy alongside French forces and had assisted in putting down native Algerian resistance in 1871. In listing his family’s “service rendered to the fatherland,” Guerrache hoped to ingratiate himself with the government and

⁸⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/988A, Contrôle civil de vice consulat de France in Tunis to Massicault, 15 June 1892.

⁸⁵ See for example: CADN, 1TU/1/V/988A, Vice-Consulat de France in Tunis to Rouvier, Ministre Président Général de France in Tunis, 2 December 1893.

obtain a leadership position within the Oranais community.⁸⁶ Petitioning and official requests became increasingly common among the Algerian communities scattered throughout Tunisia over the coming decades. Tunisian officials might have groaned at the thought of getting entangled in messy Algerian disputes that had little importance for the protectorate, but for many Algerian transplants their newfound protégé status was empowering. It gave them official channels to work through and allowed community leaders to appeal directly to French officials.

Cross-border communities certainly generated problems such as tribal disputes and family rivalries that colonial administrators had little desire to confront, but they also provided colonial officials with new opportunities for power brokering and expanding influence. At the same time French authorities were attempting to pacify factional rifts among Algerians in the protectorate, administrators were considering how best to profit from Moroccan émigrés resident in Tunisia. In 1889, the government took an interest in a Moroccan community from Tuat, an oasis outpost located along the trans-Saharan trade route running south of French Algeria. While Tuat was nominally under the control of the Moroccan sultan at the time, the Algerian administration had plans of expanding into the Sahara and exercising control over the important Saharan trade routes. Shaykh Mustafa Sellaoui, a native of Tuat residing in Tunis, had been invested by the Bey with protégé status, permitting him to demand taxes from the Moroccan émigrés under his charge.⁸⁷ Sellaoui was, however, a controversial figure. Many Tuati émigrés in Tunis believed the shaykh was using his protégé status to enrich himself and extend his personal power. More compelling was the fact that opponents within the Tuati community identified themselves as Algerians coming from the oasis of Khenafsa.⁸⁸ Opposing Sellaoui, they rallied around an Algerian French protégé Cherif d'Ouazzan and requested to be placed under his authority. The Bey of Tunis preferred to appease the Moroccans and refused to recognize Ouazzan's supporters, but Massicault saw an opportunity in these disputes. The issue of protégé status was "not without interest for the government of Algeria," he claimed. If the Tuatis were recognized as Algerians, the government could use them to expand its influence in Tuat and secure a French presence in the coveted oasis. To this end, Massicault recommended support for the Algerian faction within the Tuat community.⁸⁹

The French foreign minister, Eugène Spuller, saw the potential of the scheme but warned that it could open a can of worms. Sellaoui's authority had already been invested and attempting to alter this status threatened to create diplomatic

⁸⁶ CADN, 1TU/1/V/988A, Mohammed Ben Guerrache to Stephen Pichon, 1 January 1903.

⁸⁷ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 116, Massicault to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 26 February 1889; Spuller, MAE to Gaston, Minister of France in Tangier, 21 March 1889.

⁸⁸ See: Noureddine Amara, "La nationalité algérienne des Touatis, un événement à la mesure d'empire (1901–1830)," *Maghreb et sciences sociales*, 2 (2012): 99–106.

⁸⁹ CADN, 1TU/1/V/988B, Résident Général to Foreign Affairs Ministry, 27 February 1889.

tensions with the Moroccan kingdom. He urged Massicault to “carefully avoid” making a misstep.⁹⁰ Louis Tirman, the Governor General of Algeria, shared his opinion, insisting that an international incident between France and Morocco could generate “serious inconveniences” south of Algeria and along the caravan routes.⁹¹ Even if it might be favorable to long-term Algerian objectives, the foreign ministry was not about to give support to Cherif d’Ouazzan and the Algerians and risk an international incident. The Tuatis remained unsatisfied and three years later took matters into their own hands. Refusing to pay the taxes demanded of them in 1892, the protégés under Sellaoui’s charge assassinated the shaykh in the streets of Tunis following a heated dispute.⁹² Yet violence proved ineffective. Sellaoui’s replacement, Shaykh El Hadj Ali El Azaoui, was hardly an improvement and the Algerians once again expressed their discontent to the Tunisian administration. In a petition to the government, they complained they were forced to work for Azaoui and turn over a significant portion of their incomes to him on a regular basis. The petitioners were keen to note that they were “French subjects” requesting the intervention of the Resident General on their behalf, insisting that the government could not abandon its own subjects. “We do not have any other protectors other than God and you,” the petition stated.⁹³ Disagreements continued into the following year and eventually the newly appointed Resident General Charles Rouvier decided to wash his hands of the entire affair. He acknowledged the complaints against Azaoui but insisted there was little he could do. “Given the nationality of those involved, this matter is beyond the jurisdiction of the Tunisian Government,” he concluded.⁹⁴

The Moroccan community in Tunisia exemplified the complex politics that accompanied empire in a mobile Mediterranean world. While French officials sought to limit extraterritoriality when it posed a threat to their authority, administrators like Massicault were capable of understanding how cross-border ties and legal regimes could be used to further French imperial expansion. These two approaches were not mutually exclusive. At once a threat to imperial stability and a potential arm of imperial influence abroad, the Algerian exodus revealed that cross-border imperial migrations were a double-edged sword.

Janus-Faced Imperialism

Writing in 1885, an anonymous author sketched a possible future for North Africa in an age of rampant European imperial expansion. Fearful that competition for

⁹⁰ CADN, 1TU/1/V/988B, Eugène Spuller, MAE to Massicault, 22 March 1889.

⁹¹ CADN, 1TU/1/V/988B, Eugène Spuller, MAE to Massicault, 4 April 1889.

⁹² AMAE, Tunisie, NS 116, Blondel to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 8 June 1892.

⁹³ CADN, 1TU/1/V/988A, “Petition de Touates,” 19 October 1882.

⁹⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/988A, “Secrétariat Général: Note,” 28 October 1893.

territory might ignite a general European conflict, the pamphlet writer insisted that war could be averted if states cooperated and came to a collective agreement regarding their Mediterranean spoils. Britain would control Egypt. Spain could take Morocco while Italy were free to acquire Ottoman Tripoli. For its part, France, would content itself with Algeria and Tunisia. “Would it not be a great sight to see England, Italy, France, and Spain masters of North Africa, marching together, the flame of civilization in hand, to open this immense country to the activity and commerce of Europe?” the author asked.⁹⁵ This practical solution was premised on a territorial vision of empire inclined toward neat, bounded enclaves subject to unitary sovereign authorities. If it made sense on paper, this vision ignored the various subtle forms of control and influence at work in the region. Moreover, even as this irenic imperial North Africa was being proposed, events were working in the opposite direction.

With France and Britain securing their hold over North Africa, Spanish politicians began to wonder if anything would be left for them. Since the middle of the century, Spanish imperialists had been monitoring the situation across the Mediterranean with growing anxiety. Controlling small trading enclaves along the Moroccan coast, Spain had commercial links with ports such as Tangier and Tetouan via Andalusia. An established Spanish population existed in the kingdom, consisting of a few hundred merchants, medical professionals, builders, and Franciscan missionaries.⁹⁶ Given these existing ties, Morocco was increasingly seen as a place where Spain might exert an imperial influence, especially as the country’s empire in the Americas disintegrated over the course of the century.⁹⁷ “Let us imitate France in its conquest and colonization of Algeria,” the publicists Ruperto de Aguirre remarked in 1859. “We already slavishly imitate them in matters of less importance.”⁹⁸ An abortive war against the Moroccan government that year failed to satiate these imperial desires, encouraging elites to press the government for a more robust Mediterranean policy in the years ahead. “Spain must return to giving a living testimony of its colonizing abilities, externalize its forces to greater extent and take up positions on the planet,” the pro-colonial anthropologist Joaquín Costa urged in 1883.⁹⁹ Located directly across the Straits of Gibraltar, Morocco was the likely place where this “testimony” to Spanish national renewal would occur. According to Francisco Coello, president of the

⁹⁵ *De L’Égypte, du Nord de l’Afrique et d’une revanche pacifique de 1870* (no publication information given, 1885), 10.

⁹⁶ Eloy Martín Corrales, “Les Espagnols au Maroc (1767–1860): le défi de traveller avec l’autre,” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 84 (2012): 200–04.

⁹⁷ Susan Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 50–51.

⁹⁸ Ruperto de Aguirre, *Espedicion al Riff: Su Importancia, Necesidad y Conveniencia* (Madrid: Imprenta de José María Ducazcal, 1858), 17.

⁹⁹ Session of 1 November 1883, *Actas del Congreso Español de Geografía Colonial y Mercantil* (Madrid: Imprenta de Fortanet, 1884), 1: 59.

newly formed *Sociedad Española de Africanistas y Colonistas*, “the slightest attack on the independence of Morocco is, in fact, an attack on our nation.”¹⁰⁰

The aggressive imperial rhetoric coming from Madrid gave French officials cause for concern. A strong Spanish presence directly adjacent to Algeria was certainly undesirable, but colonial officials had to worry about the potential impact a Spanish dominated Morocco would have within Algeria. The colony possessed a sizable Spanish settler population, with a significant concentration in the western province of Oran. What would prevent Spanish colonists from looking to their co-nationals across the border or even seeking outright unity with a Spanish Morocco? French authorities could not afford to underestimate “the gravity of this peril,” one report warned.¹⁰¹ As fears over cross-border ties and loyalties grew during the 1880s, Algerian colonial authorities took decisive action. In June 1889, they passed a comprehensive citizenship law for the colony, effectively naturalizing all European colonists as French nationals en masse. Whereas in the past, Spanish or Italian colonists had a choice of whether to apply for naturalization or retain their own nationality, the new law took individual choice out of the equation. Henceforth, all Europeans in the colony would be considered French, reducing the number of “foreign” communities over successive generations.¹⁰² In its ability to identify individuals and claim jurisdictional authority over them, nationality was a potent means of shoring up sovereignty among populations where legal ambiguities persisted and loyalties remained uncertain. As one legal theorist remarked, “What we call nationality is . . . the line that unites the individual with a state.”¹⁰³ Seeking to strengthen the link between the sovereign state and the individual, the government saw fit to impose French nationality on Algeria’s diverse settler population, stamping the colony as a definitively “French” space.

This territorializing impulse was in line with the spirit of the new imperialism. Yet there was a certain irony evident when it came to the 1889 naturalization law. While French authorities employed nationality in Algeria to insulate the colony from foreign influences, they saw little conflict in using nationality claims to obstruct sovereignty elsewhere. Consuls in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire readily defend the rights of French nationals and protégés abroad, protesting against attempts by governments to reverse existing capitulatory laws and circumscribe France’s ability to intervene in local affairs. This predatory use of nationality did not support aspirations for territorial rule. It instead aimed to

¹⁰⁰ *Intereses de España en Marruecos* (Madrid: Imprenta de Fortanet, 1884), 8.

¹⁰¹ Eugène Audinet, *La Nationalité française en Algérie et en Tunisie d’après la législation récente* (Algiers: A. Jourdan, 1890), 4.

¹⁰² Andrea L. Smith, “Citizenship in the Colony: Naturalization Law and Legal Assimilation in Nineteenth-Century Algeria,” *Polar*, 11:1 (1996): 37–38.

¹⁰³ George Cogordan, *Droit des gens: la nationalité au point de vue des rapports internationaux* (Paris: L. Larose et Forcel, 1890), 4.

maintain an informal presence in other areas without incurring the costs and responsibilities of colonial administration.¹⁰⁴ Nationality was a versatile weapon in the imperial politics of the Mediterranean, one that both abetted and frustrated imperial projects. It could be used to consolidate imperial holdings just as much as erode sovereign authority, and the two processes could be interconnected.

As Europeans increasingly exercised power through consular authorities and claimed jurisdiction over “foreigners,” the Ottoman Empire developed strategies to combat these imperial encroachments. The proposed remedy encouraged a general rethinking of the entire Ottoman imperial polity based upon European concepts that did not necessarily reflect the multi-ethnic social composition of the empire. “The question of nationality in Turkey is a European question,” as the government argued in 1869. “All the powers that have treaties with the empire take an interest in it.”¹⁰⁵ Reluctantly, the state endorsed “national” criteria to curtail consular influence, providing a context in which to imagine an Ottoman nationality distinct from the confessional identities that had traditionally governed Ottoman imperial society. Whether employed for offensive or defensive reasons, it was evident that questions of identity and centralized jurisdiction were being imprinted on a region where such concepts had been historically fluid and multi-layered. Imperialism and empire-building were contributing to the creation of a new territorial regime across much of the southern and eastern Mediterranean world as states attempted to consolidate power and push out rivals.

Efforts to re-territorialize the southern Mediterranean and imagine it as a space of sovereign imperial states was not always consistent with the social realities of the region. The Ottoman legacy remained omnipresent as existing cross-border networks and administrative structures frustrated jurisdictional authority at every turn. Yet even as statesmen and imperial strategists laid claim to subjects and worked to sequester territories from outside influences, they never rejected the possibility of working through other channels simultaneously. European authorities operated within multiple spatial frameworks as they constructed their respective empires. Although seeking to control and redirect trans-imperial flows within their own territories, they exploited cross-border ties where they could and attempted to profit from new migratory flows generated by imperial conquest and occupation. Émigré communities like those established in Syria and Tunisia straddled imperial borders, and in doing so connected neighboring empires in ways that exposed the porous nature of those very borders. Empire-building in the Mediterranean was a complex and often contradictory process. Empire adapted to the political and social landscape on the ground, imposing itself on the dense web of connections linking Africa with the Ottoman world. The new imperialism may have encouraged a great power

¹⁰⁴ Todd, “Beneath Sovereignty,” 125.

¹⁰⁵ Arminjon, *Étrangères et Protégés*, 1: 341–42.

perspective and envisioned a world defined by sovereign imperial enclaves, but authorities found it difficult to escape the numerous entanglements that traversed the Mediterranean region. Control not only required isolating vulnerable colonies and asserting authority over labile territories; it entailed co-opting and instrumentalizing the many flows that circulated through the region, pressing mobile communities into service.

Pan-Islamism and Ottoman Imperialism

Controlling and instrumentalizing migratory flows was one means of exercising imperium that proved beneficial to European powers. The Ottoman Empire was forced to adapt to these circumstances, but this did not imply, however, that it was completely held hostage to external influences. Like its European counterparts, the Ottoman government found means of turning migration and trans-imperial networks to its advantage. In an age of high imperialism, the Ottomans did not have the luxury of adopting a wait and see approach.

Over the years, the Ottoman Empire had made progressive gains in establishing itself among the powers of Europe, eventually earning a place at the diplomatic table during the Congress of Paris in 1856 as an equal partner. Yet equality was never absolute. European perspectives shifted as imperial rivalries grew. Setting their sights on the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean, politicians objected to the Ottoman Empire's treatment of Christian minorities and assailed its "despotic" violations of basic rights. They favored imposing reforms on the "barbaric Turk" in the name of "humanitarian" intervention.¹ Ottoman officials cringed at these suggestions, seeing in them veiled threats of colonization. "The word 'reforms' as it is understood in Europe does not have much meaning [to us]," contended the statesman Mehmed Kâmil Pasha, adding, "Once Europe leaves us in peace, we will march down the path of progress compatible with the Oriental spirit."² Ottomans were sensitive to what the Grand Vizier Fuad Pasha called "the malevolent assertions of the European press" at mid-century.³ They fended off a constant barrage of criticism painting the empire as a backward and intolerant Muslim society resistant to modern change. "We have assimilated the legal, medical, military and other sciences to such an extent that at present there does not exist in Europe a single science which remains unknown to us," one official indignantly countered.⁴ The government even extended patronage to prominent scholars like the Hungarian orientalist Ármín Vámbéry to influence public opinion and assure that

¹ Tetsuya Toyoda, "L'Aspect universaliste du droit international européen du 19ème siècle et le statut juridique de la Turquie avant 1856," *Journal of the History of International Law*, 8:1 (2006): 19–37; Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Intervention in the Ottoman Empire, 1878–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

² "La Turquie et l'Europe," *Revue de L'Islam*, 24 (November 1897), 164.

³ OD-PoHis, HR.SYS-225-3, Fuad Pacha to Diran Bey, 16 February 1859.

⁴ OD-PoHis, HR.SYS-226-42, "Draft Report on Ahmed Riza," n.d.

the Porte was making strides toward achieving “a higher degree of civilization.”⁵ Yet these endorsements were typically ignored and resentments lingered. “I do everything to combat this instigation, harmful as it is unjust, found in public opinion,” complained Diran Bey, an Ottoman diplomatic official stationed in Brussels. “But what is, perhaps, most annoying for us is not being able to fight our adversaries with the same weapons.”⁶

Denied an equal playing field, the government came to outline a unique policy that it could deploy in its struggle against European imperial encroachment. Appeals to Pan-Islamic solidarity were part of an informal policy designed to influence Muslims outside the empire and use religious loyalties as a tool to exert diplomatic pressures on European governments. It also abetted processes of Ottoman empire-building at home and abroad as the Porte employed religious networks in Africa and the Near East to advance its power.⁷ Ottoman Pan-Islamism did not emerge *ex nihilo*. It evolved out of existing movements taking shape across Muslim societies. As European imperialism threatened to obliterate *dar al-Islam* and swallow up independent Muslim states, activists from North Africa to India responded with calls for a united Islamic front, insisting unity would empower Muslims and provide the motor for Islamic renewal. The Ottoman government exploited these sentiments as it attempted to use trans-imperial networks and Muslim loyalties to meet pressing security concerns and expand its global influence. It channeled popular feelings for Muslim unity into an Ottoman-centric policy and used anti-imperial movements to pursue its own imperialist goals.

European states like France and Britain claimed to be “Muslim powers” due to the large Muslim populations over which they ruled. Movements like Pan-Islamism, however, exposed the flimsy premise on which such claims were built. As a state ruled by a Muslim sovereign, the Ottoman Empire was well positioned to tap into the popular Islamic movements arising in the late nineteenth century. It could appeal to Muslims in a way that European powers could not, espousing themes of Islamic solidarity attractive to Muslim activists and colonial subjects. Yet if the Porte appropriated the rhetoric of Muslim imperium and channeled it into its own imperial project, Ottoman Pan-Islamism amounted to more than a policy of imperial mimicry. Ottoman religious politics were also a reaction to changes occurring within the empire itself. Migratory flows stemming from North Africa and Central Asia were changing the face of the Ottoman Empire as it absorbed growing numbers of refugees and émigrés. Between 1878 and 1914, an estimated 5 million Muslims migrated to the Ottoman Empire. At the same

⁵ Arminius Vámbrey, *Le Turquie est elle susceptible de réformes?* (Paris: Hartgé et Le Soudier, 1878), 39–40.

⁶ OD-PoHis, HR.SYS-225-6, Diran Bey to Safvet Pasha, 16 February 1860.

⁷ Cemil Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 68; Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*.

time, it lost roughly two-fifths of its territory to European interventions and nationalist revolts, many of these areas populated by Christians. Ottoman society continued to be defined by a high degree of ethnic diversity, but its religious makeup became predominantly Islamic in character.⁸ As a result, Islam would play a more prominent role in imperial politics, and the incoming Sultan Abdülhamid was not ignorant of this fact. While the state increasingly came to use nationality to identify subjects and blunt extraterritoriality, the new sultan showed a willingness to endorse Islamic association and vest his authority in religious symbolism.⁹ This seeming paradox revealed the multiple ways in which Ottoman authorities adapted to the new imperial environment as they defended against European advances and responded to the broader cultural and political fluctuations around them. Notions of Muslim unity had a powerful allure that transcended borders. In harnessing this message, Abdülhamid anticipated fashioning a trans-imperial policy of his own and breaking the isolation that left his empire at the mercy of other imperial powers.

Like Muslim religious networks and pilgrimage itineraries, Pan-Islamism illuminated the linkages connecting Muslim communities across borders. The perceived threat posed by Islamic unity movements compelled European states to take a more active role in the lives of their Muslim subjects. French authorities ramped up surveillance on Muslim religious association and the press in North Africa, hoping to shield colonies from external influences. At the same time, administrators took Ottoman efforts to mobilize Muslim religious networks seriously, countering with plans of their own to work through Sufi brotherhoods and stem the flow of Islamic politicization. By the turn of the century, it was evident that movements in the Islamic world were encouraging a more concerted effort on the part of the French to cordon off Algeria and Tunisia from surrounding areas. These circumstances also provided new contexts in which to reflect on France's image as an ostensible "Muslim power," engendering discursive strategies that would give shape and substance to the idea of the Muslim Mediterranean.

Unifying the Muslim World

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Islamic world was in a state of transition. New technological innovations and approaches to statecraft were dramatically altering the traditional social and economic relations that had previously organized Muslim societies. Taking note of developments occurring in the West and confronted with the growing power of Europe across much of Africa and Asia, elites

⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 187.

⁹ Low, "Unfurling the Flag of Extraterritoriality," 300–01.

believed it necessary to re-evaluate the political institutions and economic practices in their own societies in order to remain competitive and preserve their independence.¹⁰ In Istanbul, Cairo, and Tunisia, statesmen espoused modernizing programs that endeavored to strengthen the institutions of state and “restructure” society through economic and social improvements. Elites might have noted the need to “imitate the commendable dynamism of Europe” as the Tunisian statesman Khayr al-Dīn claimed, but their eyes always remained fixed on “the future of Islam” and the Muslim world.¹¹ Reformers were appreciative of what Europe could offer, but they rarely advocated unapologetic Westernization and imitation.¹² The Tunisian newspaper *As-Sawāb* reflected the attitudes of various reform-minded elites when it criticized those who “adopt the principles and views [of Europeans] without having understood either their significance or real impact.”¹³ Leading modernizers elaborated aspirations for change through indigenous social and intellectual frameworks.¹⁴ Ideas of scientific progress and representative government were packaged for Muslim audiences and often related back to authoritative sources like the Hadith and Qur’an. Presented in such a way, calls for reform acquired an international dimension, spreading outward from intellectual centers like Istanbul and Tunis to peripheral locations in Indonesia and Subcontinental Asia. Muslim colonial subjects in Algeria, India, and Central Asia were not immune to these influences either and often sought to pursue similar modernizing agendas in collaboration with colonial regimes. As texts and ideas moved across empires, concepts like *jadid* (innovation) and *taqadam* (progress) acquired a global dimension.¹⁵

This is not to imply that tensions between reform and tradition were absent. Religious authorities and community leaders reacted to talk of modernization and innovation, emboldening various Islamic revivalist movements that generated stark cultural and ideological divisions within communities. Grass-roots organizers mobilized followers at the local levels, mounting populist platforms behind calls for reform (*islāh*) and renewal (*tajdid*).¹⁶ They lashed out at European imperialism and criticized authoritarian rulers and established religious authorities at home. While Ottoman political elites spoke of “restructuring” (*tanzimat*),

¹⁰ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 53–91; Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 36–39.

¹¹ Khayr al-Dīn, *Réformes Nécessaires aux États Musulmans* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1868), 5.

¹² See: Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*.

¹³ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1469, “Resumé du Sawab,” 12 May 1905.

¹⁴ R. Michael Feener, “New Networks and New Knowledge: Migrations, Communications and the Reconfiguration of the Muslim Community in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *The New Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 39–68; Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Two Concepts of State in the Tanzimat Period: The Hatt-i Şerif of Gülhane and the Hatt-i Hümayun,” *Turkish Historical Review*, 6 (2015): 117–37.

¹⁵ Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism*, 18–19; Elena I. Campbell, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 71–74.

¹⁶ Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 20–22.

others made appeals to “Islamism” (*Islāmcilik*) and demanded a return to fundamental Islamic values.¹⁷ Sufis across North Africa and Asia preached rehabilitating Islamic society through new readings of the Qur’an and Sunna.¹⁸ More radical, a small but influential elite group of Islamic modernists and so-called “Salafists” in Egypt looked to an imagined Muslim past, calling for the “regeneration” of Islamic civilization through progressive reform and a return to a purified faith. Despite the fundamentalist orientation of the Salafiyya movement, Salafists were hardly conservatives, and rallied behind a revolutionary Pan-Islamism committed to liberating Muslim societies from European rule.¹⁹ Whether elitist or popular in nature, these various movements suggested that Muslims were grappling with questions of how to preserve Islamic identity and culture and in what measure as they confronted the imposition of modern secular institutions on their societies and watched as large swaths of the Islamic world fell under European control. New social and political concerns stimulated debates among elites and community leaders, provoking novel calls for Muslim unity (*Ittihād-i Islām*) and Islamic cultural identification that had little precedent with the past.²⁰

Europeans were not oblivious to the new mood arising among Muslim writers and authorities as the century progressed. Many saw a clear danger in Islamic revivalism and compared yearnings for Muslim unity with nationalist movements such as Pan-Germanism or Pan-Slavism occurring on the continent.²¹ In the European imagination, “Pan-Islamism” became shorthand for a militant and regressive political program with strong anti-Western connotations. “It is an indisputable fact that a profound movement has seized the professors of Islam, and there is indeed a religious-political movement which . . . Muslim public opinion [*Mohamedanische Volksseele*] has seized upon and hold fast to with all the tenacious fanaticism of the Oriental,” an Austrian journalist stated in 1882.²² Officials took a dim view of Pan-Islamism, especially among those in the colonies who governed large Muslim populations. “Pan-Islamism aims at religious unity,” an official report from French Algeria maintained. “It rests upon the dogma of the

¹⁷ Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 22–23.

¹⁸ Nikki R. Keddie, “The Revolt of Islam, 1700 to 1993: Comparative Considerations and Relations to Imperialism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 36:3 (July 1994): 468–82; O’Fahey and Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered,” 57–61; Reinhard Schulze, “Die Politisierung des Islam im 19. Jahrhundert,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 22:1/4 (1982): 106–07; Itzhak Weismann, *Taste of Modernity: Sufism, Salafiyya, and Arabism in Late Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

¹⁹ Henri Lauzière, “The Construction of Salafiyya: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42 (2010): 369–89; Umar Ryad, “Anti-Imperialism and the Pan-Islamic Movement,” in Motadel, *Islam and the European Empires*, 132.

²⁰ Adeb Khalid, “Pan-Islamism in Practice: The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and Its Uses,” in Özdalga, *Late Ottoman Society*, 201–02; Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 341–42.

²¹ Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism*, 2.

²² “Der Panislamismus,” *Tages-Post* (Linz), 31 May 1882.

militant expansion of Islam and dreams of submitting all non-Muslims under the scepter of an ideal leader and a world guided by the law of Mohammedanism.”²³

Critics were quick to dispel such interpretations, insisting “Pan-Islamism” was a misconception. “Pan-Islamism does not exist,” Mehmed Kâmil Pasha informed his European audience in 1897. “This word was created by some careless Orientalists who attribute to the Orient the same ideas they attach to Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism or Pan-Hellenism. The civilization of the Orient has no relation... with the civilization of the Occident.”²⁴ Other critics were willing to agree, writing off the idea of a widescale Muslim conspiracy as pure fantasy. “Despite the diversity of race and religion, despite the profound disagreement,” the Catholic journalist Joseph Denais chided, “the West appears to fear the awakening of a tightly unified Islam from China to Morocco.”²⁵ The orientalist scholar Edward Brown claimed he could find no reference to “Pan-Islamism” in Arabic, Turkish, or Persian, and concluded it was certainly a European creation. Nonetheless, he was aware of the defensive impetus for unity among Muslims worldwide as they reacted to European imperialism. “Recent events have done much to create among the Muslim nations a sense of brotherhood and community of interests,” he remarked.²⁶

The unity movement was neither a global Muslim conspiracy against Europe nor a complete European fabrication. What Europeans deemed “Pan-Islamism” registered with an array of Muslim elites across borders, although not necessarily for the reason many European critics assumed. Calls for Muslim unity merged with revivalist sentiments and took on evident anti-colonial overtones.²⁷ Yet at base it sprang from collective concerns over tradition and how to make Muslim society compatible with the cultural and political forms of modernity.²⁸ For Muslim reformers, calls for unity aimed to construct a transnational identity with the power to mobilize communities and influence modernist movements on a broad scale.²⁹ It grew out of the loose-knit networks that traditionally connected Muslim societies and provided a context in which reform-minded elites could re-imagine these social and cultural bonds through articulations of a shared Islamic cultural identity and heritage. In their desires to revive Islamic civilization and stave off colonial conquest, elites espoused a brand of “Muslim cosmopolitanism” that worked its way into varying outlooks and ideological platforms.³⁰

²³ ANOM, GGA/27H/8, “Revue de la Presse musulmane,” 28 February 1913.

²⁴ “La Turquie et l’Europe,” *Revue de l’Islam*, 24 (November 1897), 163.

²⁵ Joseph Denais, “Le Fanatisme en Turquie,” *Mechveret*, 15 July 1897.

²⁶ Quoted in Christopher de Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment: The Modern Struggle Between Faith and Reason* (London: Vintage, 2017), 202.

²⁷ Khalid, “Pan-Islamism in Practice,” in Özdalga, *Late Ottoman Society*, 201–02.

²⁸ Karpas, *The Politicization of Islam*, 7–8.

²⁹ Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Vision of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 3–4.

³⁰ Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism*, 178–79.

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.³¹ “It is the press that creates union and solidarity among people and experience has demonstrated this fact,” as one Tunisian journalist explained. “The smallest journal can do more than the most celebrated orator.”³² More precisely, the print revolution effectively broke the monopoly of the ‘ulamā on authoritative knowledge and religious discourse and armed reformers with a modern medium that could reach larger audiences.³³ “Newspapers are a sort of orator, preachers of the people, which travel through the streets and give speeches in the sheets of paper distributed through the entire world to spread good advice and enlightenment,” the newspaper *Al-Islam* affirmed in 1908.³⁴ Journals and print culture connected Muslim communities on a global scale. A new Islamic public sphere was emerging in which both publications and elites circulated in greater numbers.³⁵ Public Pan-Islamism was part of this development. It acquired saliency through the new forms of communication and sociability growing up in places like Istanbul, Cairo, and Tunis, and attested to the dynamism of a new trans-imperial Muslim public sphere.³⁶ In a more general sense, innovations in print helped construct the very idea of a “Muslim world” distinct from religiously based understandings of the *ummah*.³⁷ Popular Pan-Islamism emphasized the Muslim community as a cultural and social entity rather than a religious one, and for this reason it struck a chord with a host of reform-minded elites, writers, and radicals.

Pan-Islamism and Ottoman Trans-Imperial Policy

As calls for Muslim unity emanated from various centers, the Ottoman government became sensitive to the potential of Pan-Islamism as a political tool. By 1880, the Ottoman Empire faced a precarious situation. War and European military intervention had taken their toll on the government. Threatened by national separatist movements within and European imperialism without, the Porte confronted the prospect of further unrest if these dangers went unchecked. Adding to

³¹ Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment*, 77–84.

³² CADN, 1TU/1/V/990, Compte rendu analytique de la press tunisienne, “Un Trait de plume,” *Ed-Dohk*, 6 July 1911.

³³ Francis Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 27:1 (February 1993): 237–39; Adeeb Khalid, “Printing, Publishing and Reform in Tsarist Central Asia,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26:2 (May 1994): 187–200.

³⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1469, “La Presse Tunisienne,” *El Islam*, 17 June 1908.

³⁵ Gelvin and Green, “Introduction,” *Global Muslims*, 11–14.

³⁶ Khalid, “Pan-Islamism in Practice,” in Özdalga, *Late Ottoman Society*, 203–07.

³⁷ Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 16, 72–73.

the sense of urgency, Istanbul faced a financial crisis. By 1878, the government owed more than £200 million in direct loans to foreign investors. As the government increasingly found it difficult to meet its financial obligations, the major European powers began to speculate on the future of the “sick man of Europe,” drawing up contingency plans should it collapse completely. Neither Britain nor France particularly welcomed the scenario and were willing to keep the “sick man” on life support if need be to recover their money and prevent Russia from expanding into the Mediterranean. After 1878, therefore, the Ottoman Empire was subject to more direct European supervision as France and Britain assumed control over managing the economy through the Ottoman Debt Administration, a European condominium that extracted taxes and ensured European creditors were paid. They also tied future loans to promises of imperial reform and ensured that Christian minorities in the empire were “protected” from abuse.³⁸ The situation was hardly ideal, and more often than not European interventions exacerbated conflicts and impeded the empire’s financial recovery.³⁹ Some even suspected that these adverse effects were by design rather than misfortune. “[The Europeans] can only live on an inept, troubled Turkey in the throes of a massive crisis,” one critic fulminated.⁴⁰

Coming to the throne in 1876, Sultan Abdülhamid was well aware of the dilemma he faced. He needed to appease his European creditors and restore power to the government. To this end, he encouraged a series of modernizing reforms intended to assuage fears over the empire’s economic future. The state invested in infrastructure like railroads and reorganized industries to attract foreign investment in industry. It also centralized its power. Between 1876 and 1908, the Ottoman state grew from a modest staff of 2,000 public servants into a robust imperial bureaucracy with 35,000 employees.⁴¹ Under the circumstances, the state acquired a more pronounced presence in Ottoman life, eschewing liberalization. In 1878, Abdülhamid suppressed the Ottoman constitution and cracked down on liberal political opponents.⁴² Any effort to safeguard the little sovereignty that remained to him was, however, quickly annulled by his supposed European “allies” as they snatched Tunisia and Egypt within the course of a year. Ottoman North Africa was diminished, leaving observers to speculate whether the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of becoming yet another European protectorate.

³⁸ Michelle Raccagni, “The French Economic Interest in the Ottoman Empire,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 11:3 (1980): 339–76; Christopher Clay, *Gold for the Sultan: Western Bankers and Ottoman Finance, 1856–1881* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000); Murat Birdal, *The Political Economy of the Ottoman Public Debt: Insolvency and European Financial Control in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).

³⁹ Isa Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees, 1878–1939: Migration in a Post-Imperial World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 13–19.

⁴⁰ “Les Affaires en Turquie,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 5 (March 1896), 68.

⁴¹ Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East*, 102.

⁴² Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*.

As internal problems mounted and the international environment became increasingly hostile, Ottoman sovereignty hung in the balance. Navigating this perilous situation, Abdülhamid was compelled to tread delicately, playing his European rivals off one another and making gains where he could. Pan-Islamism offered a potential solution.

As dynastic head of the Ottoman Empire, the sultan was a temporal political leader. Yet he was also recognized as the Caliph of the Muslim world and a religious authority for Muslims worldwide. Abdülhamid had inherited the title of Caliph upon taking the throne and was confirmed by pledges of loyalty from the Ottoman religious establishment that recognized him as the “protector of Islam” and “commander of the faithful.” From the commencement of his reign, he aspired to capitalize on his religious stature and deploy Caliphal spiritual authority as part of a wider cultural and political policy focused on imperial reform and security. Islam was “the only bond” capable of uniting an ethnically diverse and disparate Muslim community, in his opinion.⁴³ Moreover, faced with the threat of an aggressive European imperialism, unity was essential. “We must strengthen our links with the Muslims of other lands and get closer to each other,” he proclaimed. “The only hope for our future lies in this idea.”⁴⁴ Appeals to unity aimed to rally Muslims in the Near and Middle East to the dynasty, combating the fierce ethnic separatism that perpetually loomed over the empire. Employing Islamic rhetoric and symbolism also gave a veneer of religious legitimacy to the state’s modernizing reforms and offered a potential popular base of support to prop up Hamidian authoritarianism. In the domain of foreign policy, the sultan could use calls to Pan-Islamic solidarity to counter the empire’s diplomatic isolation, appealing directly to a global Muslim audience and applying pressure on European imperial powers like France, Britain, and Russia which possessed large Muslim populations.⁴⁵

The unity movement had a wide appeal and Abdülhamid readily drew upon these popular sentiments, channeling them into his domestic and foreign policies. He employed ritual and religious spectacle in crafting a Caliphal identity for himself. Newspapers customarily reported on his attendance at the weekly prayer held in the Yildiz Mosque. Imams from Sarajevo to Jakarta were encouraged to invoke the sultan’s name in prayers and encourage loyalty among followers. During the 1880s, greater attention was focused on Islamic holy sites, with Abdülhamid taking a more active role in organizing hajj travel routes and securing protections for pilgrims. Through Islamic motifs and symbols, he effectively sacralized his

⁴³ Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 232.

⁴⁴ Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877–1924)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 50.

⁴⁵ Khalid, “Pan-Islamism in Practice,” in Özdalga, *Late Ottoman Society*, 203; Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East*, 81–84.

political office.⁴⁶ As one European saw it, he aspired to make himself “the Pope of Islam, from whom emanates all truth and all salutary blessings.”⁴⁷ The analogy was a poor one. Hamidian Pan-Islamism nurtured a strong emotional attachment to the Caliph, depicting the sultan as a defender and champion of Islam, not its doctrinal authority. Muslims were instructed to see themselves as “spiritual subjects” of the Caliph, even if politically they were subjects of another sovereign authority.⁴⁸ As the “protector” of Islam, the Caliph provided a visible symbol for the unity movement and a focal point for Muslim anti-colonial protest. Conversely, with the Ottoman Empire itself under threat of European colonialization, Hamidian Pan-Islamism also underscored the message that the survival of the Ottoman Empire and the preservation of the Islamic faith were one and the same, exhorting Muslims to defend the empire against its enemies.⁴⁹ Muslims around the world responded, demonstrating the strong emotional and religious attraction of the Pan-Islamic message. They staged public demonstrations of support for the Ottoman Empire at moments when diplomatic tensions loomed between Istanbul and Europe or gathered each year to celebrate Abdülhamid’s birthday in shows of spiritual solidarity. “He has his shortcomings as a statesman,” the British Muslim Rafiuddin Ahmad admitted in 1895 when speaking of Abdülhamid, “but as Caliph of Islam he is the most popular prince that ever came to the throne.”⁵⁰

As Caliph, Abdülhamid possessed a mystique and authority over Muslims that European authorities lacked. As early as 1880, British authorities were taking note of Indian Muslims raising money for Muslim refugees in the Ottoman Empire and carrying the Caliphal message to the Subcontinent.⁵¹ These activities were encouraged through the Ottoman consulate in Mumbai, where a “committee” had been set up to ensure direct and constant contact with Istanbul.⁵² A corresponding body of Indian subjects working in conjunction with the Porte had already been set up in the Ottoman capital, creating “a sort of unofficial agency” intended to strengthen Pan-Islamic ties between the two, as Austen Henry Layard, the British diplomat in Istanbul claimed.⁵³ North African Muslims equally

⁴⁶ Selim Deringil, “The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 35:1 (January 1993): 3–29.

⁴⁷ Robert Arnaud, *Précis de Politique Musulmane* (Algiers: Adolphe Jourdan, 1906), 118.

⁴⁸ Lâle Can, *Spiritual Subjects: Central Asian Pilgrims and the Ottoman Hajj at the End of Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

⁴⁹ Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, 63.

⁵⁰ Rafiuddin Ahmad, “A Moslem View of Abdul Hamid and the Powers,” *The Nineteenth Century*, 38:221 (July 1895), 162.

⁵¹ BNA, FO/881/4341, “Report from Hugo Marinich,” 7 April 1880; BNA, FO/881/4341, Austen Henry Layard to Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, Marquess of Salisbury, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, 18 April 1880.

⁵² IOR/R/1/1/61, “Mr. Lambert’s Memorandum Regarding Muhammadan Societies in Bombay,” August 1887.

⁵³ BNA, FO/881/4341, Layard to Salisbury, 18 April 1880.

revealed Pan-Islamic sympathies, expressing hopes that Abdülhamid would alleviate the “sincere apprehensions over the future of Islam” by bringing Muslims together as “a single nation,” as the Tunisian journalist Atha-Bey Hussein claimed.⁵⁴ One Egyptian journal in 1904 went as far as to hope that the intervention of the sultan could forge unity across the entirety of North Africa, promoting the cry “Let’s unite, oh my brothers of the Maghreb and Mashriq.”⁵⁵ Expressions of Caliphal support were never part of an orchestrated Pan-Islamic conspiracy directed from Istanbul, despite what European authorities might claim. They were spontaneous and tied to broader aspirations for Muslim unity and reform echoing across Islamic societies in the late nineteenth century. The secret “committees” and “agencies” noted by colonial officials were more akin to cultural associations and local propaganda associations that received Ottoman financial support as the government attempted to nurture emotional attachment to the Caliph and encourage notions of “spiritual” subjecthood.

Pan-Islamism spanned ethnic and political borders. It provided a context for imagining a form of Muslim cosmopolitanism at odds with the territorialized understandings of sovereignty and “national” identification prescribed by Europeans. Abdülhamid was perceptive enough to realize that calls for Muslim unity had the power to foster trans-imperial relationships and project Ottoman influence beyond its borders. Whereas European powers carved out political protectorates from former Ottoman territories and ran them like veritable colonies, the Ottoman Empire employed more diffuse forms of power and influence as it competed in the imperial great game. “The Ottoman Empire has assumed a sort of moral protectorate over Islam,” the French foreign minister Stephen Pichon observed. “This is the base of its global grandeur.”⁵⁶

Sufi Networks: A Mode of Imperial Governmentality

The question was whether this “moral protectorate” could be converted into real influence and power. Religious rhetoric and symbolic gestures might persuade Muslims to look to the Ottoman Empire for support, but the emotional resonance of Pan-Islamism was not sufficient in itself to serve Ottoman political ends. A more direct form of power brokering on the ground was required in order to make it effective policy, and this entailed working through the social and religious networks spanning the Muslim world. Ottoman political structures were well suited to meet this challenge. Despite Abdülhamid’s centralizing initiatives, the

⁵⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1469, Atha-Bey-Hussin, “Les Puissances Musulmanes,” *La Rachida*, 18 November 1904.

⁵⁵ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1468, “Resumé du Nebrass-el-Macharika-oual-Maghariba,” 28 September 1904.

⁵⁶ CADN, 1TU/1/V/989, Stéphane Pichon, MAE to Alapetite, Resident General, 24 December 1908.

empire was not a centralized state akin to European nations. It was a composite state made up of varying provinces with differing degrees of autonomy. The sultan presided over a complex set of local networks and partnerships, entailing that imperial policies were consistently negotiated with local and regional powerholders. This scenario was especially prevalent on the Arab frontiers where state authority tended to be thin. In Arabia and Syria, the imperial state operated through existing patron–client networks, typically relying on local religious leaders and brokers to command loyalties.⁵⁷ This style of “layered sovereignty” customary throughout much of the empire entailed the Porte was habituated to working with intermediaries and forging trans-local relationships to achieve its policy goals.⁵⁸

Given the nature of the Ottoman imperial polity, Sufi shaykhs and spiritual leaders were a valuable ally for the government both at home and abroad. Religious orders operated across multiple localities and were integrated into local economies, providing entry points into frontier and borderland regions. As early as 1866, a Council of Shaykhs (*Meclis-i Meşayih*) had been created to liaise with prominent Sufi leaders and draw them closer to the imperial government. The brotherhoods were never a consistent or reliable ally. Sufi shaykhs proved resistant to centralized control and often espoused their own variants of Islam at odds with Ottoman Hanafite orthodoxy.⁵⁹ The ascension of Abdülhamid and his Pan-Islamic policy would, however, place a premium on Istanbul’s relations with Sufis as the state worked to cultivate ties to Muslim communities across Africa and Asia and instrumentalize these relations.⁶⁰ The *tariqa* were envisaged as partners that could assist the process of Ottoman centralization and serve as an arm of Ottoman foreign and imperial policy abroad.⁶¹ In transforming Pan-Islamism from an ideology into political policy, Ottoman authorities sought to build upon existing religious networks and provided a context for imagining a new kind of trans-imperial Muslim community that drew together various autonomous actors in a collective effort to combat European encroachment and foster Muslim unity.⁶²

These objectives required, however, brokering relationships at the local level and negotiating interests with key powerholders, a task that was not always easy to achieve. In the 1880s, events in the Egyptian Sudan revealed the limitations of

⁵⁷ Elektra Kostopoulou, “Armed Negotiations: The Institutionalization of the Late Ottoman Locality,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 33:3 (2013): 295–309; Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees*, 117; Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East*, 78–90.

⁵⁸ Low, “Unfurling the Flag of Extraterritoriality,” 301.

⁵⁹ Butrus Abu-Manneh, “Sultan Abdülhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda Al-Sayyadi,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 15:2 (1979): 131–53; Isa Blumi, “Reorienting European Imperialism: How Ottomanism Went Global,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 56:3–4 (2016): 307–08; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 63–64.

⁶⁰ Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism*, 53; Özcan, *Pan-Islamism*, 52–53.

⁶¹ Brian Silverman, “Sufism and Governmentality in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 29 (2009): 171–75.

⁶² Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees*, 119–25.

Ottoman influence as Sufi leaders mobilized behind a popular rebellion directed against the elite class of Ottoman soldiers and administrators that ruled Egypt. Led by Muhammed Ahmad ibn Abdullah, a Sammaniyya shaykh claiming to be the prophesized *Mahdi* (redeemer), the uprising roiled the Egyptian Sudan as rebels rallied supporters with calls to jihad and set up an independent Islamic state. Faced with a movement beyond his control, Abdülhamid was loath to encourage the populist revivalism preached by the Mahdiyya. He also worried that its radicalism might offer a pretext for European intervention and extend the British occupation.⁶³ The rapid success of the Mahdiyya movement testified to the popularity of Sufi associations in the region as rebels forged alliances across the ethnic and tribal lines that characteristically divided Sudanese society. Sufi lodges became hotbeds of activity, generating a mass movement extending from Darfur to the Red Sea coast. Leaders appropriated Islamic symbols and ceremonies from the Sufi brotherhood to legitimate their authority, building a Mahdist state upon existing Sudanese religious and organizational structures. The relatively thin Egyptian administration stretched across the Sudan proved no match for the slaves and local strongmen who joined the Mahdist forces in droves.⁶⁴ Abdülhamid was largely relegated to a spectator as these events unfolded and Britain struggled to suppress the Mahdist forces, tightening its grip on Egypt in the process.

The sultan fared better in neighboring Libya, where he extended secret aid to the Tunisian resistance against the French. A small military contingent was dispatched to Tripolitania in 1881 with orders to train Tunisian refugees who had fled across the border into Ottoman Libya in the wake of the French invasion. Ottoman authorities were also instructed to spread Pan-Islamic propaganda in North Africa through the Turkish and Arabic press.⁶⁵ The Ottoman military presence was slim and the vali in Tripoli found it more expeditious to rely upon local support and militias in the area. These forces were primarily under the control of Muhammad al-Mahdi, leader of the Senusiyya and the real powerholder on the ground in Ottoman Libya. Although the resistance proved futile, the French occupation established a new context for Ottoman relations with the popular Sufi order in Libya, forcing the two into an active collaboration that would continue over the coming decades.⁶⁶

The Senusi had a network of lodges and clients that extended from Benghazi to the frontiers of Sub-Saharan Africa. It ran schools and had a hand in running the

⁶³ Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*, 270.

⁶⁴ Green, *Three Empires on the Nile*, 76–80; O’Fahey and Radtke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered,” 78; Kim Searcy, *The Formation of the Sudanese Mahdist State: Ceremony and Symbols of Authority, 1882–1898* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁶⁵ Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism*, 42.

⁶⁶ Michel Le Gall, “The Ottoman Government and the Sanusiyya: A Reappraisal,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 21:1 (February 1989): 91–106.

Bedouin caravan trade that moved through the region. Senusi affiliates sat on the local law courts and attended to religious worship. The order also contracted relations with influential local elites in Tripolitania and came to wield a commanding influence in the municipal assemblies. Over the 1880s, the French vice-consul in Benghazi, Eugène Ricard, watched as the order expanded its control through a mix of religious and political alliances. “The Senusiyya wins numerous adepts to its cause in this province day by day,” he warned.⁶⁷ Through these efforts, the order came to perform the functions of a quasi-state in a region typically believed to be lawless and without authority.⁶⁸ In Muhammad al-Mahdi, the Ottomans believed they had found a partner in Libya who could encourage loyalty to the Caliph and enforce Istanbul’s authority in the volatile province. More ambitious still, officials entertained the idea that Muhammad al-Mahdi and his allies could serve as a proxy for Ottoman power and expansion beyond Libya. Through the many *zawāyā* run by the Senusi across North and Central Africa, the Ottomans saw the means of carving out a new African empire extending from the Mediterranean to the yet unclaimed areas surrounding Lake Chad.⁶⁹

The Ottoman Empire’s entrance into the struggle for Africa was an unwelcome addition and added a new element to the ongoing imperial rivalries between the European powers. The French ambassador in Istanbul was fully aware that the sultan was using Pan-Islamism for political ends and expressed as much to the foreign ministry. “We cannot ignore that the interested advances of Abdülhamid are inspired by policy needs and not by religious faith,” he advised.⁷⁰ Yet the options at France’s disposal were limited. Military intervention against the Senusi was strongly discouraged, with officials warning that French forces would become bogged down in a grueling and pointless campaign.⁷¹ The French were no strangers to the Senusiyya. The founder, Muhammad ibn Ali as-Senusi, was of Algerian origin. Following travels through Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and the Hijaz, he had settled in Libya and from there built up his impressive network of clients and allies. Given the scope and influence of the order, French authorities regarded it with deep suspicion from the outset.⁷² Senusi shaykhs stood accused of the most virulent religious fanaticism and posed one of the most formidable obstacles to “the progress of civilization in the Orient,” as one government report noted.⁷³

⁶⁷ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1218, M. Ricardo, Consul General de France in Tripoli to Alexandre Ribot, MAE, 29 September 1890.

⁶⁸ Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya*, 32.

⁶⁹ Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*, 43–75.

⁷⁰ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1218, Ambassadeur de France près du Porte Ottomane to Gabriel Hanotaux, 10 December 1896.

⁷¹ ANT, series E, carton 533, dossier 2, Ricard to Théophile Delcassé, MAE, 14 April 1899.

⁷² Jean-Louis Triaud, *La Légende Noire de la Sanûsiyya: une confrérie musulmane saharienne sous le regard français, 1840–1930* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1995).

⁷³ ANOM, Alger/2U/23, General Sous-Governor of Algeria to the Généraux des divisions de l’Algérie, 25 December 1864.

According to one Algerian official, the Senusi had the potential to create “a center of revolutionary action” that would direct “all the hatred and fanaticism of the Arabs” against France in the region.⁷⁴ Eugène Ricard had “little doubt” that the order would “try to create great difficulties for Algeria” and threaten French power throughout the region.⁷⁵ While the Tunisian administration assuaged fears with insistences that the Senusi were “little known” in the Regency, French authorities were inclined to see the order as one of the chief regional threats to its empire.⁷⁶

The Ottoman alliance with the Senusiyya and the Mahdist uprising in the Sudan necessitated greater vigilance as France extended its control over larger sections of North Africa. In 1882, French observers kept a close eye on the Sudan and grew increasingly wary at the thought of a radical Islamic liberation movement spreading along their eastern colonial border. That July, the explorer and journalist Gabriel Charmes took up the issue in the French press, warning that Egypt was in the throes of a “great religious agitation” that threatened to destabilize Libya and seep into Tunisia and Algeria.⁷⁷ The recently deposed premier Léon Gambetta concurred. If the “votaries of Islam” were allowed to preach their message of Islamic solidarity and revolt from Khartoum or Benghazi “the consequences will immediately be felt in Tunis,” he claimed.⁷⁸ To pre-empt any spillover from the brewing Sudanese crisis, military commanders were ordered to secure the Tunisian–Libyan border and keep a close eye on the local populations.⁷⁹ As they saw it, the Sufis posed the principal danger. A radical Islamic insurgency across the eastern border could have a devastating ripple effect if the brotherhoods were spurred into action, the Algerian Governor General Louis Tirman claimed. Local authorities needed to stay alert. “The events currently taking place in Egypt and the state of minds in Tripolitania make it necessary more than ever to closely monitor the religious orders in Algeria,” Tirman ordered.⁸⁰

As part of the heightened security measures to be put into place, Tirman requested prefects to draw up new surveys on the brotherhoods, providing information on the factions within them, the number of *zawāyā* they ran, their schools, and the properties they owned.⁸¹ Working to tight deadlines, most officials found it “absolutely impossible” to compile the requested information in a timely manner.⁸² Tirman was explicit in his reasoning for such information, insisting that *zawāyā* and houses connected with Sufi lodges in the major cities were believed to be meeting places for “Muslim agents from abroad.”⁸³ Louis Rinn, chief of the

⁷⁴ ANOM, Alger/2U/23, Delaporte, “Confidentielle,” 17 January 1874.

⁷⁵ ANOM, Alger/2U/23, “Extrait d’un rapport adressé par le vice-consul de France à Bengazi” (n.d.).

⁷⁶ ANT, Series E, Carton 550, dossier 4/9, “Note pour la Résidence Général,” 7 August 1902.

⁷⁷ *Journal des Débats*, 5 July 1882.

⁷⁸ “Egypt,” *The Standard* (31 March 1882), 5.

⁷⁹ ANOM, GGA/26H/13, “Rapport mensuel du moi de Janvier 1884,” 12 February 1884.

⁸⁰ ANOM, Alger/2U/20, Governor General to the Prefect of Algiers, 5 September 1882.

⁸¹ ANOM, Alger/2U/20, Governor General to the Prefect of Algiers, 5 September 1882.

⁸² ANOM, Alger/2U/20, Sous-prefect of Orleansville to Prefect of Algiers, 14 September 1882.

⁸³ ANOM, Alger/2U/20, Governor General to the Prefect of Algiers, 5 September 1882.

Native Affairs Service in Algeria and one of the foremost colonial experts on the Sufi brotherhoods, was equally concerned with the outside influences at work within Sufi networks and argued it would be “advantageous” to keep records on the foreign students (*tolbas*) attending their respective religious schools.⁸⁴ 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 their respective localities.⁸⁵ As surveillance policies evolved, the Algerian Service of Native Affairs came to prepare *renseignements individuels* on all known members of religious orders. The dossiers contained brief biographical sketches and later photographs to help identify those active within the orders.⁸⁶ Generally speaking, the belief was that the orders formed “a society with members and adepts from all the countries of Islam,” a conviction that only grew as fears of Ottoman Pan-Islamism infesting North Africa preoccupied French colonial officialdom.⁸⁷

The “foreign” elements attributed to the *tariqa* highlighted the perceived vulnerability of French colonies situated at the nexus of trans-regional Islamic religious and political influences. As with most colonial states, surveillance became the dominant *modus operandi* in dealing with the brotherhoods.⁸⁸ Direct intervention was discouraged. “The administration has not intervened in the organization of the Muslim religious orders and its role must confine itself to closely monitoring them,” Native Affairs advised. “Acting otherwise would give these associations a sort of recognition, an official status which we should carefully avoid giving to them.” The fear was that in reaching out to the brotherhoods it would give their leaders “a legal existence that they should not have in our eyes.”⁸⁹ As a rule of thumb, religious orders were criminalized in Algeria. As well, officials recognized that intervention could backfire on the regime. In 1882 for example, fears over “fanatical” marabouts elicited a variety of proposals on how best to handle the imagined Pan-Islamic threat lurking within the colonies. One suggestion recommended relocating unruly Sufis outside their home regions in order to break up their networks and nullify their influence. The Governor General’s office rejected the idea, insisting it would only spread radicalism to other areas and allow religious authorities to present themselves as martyrs persecuted by the state.⁹⁰ For much of the 1880s, surveillance remained the dominant policy initiative.

⁸⁴ ANOM, Alger/2U/20, Louis Rinn to the Prefects of Algiers, 4 November 1887.

⁸⁵ ANOM, Alger/2U/20, “Circulaire aux sous-préfets, administrateurs et maires,” 9 November 1887.

⁸⁶ See for example: ANOM, Alger/2U/22, Dossier: Rahmaniya, marabouts et moqquadem (1898).

⁸⁷ ANOM, Alger/2U/22, “Rapport au Conseiller d’État, Directeur Général, Préfet d’Alger,” 18 April 1862.

⁸⁸ See: Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); George R. Trumbull III, *An Empire of Facts: Colonial Power, Cultural Knowledge, and Islam in Algeria, 1870–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 101–25.

⁸⁹ ANOM, Alger/2U/22, État-major général to the Prefect of Algiers, 14 February 1879.

⁹⁰ ANOM, Alger/2U/23, Governor General to Prefect of Algiers, 8 July 1882.

Yet as the Ottoman Empire pressed religious networks into the service of empire-building, French officials slowly came to appreciate that Sufi networks could provide readymade channels to work through on both a local and trans-local level. By the mid-1890s, authorities saw merit in abandoning the policy of non-intervention and began offering official recognition to religious leaders who were willing to cooperate. They singled out leaders “in whom we can have confidence and who are responsible” and attempted to cultivate good relations with influential Sufis in the colony, using the carrot rather than the stick.⁹¹ Local authorities were inclined to approve the opening of new *zawāyā* and religious buildings for shaykhs known to be friendly to the government.⁹² Collaborators also found official approval for travel between *zawāyā* easier to obtain and benefited from reduced government surveillance over some religious activities.⁹³ The Tijāniyya, an order resistant to Ottoman control, proved particularly adroit at negotiating its position with the French in Algeria to preserve its independence. During the 1880s and 1890s, Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijāni worked closely with the French administration and even took a French wife, sealing an informal alliance between the Algerian brotherhood and the administration. Upon the death of Ahmad in 1897, the venerated shaykh was given a state funeral in the Mosque of the Pêcherie attended by the muftis of Algeria and the Governor General Jules Cambon. In his eulogy, Cambon highlighted Ahmad’s service to the state, noting “he served civilization by his example and laid the groundwork for it [in Algeria].” At the funeral, the loyalty of the Tijāniyya was put on full display, symbolizing the “profound mark of sympathy on the part of the French government for its native subjects.”⁹⁴

Domestic stability was not the only advantage the Tijāniyya could offer the French, officials surmised. Although founded in Algeria in the early nineteenth century, the order had branches extending throughout the region, with centers in Fez, Tunis, Senegal, and the Sudan. The geographic scope of the Tijāniyya network led some to believe it could be helpful in assisting French designs elsewhere, especially in the Western Sahara where France was working to secure control by the 1890s. These expectations were, however, quickly shown to be elusive. In 1898, the Algerian government noted that while the Tijāniyya were “devoted to our authority” in Algeria, adherents in Fez were actively providing aid to combatants resisting French authority in Senegal and the Sudan. While officials hoped to co-opt Tijāniyya leaders in West Africa, they exerted no authority over Morocco.⁹⁵ Neither did the Tijāniyya leadership in Algeria apparently. Colonial authorities

⁹¹ ANOM, Alger/2U/22, “Note au Préfet d’Alger,” 4 February 1894.

⁹² ANOM, Alger/2U/22, Mayor of l’Arba to Prefect of Algiers, 30 July 1895.

⁹³ ANOM, Alger/2U/22, Governor General of Algeria to Général Commandant la Division, 26 August 1911.

⁹⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1218, “Cérémonie Religieuse à la Mosquée de la Pêcherie à Alger” (1897), 10–12.

⁹⁵ ANOM, Alger/2U/23, Governor General of Algeria to the Général Commandant la Division, 24 March 1898.

might have believed Sufi orders to be highly centralized networks with rigid command structures, but the reality proved quite different.⁹⁶ As fighting continued, it became evident that the Tijāniyya held little sway over their fellow brothers outside Algeria. This did not prevent the French from using the brotherhood to exercise a moderating influence in Senegal or even recommend having a Tijāniyya delegation meet with the Senusi in 1902 to coordinate relations with Ahmed Sharif as-Senusi in the African interior.⁹⁷ These efforts largely failed. Outside Algeria, the Tijāniyya remained an active force in the resistance movements roiling central Africa. They fought the French in the Western Sahara and assisted combatants fighting British authorities in northern Nigeria in the early twentieth century.⁹⁸

Despite the shortcomings of the Tijāniyya alliance, French colonial authorities maintained that Sufi religious organizations could be used as a form of imperial governmentality in Africa much as the Ottoman–Senusiyya partnership demonstrated. By the turn of the century, this position was emerging as a veritable colonial doctrine thanks in part to the work of Xavier Coppolani. Born to a French *colon* family in Algeria, Coppolani had studied North African Islam in his formative years, taking an interest in Sufi religious practices. At the turn of the century, he took up a position with the French imperial administration in West Africa and conducted studies on the “Moorish” tribal networks around Senegal. An adherent to the “Algerian school” of colonial rule, Coppolani was convinced of the utility in monitoring natives and exercising influence through Islamic structures. He saw the brotherhoods and the spread of Ottoman Pan-Islamism as “a grave peril for the work of civilization to be undertaken” in Africa, and given this assessment proposed a simple and straightforward policy.⁹⁹ “Make use of the religious leaders who have been won over to our cause,” he advised.¹⁰⁰ He managed to convince the West African administration of this approach across the Sahara, urging support for select Sufi leaders who could assist France on the ground and thwart Pan-Islamic rebellion. Coppolani himself played an instrumental role in forging relations with tribes in Senegal and Mauritania and ultimately died in the service of this mission. In 1905, as he was gearing up for an advance on the emirate of Adrar, he was assassinated by members of the Gudfiyya, a militant offshoot created by members of the Qadiriyya to fight the French in the western Maghreb.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Burke, *The Ethnographic State*, 172–73.

⁹⁷ ANT, Series E, Carton 550, dossier 4/9, Albert Decrais to Paul Révoil, Governor General of Algeria, 6 June 1902.

⁹⁸ Paul E. Lovejoy and J. S. Hogendorn, “Revolutionary Mahdism and Resistance to Colonial Rule in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1905–06,” *The Journal of African History*, 31:2 (1990): 214–44; Jonathan Reynolds, “Good and Bad Muslims: Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 34:3 (2001): 601–18.

⁹⁹ Octave Dupont and Xavier Coppolani, *Les Confrères religieuses musulmanes* (Algiers: Adolphe Jourdan, 1897), xiv.

¹⁰⁰ David Robinson, “France as a Muslim Power in West Africa,” *Africa Today*, 46:3/4 (1999): 124.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 36–40.

In spite of Coppolani's untimely death, his policy recommendations bore fruit. In 1906, Coppolani's friend and cohort, Robert Arnaud, gave broad policy recommendations for France's entire Muslim African empire, discouraging war against the Sufi brothers that would incite resistance and religious conflicts. "It is necessary to use the brotherhoods as they possess an undeniable political influence," he argued.¹⁰² Winning over Sufi shaykhs could be achieved through offering material advantages, although the administration was also not above employing a heavy hand when it need to enforce its will. "The religious leaders are devoted to us for the most part," the Governor General of West Africa, Ernest Roume stated in 1904. "They all know, however, that we will not hesitate to repress immediately all hostile political agitation which hides itself under the cover of religious propaganda."¹⁰³ More often than not, force and political convenience rather than mutual accord, provided the basis for these colonial relationships, making reliance on the brotherhoods an uncertain enterprise. The reason for this unpredictability was easy enough to grasp. "No doubt we can press the marabouts into service, although with less authority than a Mohammedan government," wrote Edmond Doutté in 1900. "[But] what is good for the Moroccan or Turkish governments would not suffice for us."¹⁰⁴

If the Ottoman government was able to tap into Sufi networks and exercise a measure of control abroad through them, it remained doubtful whether an imperial European power like France could replicate this policy. Experts such as Doutté recognized that Islamic powers had the potential to transform Sufi religious organization into a "means of government," but France possessed neither the spiritual clout nor legitimacy to command Muslim loyalties on its own. In contrast to the Ottoman Empire, the feebleness of French Muslim imperium was clear to see. Ottoman and Mahdist political projects relied upon trans-local religious networks and demonstrated the ways in which empire-building could engage with intermediaries across frontiers. By contrast, European colonial powers found themselves on the opposite side of these projects, confronting "waves of fanaticism bounded by no political frontiers," as the British governor of Nigeria Lord Frederick Lugard stated.¹⁰⁵

Envisioning the Muslim Mediterranean

For powers like France and Britain eager to project images of themselves as "Muslim powers," Ottoman Pan-Islamism appeared more than a subversive movement.

¹⁰² Arnaud, *Précis de Politique Musulmane*, 119.

¹⁰³ ANOM, AOF/I/18, Governor General of AOF to Minister of the Colonies, 10 May 1904.

¹⁰⁴ Edmond Doutté, *Notes sur l'Islâm maghrîbin: les marabouts* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1900), 118–19.

¹⁰⁵ Reynolds, "Good and Bad Muslims," 603.

It posed a direct challenge to the very imperial identities they sought to cultivate among colonial subjects. As expressions of Islamic solidarity grew, European critics responded by reaffirming notions of Muslim imperium that countered Ottoman assertions of Islamic leadership. “There are Christian powers that are at the same time Muslim powers, by reason of the very great number of their subjects—numbered in the millions—which belong to the religion of Islam and which are governed by its laws,” explained the orientalist and former Catholic priest Hyacinthe Loyson in 1897. Given its number of Muslim subjects, France was invested in “the scientific and social regeneration of Islam,” and this achievement would “extend beyond the frontiers of its colonies and protectorates . . . [to] echo throughout the entire world of Islam.”¹⁰⁶ The military veteran and prominent colonial lobbyist Jules-Napoléon Ney was more direct, flatly dismissing the idea that the Ottoman sultan could unite all Muslims across the world as ludicrous. “It would be more probable for a Christian power to politically yoke Islam and exercise its influence over all the Muslim people than a Muslim power to convincingly realize Pan-Islamism.” Ney was not being facetious. He believed that France commanded a position of moral authority in the Islamic world and could exercise “spiritual leadership” over Muslims. “France is the only country in Europe which, by its exceptional position, cannot only create and make acceptable a Muslim Vatican, but also render it at once an immense source of benefit for humanity and a powerful instrument of triumph for its foreign policy and colonial empire.”¹⁰⁷

Despite these grandiose claims, the question of whether Ottoman Pan-Islamism could unite Sunni Muslims coming from different ethnic and regional backgrounds was a valid one. It was no secret that various Arab critics were hesitant to recognize a Turkic dynasty as the spiritual head of Islam, contending this title of Caliph belonged solely to the ancestors of the Prophet Muhammad and was thus an Arab inheritance.¹⁰⁸ British writers who consulted with scholars in Egypt and the Middle East were convinced of this logic and gave credence to ideas of Arab Caliphal authority. “The House of Othman . . . represents nothing sacred to the Mussulmans, and the Turkish race is very far from being respected in Islam,” the orientalist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, one of the chief proponents of the Arab Caliphate idea in Britain, stated in 1882.¹⁰⁹ This position gained currency among British critics eager to undercut Ottoman influence. Habib Anthony Salmoné, an English educated Syrian and Arabic teacher, put the matter bluntly, insisting there was no love between the Arab people and the Ottoman Turks. “The Arabs have

¹⁰⁶ Hyacinthe Loyson, “Le Rôle de la France en Orient,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 18 (May 1897), 130–31.

¹⁰⁷ Napoléon Ney, “La France et L’Islam,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 50–51 (January–February, 1900), 2–5.

¹⁰⁸ S. Tufan Buzpinar, “Opposition to the Ottoman Caliphate in the Early Years of Abdülhamid II: 1877–1882,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 36:1 (1996): 59–89.

¹⁰⁹ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *The Future of Islam* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1882), 92.

always regarded the Turks as aliens and have never really assented to their control of the spiritual power which was forced upon them by their conquerors.”¹¹⁰

Accusations of Arab–Turkish enmity were hardly novel by the late nineteenth century. In fact, they had been routinely employed by French imperial critics over the years to provide moral justification for advances into North Africa. Seizing Algeria, French apologists insisted they were “liberating” the Algerian people from a foreign and oppressive Ottoman rule. During the 1860s, Napoleon III built upon these tropes when he attempted to rebrand the colony an “Arab Kingdom,” pledging to develop this liberated Arab “nationality” under the guise of French stewardship.¹¹¹ The orientation of French imperial policy in the region was, for the most part, focused on the southern and eastern Mediterranean, an area with a large Arabic speaking population. Efforts to discourage Islamic association through appeals to an imagined Arab cultural or national unity had long roots in France’s imperial undertakings. By the late nineteenth century, Arab publicists disdainful of the Hamidian government or in the pay of rival Muslim sovereigns readily conjured up images of Arab–Turkish antagonism, peddling them to Europeans prepared to diminish support for Ottoman Pan-Islamists.¹¹² Speaking with various notables over the course of his travels through North Africa, Gabriel Charms had become sympathetic to the cause of Arab liberation. “The Turks are usurpers,” he contended in 1887. “They have snatched the government of Islam from the Arabs by force.”¹¹³

The defense of Arab nationality was a convenient means of undermining Ottoman Caliphal authority, but rarely did it reflect the complex relationships between the Ottoman government and its Arab subjects. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the imperial government had been cultivating notions of civic belonging and imperial patriotism that took stock of Arab cultural distinctiveness.¹¹⁴ Empire-building policies endeavored to integrate local and provincial elites while simultaneously “Ottomanizing” them. Movements like the *Nahda* encouraged a sense of Arab cultural distinction, but they did not exclude articulations of “Arab patriotism” centered on imperial adhesion and the Ottoman sultan.¹¹⁵ From

¹¹⁰ Habib Anthony Salmoné, “Is the Sultan of Turkey the True Kaliph of Islam?” *The Nineteenth Century*, 39:227 (January 1896), 175.

¹¹¹ Saliha Belmessous, *Assimilation and Empire: Uniformity in French and British Colonies, 1541–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 117; Osama Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) 159–200.

¹¹² Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 31–41; Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East*, 110–17.

¹¹³ Gabriel Charms, *Une Ambassade au Maroc* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1887), 187.

¹¹⁴ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 65–70; Aziz Al-Azmeh, “Nationalism and the Arabs,” in Derek Hopwood, ed., *Arab Nation, Arab Nationalism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 73–74.

¹¹⁵ Ehud Toledano, “The Emergence of Ottoman Local Elites (1700–1900): A Framework for Research,” in Ilan Pappé and Moshe Ma’oz, eds., *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from*

Egypt to the Arabian frontier, Arab loyalists declared their support for the empire and made a case for greater cooperation and autonomy vis-à-vis the imperial center. In many instances, these loyalties were vested in an emotional and cultural attachment to an envisaged Sunni Caliphate, emphasizing the allure of Pan-Islamic unity promoted by Abdülhamid among local elites.¹¹⁶ European critics flatly ignored these intricacies, preferring to see the Ottoman Empire as a hotbed of seething ethnic and national rivalries on the brink of disintegration.

If misinformed on the situation in the Ottoman Empire, French critics were not necessarily in the dark. They based their assumptions on a detailed and often specialized knowledge of the Islamic world drawn from the work of French orientalist scholars who had in one way or another served the imperial enterprise. The relationship between knowledge production and colonialism was nothing new. In many ways, it was a French tradition.¹¹⁷ French Orientalism had grown up in tandem with the Napoleonic campaign to Egypt during the late eighteenth century when savants accompanied the military to carry out detailed studies on the language, customs, and history of the region. The geographic context in which French Orientalism developed was important, giving rise a specific type of scholar—the *arabisant*—focused on the Arab world. While most scholars confined themselves to the study of texts, colonial governments did utilize the expertise of *arabisants* over the course of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁸ Already by the 1840s, administrators in the Algerian Arab Offices were gathering information concerning local societies and religious practices in the colony, setting a precedent for colonial officials operating in Tunisia and Morocco later in the century. The sociological and ethnographic studies commissioned by the state were distinct from the more literary endeavors of orientalist scholars working in the metropole. While these reports were used by colonial governments in the first instance, administrators and savants also published their findings in books and scientific journals, validating imminently “colonial” conceptions of Islam among a broader audience. By the turn of the century, a veritable French “sociology of Islam” had begun to replace more standard orientalist preoccupations concerned exclusively with Arabic texts and manuscripts.¹¹⁹

As the colonies became a terrain for the observation and study of Islam, the intertwining trajectories of knowledge production and colonialism entailed that French studies remained largely preoccupied with the Arab world. In a more

Within (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 145–62; Adam Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism: The Ideology and Culture of Power in Late Ottoman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 31–43.

¹¹⁶ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 17; Howard Eisenstadt, “Modernization, Imperial Nationalism, and the Ethnicization of Confessional Identities in the Late Ottoman Empire,” in Miller and Berger, *Nationalizing Empires*, 436–37.

¹¹⁷ Trumbull, *An Empire of Facts*; Edmund Burke III, “France and the Classical Sociology of Islam, 1789–1962,” *Journal of North African Studies*, 12:4 (2007): 551–57; Philippe Lucas and Jean-Claude Vatin, *L’Algérie des anthropologues* (Paris: Maspero, 1975).

¹¹⁸ Messaoudi, *Les Arabisants*, 22, 349–50.

¹¹⁹ Burke, *The Ethnographic State*, 26–40.

precise way, they focused on North Africa and the Mediterranean as France consolidated its Mediterranean empire, giving French views on Islam a specific regional dimension. Maghrebin Islam was heavily influenced by Sufism, prompting French analysts to reflect on the traditions of “maraboutism” and popular forms of religious mysticism prevalent across much of North Africa.¹²⁰ Over the years, French colonial administrators and Islamologists contributed to developing a rich corpus of work detailing the cross-border structures and social functions of the religious orders in the colonies.¹²¹ By the late nineteenth century, such studies were coming to influence a sense of Maghrebin particularism among colonial officials and a small group of metropolitan elites who followed African affairs. “Islam presents itself in North Africa under a very particular form, necessitating there a special policy, entirely distinct and which has little conformity with practices in other parts of the Muslim world,” one critic remarked in a review of Coppolani’s work published in the *Journal des Débats*.¹²² At the moment when Pan-Islamism was illuminating the contours of a cosmopolitan and even global “Muslim world,” French policymakers and Islamologists were refining their perspectives and drawing attention to the Maghreb. In no small part, French experts were constructing an idea of a Muslim Mediterranean distinct from prevailing notions of *dar al-Islam*.

In 1900, Edmond Doutté would offer a convincing set of arguments for the saliency of thinking about France’s Islamic policies in an explicitly North African framework. A former colonial administrator turned academic, Doutté had recently settled into a position at the *École Supérieure* in Algiers. Inspired by the sociology of Émile Durkheim, he was committed to the study of Islam and, in particular, native Algerian folklore and religious practices. Having worked in the Aurès Mountains, he was familiar with the Sufi brotherhoods in Algeria, and later, with funding provided by the Algerian government and the *Comité du Maroc*, he would turn his attention to Morocco.¹²³ For Doutté, Maghrebin Islam possessed a unique character in light of its historical development and the “cult of the saints” prevalent among the Sufis. It was rooted in the customs and history of the Arab and Berber populations that inhabited the region. The rites and practices shared among North African Sufis offered “material proof” of a regional identity, in his estimation.¹²⁴ In categorizing these maraboutic traditions vested in mysticism and spiritual authority, he traced an Islamic geography that roughly corresponded with French imperial designs. “In religious matters, the Maghreb

¹²⁰ Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, 406.

¹²¹ For example, see: Louis Rinn, *Marabouts et Khouan: Étude sur l’Islam en Algérie* (Algiers: Adolphe Jourdan, 1884); Doutté, *Notes sur l’Islam Maghribin*; Dupont and Coppolani, *Les confréries religieuses musulmanes*.

¹²² “Les Confréries religieuses musulmanes et leur action dans l’Afrique du Nord,” *Revue de l’Islam*, 49 (December 1899), 187.

¹²³ Messaoudi, *Les Arabisants*, 459–60.

¹²⁴ Doutté, *Notes sur l’Islam Maghribin*, 8–14.

extends up to Alexandria and Cairo... Maraboutism with its special allure, characterizes this immense domain."¹²⁵ Analyzing the expanse of territory stretching "from the Atlantic to the Nile," Doutté emphasized the shared forms of religious worship, the cultural commonalities, and the family and tribal ties that bound North African Muslims.¹²⁶ "There is a uniformity across all North Africa," he contended, and these similarities permitted the imagining of a specific Muslim environment separate from the Ottoman world and Arabia.¹²⁷

Doutté's account gave substance to the notion of a particular "Maghreb Islam," and in doing so dispelled the idea of a unified Muslim world. Pan-Islamism was nothing but a "chimera," in his opinion.¹²⁸ Sociology and ethnography presented conceptual tools that undermined assertions of Islamic unity. Even those skeptical of the "uniformity" Doutté found across North Africa were inclined to attribute fears of Muslim unity to a "superficial understanding" of the religion.¹²⁹ According to the geographer and historian Augustin Barnard, Islam was subject to numerous variations based upon geography and ethnicity. "This religion is not identical everywhere... In the Maghreb there exist profound differences between the Muslims of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Fanaticism increases the further West one goes. All the more reason that the Islam of the East differs from the Islam of the Maghreb, which in turn does not resemble Islam in the Sudan."¹³⁰ Édouard Montet, who accompanied the scientific mission to Morocco in 1900 to study the Sufi brotherhoods in the kingdom, similarly found evident differences when compared with other neighboring areas. While he encountered Sufi orders like the Tayyibiyya, Qadiriyya, and Tijāniyya with which Algerian officials were all too familiar, Montet noted that these bore little resemblance to the brotherhoods in the colony. Morocco adhered to a conservative and "orthodox" brand of Islam that discouraged Pan-Islamic association in favor of loyalties centered on the Moroccan sultanate.¹³¹ Although Islamologists operating in Morocco based their investigations on the practices and intellectual outlooks developed in Algeria, they were inclined to see the kingdom as an independent object of study in its own right, provoking conceptions of a specific "Moroccan Islam" that France might seek to co-opt and control.¹³²

In the larger picture, French scholarship was coming to inscribe Islam within a geographic context that struck at the very premise of Pan-Islamic association.

¹²⁵ Doutté, *L'Islam algérien*, 40–41.

¹²⁶ Doutté, *Notes sur l'Islam Maghrebien*, 33.

¹²⁷ Doutté, *Merrâkech*, 24.

¹²⁸ "L'Avenir de l'Islam," *Questions diplomatiques et coloniales: Revue de politique extérieure*, 12:113 (October 1901): 397.

¹²⁹ Augustin Bernard, "Un aspect du Panislamisme actuel," *Revue pédagogique*, 51:2 (1907): 60.

¹³⁰ Augustin Bernard, "L'Islam dans l'Afrique Occidentale," *Questions diplomatiques et coloniales: Revue de politique extérieure*, 4:69 (January 1900): 422–23.

¹³¹ Édouard Montet, *Les Confréries religieuses de l'Islam Marocain: Leur Role politique, religieux et social* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1902), 3–4.

¹³² Burke, *The Ethnographic State*, 175–76.

Drawing attention to the diversity found within the Islamic world, savants were effectively territorializing Islam and making a case for a distinct Muslim Mediterranean defined by common ethnic traits and religious practices. France may not have been able to appeal to Pan-Islamic sympathies in ways similar to the Ottoman Empire, but it did not necessarily need to either. A more accurate understanding of the Maghreb presaged that France's Muslim imperium rested upon adapting to the particular cultural and religious forms prevalent across the southern Mediterranean as it competed for the loyalties of colonial subjects and expanded its influence elsewhere.

Combating Trans-Imperial Politicization

Even as critics and savants expressed skepticism over the threat posed by Pan-Islamism, colonial officials maintained a cautious attitude. They fell back on established forms of state surveillance and oversight that had served them in the past. However, existing structures had been created to monitor Muslim religious networks and combat Sufi politicization. Pan-Islamic activism, though, was different. It grew up in tandem with the development of an independent Muslim press, and activists used print technologies to good effect in spreading their message of unity and reform. Through the press, Pan-Islamism acquired an international resonance and encouraged new flows distinct from the traditional religious networks on the ground. As fears of Pan-Islamic subversion grew, imperial regimes were forced to adapt to these circumstances and modify surveillance techniques in their effort to isolate territories from foreign influences.

The colonial *sûreté* kept a close watch on Muslim journalists and travelers moving through Tunisia and Algeria from Morocco, Libya, and Egypt. Officials gathered information on the activities of foreign Muslims, recording who they met with, when they entered the colony, and when they left.¹³³ In 1898, the Tunisian *sûreté* took a particular interest in the border-hopping journalist Mahmoud Zeki, a young political activist who was slowly establishing a 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 favorable to the Ottoman Empire and Sultan Abdülhamid's brand of Pan-Islamism. More alarming was the fact that the paper carried a broad

¹³³ See the various "Notes" of the *Sûreté Publique* in CADN, 1TU/1/V/990.

spread of stories covering the Maghreb, signaling it might be an organ for disseminating Ottoman influence across North Africa.¹³⁴ 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.”¹³⁵

As colonial officials identified suspected Pan-Islamic “agents” and monitored the circulation of books and newspapers across borders, a consistent fact presented itself that was difficult to ignore: 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.¹³⁶ Colonial authorities in Algeria and Tunisia kept abreast of the foreign newspapers and publications that entered their territories on a regular basis, noting a steady stream of works coming from Egypt and Istanbul. By the turn of the century, the colonial administrations all operated their own press offices while the colonial ministry ran a *Service d'Information Islamique*. These agencies were designed to filter, translate, and report on Muslim periodicals entering the colonies.¹³⁷ In 1913, the French ministry of foreign affairs moved to centralize these assorted administrative bodies into a single *Bureau de la Presse Musulmane* designed to streamline surveillance operations and create a “single organ” that would report directly to the government.¹³⁸ While the machinery of colonial press surveillance and censorship was progressively refined over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to meet the challenges posed by Pan-Islamic activism, these enhancements failed to yield any new insights or information. Colonial officialdom simply developed more effective methods of confirming what they already suspected to be true, citing the existence of clandestine Pan-Islamic networks and plots orchestrated from abroad.

Newspapers and foreign literature were consistently seen as vehicles of subversion and Muslim radicalization, even when evidence suggested more subtle explanations regarding print culture and production. A bookstore on the Souk de la Laine in the Tunis Medina was singled out by police when it was found to be selling translations of the Ottoman writer Namik Kemal's poem “Voice of Liberty and the Patrie,” a work believed to be spreading “dangerous ideas” among Tunisian students. If this observation was insipid, the book itself suggested the extent to which texts moved. 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

¹³⁴ ANT, E 532, dossier 6/1, “Secrétariat Général: Bureau de la comptabilité,” 11 May 1898.

¹³⁵ ANT, E 532, dossier 6/1, “Note: A. S. du journal *L'Étoile ottomane*,” 16 May 1898.

¹³⁶ Edmund Burke III, “Pan-Islamism and Moroccan Resistance to French Colonial Penetration,” *The Journal of African History*, 13:1 (1972): 103–04.

¹³⁷ ANT, Series E, Carton 531, dossier 5, Directeur des Finances to the Secrétaire Général of the Tunisian Government, 10 February 1911.

¹³⁸ ANT, Series E, Carton 532, dossier 8/2, Gaston Doumergue, MAE to Alapetite, 5 December 1913.

migrating texts that circulated through the Mediterranean at this time.¹³⁹ Booksellers in cities like Tunis and Algiers typically carried a range of foreign publications, while readers obtained materials through personal travel or friends abroad.¹⁴⁰ Although these findings highlighted the various channels through which North African Muslims acquired foreign print, they hardly suggested a sinister conspiracy against the French government. For the most part, books entering the colonies tended to be Qur'ans, Arab classics like *A Thousand and One Nights* or works treating subjects on medicine, theology, and history.¹⁴¹ Even works that might seem suspicious were often benign. In 1907, Hadj Ahmed Ben Dali, a tobacco merchant in Blida, was found to be in possession of a book published in Leipzig featuring images of Wilhelm II and his voyage to Istanbul. Algerian authorities believed the book was favorable to German imperial expansion and, therefore, anti-French. When authorities interrogated Dali, he told them he had received the book from a friend in Tunis. However, he also informed them he had acquired the tome for its illustrations and engravings of the Orient, not out of any pro-German sympathies.¹⁴²

Despite these insights, colonial authorities remained guarded when it came to foreign newspapers and print entering the colony. Every detail “proved the extent of intellectual contact that is maintained between the different countries of Islamic culture,” Pierre de Margerie, chief of the African and Eastern affairs sub-department in the ministry of foreign affairs, claimed in 1913.¹⁴³ Colonial officials were ordered to track papers and monitor articles in order to stay informed on what Stephen Pichon deemed “the timbre” of the Muslim press.¹⁴⁴ Yet rarely did authorities stop and pause to consider what this “timbre” was indicating. Modern forms of communication were providing Muslim publicists and publishers with a medium that could reach large audiences across political borders. As local events and communities were connected through print and journalism, conceptions of what it meant to be “Muslim” were being reshaped and reconfigured. Calls for Muslim unity and the emergence of a trans-imperial public sphere went hand-in-hand during the nineteenth century. Print encouraged and enabled new expressions of cultural identity and permitted Muslims to imagine themselves as part of a broader community or “Muslim world” undergoing a profound transformation as it came to grips with anxieties stemming from modernization and European empire.¹⁴⁵ “The aim that we pursue consists in proclaiming what our conscience dictates for the good of the people and religion to enhance the

¹³⁹ ANT, E 550, dossier 4/9, “Note: Direction de la sureté publique,” 15 November 1910.

¹⁴⁰ ANOM, GGA/15H/7, Prefect of Oran to Charles Lutaud, 24 July 1913.

¹⁴¹ ANOM, GGA/15H/7, Prefect of Constantine to Charles Lutaud, 18 September 1913.

¹⁴² ANT, Series E, Carton 533, dossier 2, Célestin Jonnart, Governor General of Algeria to Resident of France in Tunis, 30 May 1907.

¹⁴³ ANT, E 532, dossier 6/1, Minister of Foreign Affairs to Alapetite, 8 July 1913.

¹⁴⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/989, Minister of Foreign Affairs to Alapetite, 22 December 1908.

¹⁴⁵ Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 68–82; Asseraf, *Electric News*, 67.

prestige of Muslims,” the Tunisian newspaper *Al-Islam* declared in 1908.¹⁴⁶ This mission was central to many Muslim cultural and political projects of the era and gave the unity movement a broad scope and importance for Muslim communities across imperial divides.

Pan-Islamism was a diverse and multivalent phenomenon, which made it perennially difficult for European authorities to pin down and identify with any certainty. Its Hamidian variant gave Europeans a culprit they could point to and assail, making what was complex easily intelligible. Yet simplistic definitions entailed that they saw secretive Pan-Islamic agents everywhere they looked. Every expression of Islamic solidarity became proof of the shadowy hand of Istanbul at work and justified greater control and surveillance over colonial borders that never adhered to the flows and social currents of Muslim societies in the first place. Abdülhamid attempted to harness the popularity of the unity movement and use it to promote trans-imperial connections that would further imperial aspirations. Pan-Islamism provided the context for these goals; it was never a product of them. Abdülhamid’s novel brand of religious politics constituted a number of different cultural and political policies that often required negotiation and bargaining on the ground.¹⁴⁷ Whether nurturing emotional ties to Muslims across the globe or furthering imperial expansion through established religious networks, Hamidian Pan-Islamism tied the Ottoman Empire to a trans-imperial project that sought to provide security and promote empire-building. Much like his European contemporaries, the sultan understood that cross-border flows and movements could be valuable assets in the new imperialism coming of age.

The interconnected trajectories of Islam and empire exposed the broader panorama in which empire-building evolved. French colonial territories were perennially situated within a nexus of flows and currents that resisted bounded forms of state authority and power. French policies evolved in response to Ottoman empire-building as Abdülhamid experimented with forms of Islamic sovereignty and cultivated a Caliphal identity. While reactions were varied, it was evident that French officials and elites were coming to acquire a more pronounced sense of their own Muslim empire in this process. Policies focused on Sufi networks and sociological readings of Islam elaborated a particular context in which to assess French empire-building. If France was a “Muslim power” its dominion reigned over a Muslim Mediterranean.

¹⁴⁶ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1469, “La Presse Tunisienne,” *El Islam*, 17 June 1908.

¹⁴⁷ Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees*, 135–36; Mehrdad Kia, “Pan-Islamism in Late Nineteenth-Century Iran,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 32:1 (1996): 30–52.

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Paris, a Trans-Imperial Metropole

In 1883, European and international audiences were privy to one of the most famous debates surrounding the subject of Islamic modernization in the nineteenth century. The controversy began that March following a lecture at the Sorbonne by the philosopher Ernest Renan entitled “Islam and Science.” In his talk, Renan argued that dogmatic Islamic civilization was unable to assimilate the modern scientific progress of the nineteenth century. “The mind of a true believer is limited...rendering it absolutely closed to knowledge, incapable of either learning anything or of being open to any new idea,” he stated.¹ His comments drew consternation from European and Muslim critics, prompting a variety of responses.² In Paris, a small cohort of orientalist and philosophers took aim at Renan’s “vulgar prejudice,” claiming that Islamic civilization was not some “exhausted corpse” incapable of progressive reform.³ The most striking retort came from the radical publicist Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī residing in Paris at the time. Publishing his arguments in the popular daily *Journal des Débats*, Afghānī insisted that Islamic civilization had a long history of cultivating the sciences and had “developed, expanded, and clarified” scientific knowledge as it spread its empire across the world in the past.⁴

Debates over whether Islam was compatible with modernity were hardly cutting-edge by the 1880s. Modernists and reformers across the Middle East had been quarreling over such questions for at least a decade, making the Renan–Afghānī argument a somewhat routine affair.⁵ What gave it an air of novelty, however, was its context. An exiled Muslim scholar resident in Paris was challenging a leading French intellectual in the pages of a major European daily on a subject pertinent to Islam. As the controversy made clear, debates over Islamic modernization and reform were becoming entwined in the French capital’s intellectual culture by the end of the nineteenth century, especially as exiles coming from the eastern Mediterranean like Afghānī made their way to France. Exiles brought with them a

¹ Ernest Renan, *L’Islamisme et la science* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1883), 2–3.

² Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 47–49; Michelangelo Guida, “Al-Afghānī and Namik Kemal’s Replies to Ernest Renan: Two Anti-Westernist Works in the Formative Stage of Islamic Thought,” *Turkish Journal of Politics*, 2:2 (Winter 2011): 57–70.

³ Charles Mismar, “La Régénération de l’Islam,” *La Philosophie Positive*, 2:31 (July–December, 1883): 287.

⁴ *Journal des Débats*, 18 May 1883.

⁵ Monica M. Ringer and A. Holly Shissler, “The Al-Afghani-Renan Debate, Reconsidered,” *Iran Nameh*, 30:3 (Fall 2015): 31–32.

host of political and intellectual concerns that would find outlets of expression in the French metropole. They ran newspapers and engaged in political and intellectual debates that occasionally drew in Europeans, as the Renan–Afg̃hānī argument revealed. Given these activities, Paris was not only becoming an important center for the development of Islamic modernist ideas. Exilic communities were rendering the city a trans-imperial metropole in which small groups of Egyptian and Ottoman exiles contemplated religious issues and outlined new political platforms intended to transform the Near and Middle East.

Exile culture was not new to Paris. Over the century, the city had been home to a rich mix of Russian political exiles, Italian nationalists, German radicals, and Hungarian dissidents. Intellectual icons like Karl Marx and the Polish nationalist Adam Mickiewicz had taken refuge in the French capital and produced some of their most important works there alongside the many other émigré communities and asylum seekers who for one reason or another found themselves in France.⁶ Yet in the second half of the century, the face of Paris's foreign communities was changing as phenomena like empire and international commerce further enmeshed France in the globalizing currents of the period. By the 1880s, "Oriental" and Muslim communities were becoming more pronounced and vocal, especially as political instability in the eastern Mediterranean drew France deeper into regional affairs. "Paris is the crossroads of the world," claimed the Syrian Ottoman exile Shukri Ghanem. "For Orientals who are on their way to America, England, or Germany, it is a city where they stop for a while, where they return often, and where many establish themselves. It is also a center of instruction."⁷

Paris was also a center of reflection, Ghanem might have added. Abroad, exiles and émigrés re-evaluated ideas on politics and culture as they interacted with European elites and responded to international events. Islam was no exception. In attempting to formulate reformist programs, exiles expounded modernist and liberal ideas within Islamic frameworks. These critical re-evaluations of Islam were consistent with modernist movements taking place within the Islamic world, although exiles were typically motivated by specific political and social goals that resisted strictly theological concerns. By the turn of the century, Europe was becoming a place where Muslims could "rediscover" Islam, as Nile Green has argued. Visitors coming to the British Isles and continent were able to access the impressive collections of Eastern manuscripts available in European libraries and converse with leading orientalist scholars of the day. Through these interactions, traveling Muslim elites revised their understandings of Islamic culture and history, and subsequently carried many new outlooks with them back home once

⁶ Lloyd S. Kramer, *Threshold of a New World: Intellectuals and the Exile Experience in Paris, 1830–1848* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Michael Löwy, *The Theory of Revolution in the Young Marx* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005), 70–77.

⁷ Chékri Ganem, "Une Ligue Ottomane," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 3 (1 November 1908), 74.

they departed the continent.⁸ These circuits of intellectual exchange and transfer stamped European capitals like Paris as nodal cities in the broader currents of nineteenth-century Islamic modernism coming from centers like Cairo, Damascus, and Istanbul.

Yet re-evaluations of Islam possessed political dimensions as well that were closely tied to the experience of exile in Europe. Conventionally, histories of Egyptian and Ottoman political displacements in the period have been narrated through nationalist paradigms, examining how activists driven abroad by authoritarian regimes upheld liberal reform movements that would, in time, provide the foundations for new postwar nation-states.⁹ In many instances, scholars have maintained a cynicism concerning exile platforms that addressed specific themes of Islamic government, seeing them as either part of broader anti-imperialist strategies linked to aspirations for national liberation or concessions to Muslim audiences at home. By dressing a secular liberalism in Islamic garb, the argument goes, radicals endeavored to assuage the fears of the *‘ulamā* back home and warm the religious establishment to the prospect of reform.¹⁰ Such explanations fail to recognize that exiles operated within a complex social and intellectual environment, one that would have a transformative impact on their thinking. Diaspora and exile encouraged a re-imagining of political space and provided opportunities for new forms of political engagement.¹¹ Exiles frequently communicated with multiple audiences, Europeans as well as co-nationals. They courted European public opinion and were compelled to respond to European colonialism and the geopolitical realities of the day.¹² In this context, imperial displacements were instrumental in reformulating concepts of Islamic modernism as a modest but not insignificant group of elites worked between empires and engaged with their host communities.

An Arab Renaissance Two Steps from the Folies-Bergères

For much of the nineteenth century, Paris possessed small Arab and Muslim communities coming primarily from North Africa and the Near East. Egyptian

⁸ Nile Green, "Space Time and the Muslim Journey West: Industrial Communications in the Making of the 'Muslim World,'" *American Historical Review*, 118:2 (April 2013): 401–29.

⁹ For a critique of standard accounts emphasizing nationalism and religion, see: Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*.

¹⁰ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 195–205; Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 200–01; Stefano Taglia, *Intellectuals and Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Young Turks on the Challenges of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2015), 23–24.

¹¹ Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire*, 13.

¹² David Fieni, "French Decadence, Arab Awakening: Figures of Decay in Arab *Nahda*," *Boundary*, 39:2 (2012): 146; David Thomas Beamish, "Intellectual Currents and the Practice of Engagement: Ottoman and Francophone Writers in a Francophone Milieu, 1890–1914" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 2018), 145–47.

refugees returning with Napoleonic forces after 1801 had settled in the city with a select few finding employment in state institutions as translators and orientalist scholars. These migrants also established an Arab Melkite community in the city that would be awarded an official place of worship by the state in 1889. In addition to refugees and migrants, the Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali sent student delegations to Paris beginning in 1826 as part of his education reform program. Egyptian students would continue to have a presence in the city for much of the century as would other students coming from North Africa seeking degrees at French higher education institutions.¹³ By the 1840s, the presence of these foreign communities was beginning to be noticeable. After returning from a trip to Egypt and Palestine in the 1840s, the writer Gérard de Nerval claimed that Paris had a more Oriental feel than the Near East. “It is only in Paris that one finds cafés so Oriental,” he remarked, albeit with some sarcasm.¹⁴

Yet this “Arab France” was different from the trickle of political exiles that found their way to Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century. Political exiles tended to be transitory. They retained connections with their home communities and sought to contract political alliances that would further causes back home. Journalists and translators like Khalil Ghanem who ran Arab papers for the French government destined for North Africa were part of a small community of Syrians in Paris that would gradually organize émigré political associations committed to Ottoman constitutional reform and Syrian autonomy.¹⁵ Despite his initial setback as editor for *Al-Bassir* in the early 1880s, Ghanem went on to have a long career as a journalist and newspaper editor in France. He was a regular contributor to the *Journal des Débats* and published articles in leading periodicals like the *Fortnightly Review* as an expert on Near Eastern affairs. Through his connections to French political society, he tapped into sources of government funding when he could, running a series of ephemeral papers largely focused on diplomacy and foreign relations. For much of the 1880s and 1890s, he spoke highly of France’s “providential mission” in the world, lauding the country’s promotion of tolerance and emancipation abroad.¹⁶ As with other Syrian publicists, indiscriminate praise for the French civilizing mission aimed to goad France into

¹³ Ian Coller, “Les Musulmans français et les politiques de l’Islam dans l’Europe post-révolutionnaire,” in Jocelyne Dakhli and Bernard Vincent, eds., *Les Musulmans dans l’histoire de l’Europe: Une Intégration invisible* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2011), 103–42; Ian Coller, *Arab France: Islam and the Making of Modern Europe, 1798–1831* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Sadek Sellam, *La France et ses Musulmans: Une Siècle de politique musulmane, 1895–2005* (Paris: Fayard, 2006), 18–19; Rifa’a Rafi’al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826–1831)*, ed. Daniel L. Newman (London: Saqi, 2004).

¹⁴ Quoted in Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine: The Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 21.

¹⁵ Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 41–43.

¹⁶ “Notre Programme,” *La France Internationale*, 14 November 1889.

supporting reform in Ottoman Syria and cementing the traditional Franco-Christian partnership in the region.

Ghanem was in many respects a pioneer of the new Arab diaspora. He was cooperative and willing to work with others when it counted. He assisted the French government when it suited his interests and retained close ties to Arab nationalists and Ottoman intellectuals in Paris, eventually allying with Young Turk activists in the city toward the end of his career. These activities were essential to the success of the political exile, and Ghanem knew it. He also benefited from the established working relationships and trust Syrian Christians had built up with the French diplomatic and foreign services over the years. Levantine Christians had an advantage when it came to liaising with the French government. Many non-Christian exiles by comparison had to find other means of currying favor and gaining entrance into elite society, often building relationships from scratch.

Despite his reputation as a political firebrand across the Muslim world, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī was a veritable *inconnu* in Paris until his public faceoff with Renan in 1883. Afghānī acquainted himself with Parisian society as best he could. The radical journalist Henri Rochefort took a shine to him and published Afghānī's criticisms of British policies in Afghanistan and Egypt in his journal *L'Intransigeant*. "We hit it off because I have an instinctively revolutionary soul," Rochefort claimed. "I am drawn impulsively to all those seeking freedom."¹⁷ A Persian by birth, Afghānī had traveled extensively through Central Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean during the 1860s and 1870s, promoting ideas of Muslim unity and modernization wherever he went. His views drew praise from certain reformist circles and the ire of religious conservatives who thought his ideas impious and heretical. Settling in Egypt during the 1870s, Afghānī became an outspoken critic of the growing European influence on the Khedival government. During public speeches at cafés, he churned out a broad and at times contradictory program encompassing nationalism, Pan-Islamic affiliation, violent jihadism, and secular innovation. His message attracted a small circle of radicals and idealists, such as the playwright Yaḳūb Sanū and Muhammad 'Abduh, a young scholar at Al-Azhar University with unconventional ideas destined to play an instrumental role in the future of the Islamic reform movement. Afghānī's radical opposition to both the authoritarian Egyptian regime and European imperialism prompted his expulsion from Egypt in 1879. Relocating to Paris, he watched from afar as the 'Urabi revolt roiled the country and Britain installed itself as the steward of Egypt's political future.¹⁸

¹⁷ Henri Rochefort, *Les Aventures de ma vie* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1898), 4: 346.

¹⁸ Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment*, 210–17; Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism*, 15–21; Ryad, "Anti-Imperialism and the Pan-Islamic Movement," in Motadel, *Islam and the European Empires*, 132–36.

Never idle, Afghānī continued his political activities from the French capital. Joined there by Muhammad ‘Abduh, he organized a secret society—*The Strongest Bond*—committed to Pan-Islamic reform and revolution. It ran an Arabic newspaper of the same name and established an associated branch in French Tunisia.¹⁹ Together, Afghānī and ‘Abduh planned to work on what they called “the Egyptian question,” linking the struggle for national independence to broader aspirations of Muslim unity and emancipation.²⁰ Although his Parisian exile was relatively short, he would set a precedent for future expatriates similarly committed to the cause of Egyptian liberty and emancipation. As Afghānī’s brief stay in the French capital revealed, Paris could be a place where exiles pursued revolutionary goals and continued the struggle. Journalists such as the Syrian Adīb Ishāq, who had affiliated with Afghānī in Egypt, and the Egyptian writer Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī would similarly come to Paris and devote themselves to political journalism during their time in the city. Running Arabic newspapers and occasionally writing for the European press, exiles endeavored to communicate with their co-nationals abroad and, if possible, convince French readers of the viability of their political projects. As an exilic hub, Paris was an ideal place in which to build up new networks and influence events from abroad.

With the suppression of the nationalist revolt in 1882, Egyptian activists found it more opportune to seek out other shores. They arrived in Paris at a crucial juncture. France had just secured its hold over Tunisia and the Anglo-French imperial rivalry in Africa was heating up. A notable Anglophobia surged in the French press and diplomatic circles during the 1880s and 1890s. Complaints against Britain’s unscrupulous foreign endeavors were incessant, with Britain accused of everything from inciting native rebellions for its own interests to installing puppet regime across Africa and the Middle East. “Wherever public disorder explodes in the Orient you can always say: *cherchez l’Anglais*,” the journalist Gaston Dujarric charged in 1897.²¹ Under the circumstances, French support for Egyptian independence against British rule looked promising, and various officials signaled as much. Writing in 1893, the French jurisconsult in Egypt, Octave Borelli, spelled out the situation in clear terms. “In truth, an English Egypt finds no sympathies anywhere while today a French Egypt is out of the question. Let’s work therefore for an Egypt for the Egyptians.”²² These circumstances provided a new context and environment for exiles to navigate. Prevented from voicing their opposition to British oversight at home, they could work as intermediaries and influence events from afar. This objective required winning

¹⁹ Green, *The Tunisian Ulama*, 147–48; Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 109–11.

²⁰ Charles Clarence Adam, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (London: Routledge, 2002), 58–60.

²¹ Gaston Dujarric, “La politique Anglaise en pays d’Islam,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 15 (February 1897), 20.

²² Octave Borelli, *Choses Politiques d’Égypte* (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1895), 84.

French favor and, as Afghānī and ‘Abduh had already hinted, transforming the Egyptian national cause into an international one.

Arriving in Paris at roughly the same time as Afghānī, Yaḳūb Sanū quickly carved out a niche for himself in the French capital. Hailing from a Cairene family of Jews, Sanū had run a popular playhouse and satirical magazine in Egypt, both of which were shut down by the government during the 1870s due to their political orientation. He relocated to Paris in 1877 to continue printing his magazine *Abu-Naddara Zarqa’*, which was regularly smuggled back to Egypt through the European post. The move proved permanent. Sanū would remain in France until his death in 1912.²³ He made a living as a journalist and actor, mixing theatrics and politics in equal measure. A critic of the Khedive and British administration, he sought to enlist French publicists in the cause of Egyptian national liberation. He crafted a persona as an expert on the Orient by giving lectures on Egyptian history and Islam. To regale audiences, he billed himself under the name Shaykh Abu-Naddara, appearing in a turban and traditional *gallabiyah*. Sanū also knew when to drop the orientalist self-fashioning and pose as the quintessential “modern Arab” as well to win favor with Parisian elites. He was joined in his efforts by the young Mustafa Kamil who, although perhaps less theatrical than Sanū, was more passionate when it came to winning over French opinion to the Egyptian cause. As a law student in Toulouse, Kamil made the acquaintance of the republican *salonnière* and author Juliette Adam whom he impressed with his patriotism and rhetorical flourishes. Adam subsequently introduced Kamil to various republican luminaries and journalists, paving the way for articles in leading periodicals like *Le Figaro* and the *Journal des Débats*. Accessing a broad French readership, Kamil never missed an opportunity to point out the injustices suffered by the Egyptian *fellahin* under British administration or to promote the cause of Egyptian nationalism with vigor.²⁴

Despite their distinctive approaches and running in different social circles, Sanū and Kamil both served the Egyptian cause abroad in their own ways. They cultivated relationships with influential backers and ingratiated themselves with French elites. “I have praised France, which I have celebrated and gloried for fourteen years by proclaiming all that this magnificent and generous nation has done for the advancement, progress, and civilization of the people of Africa and Asia,” Sanū declared in 1899.²⁵ French admirers were taken by Sanū’s fluent French, wit, and charming demeanor, with one journalist insisting “[he is] in

²³ Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 47–49.

²⁴ Ziad Fahmy, “Francophone Egyptian Nationalists, Anti-British Discourse, and European Public Opinion, 1885–1910: The Cause of Mustafa Hamil and Yaḳub Sannu,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 28:1 (2008): 170–83; Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 200–04; “Preface by Juliette Adam,” in Mustafa Kamil, *Égyptiens et Anglais* (Paris: Perrin, 1906), 5–19.

²⁵ Yaḳūb Sanū, *La France et son histoire, Paris et son expositions* (Paris: G. Lefebvre, 1899), 1.

effect nearly one of us.”²⁶ Kamil was no less flattering, recalling in speeches the profound debt Egypt owed to French culture and evoking memories of the Napoleonic Egyptian campaign. He underscored the threat British occupation posed to the traditional Franco-Egyptian relationship and spoke at length on France’s current “duty” to “intervene and save us.”²⁷ For good measure, he also appealed to diplomatic and colonial circles, giving a hard-nosed assessment of what a British dominated Egypt meant for French interests in the Mediterranean. To abandon Egypt would mean “the complete vassalage of Islam to English power,” he warned, playing upon French colonial anxieties and its self-professed status as a “Muslim power” in the world.²⁸ These overtures proved effective in garnering moral support and publicizing Egypt’s struggle against France’s erstwhile imperial rival.

Although actively seeking to win over French opinion, neither presented themselves solely as lobbyists for the Egyptian national cause. They acted as journalists and critics, running Arabic newspapers like *Abu-Naddara Zaqa’* and Kamil’s *Al-Liwa* that spoke to key issues of the day. If they manipulated imperial rivalries and capitalized on Anglophobic sentiments in France for national ends, they also positioned themselves as reformers invested in the larger struggles agitating the Muslim world. When the British marshalled familiar arguments of Muslim fanaticism and backwardness to legitimate their administrative hold over Egypt, exiles pushed back. Sanū insisted that Egyptians were “pious Muslims and sincere patriots” capable of self-rule.²⁹ In 1907, he founded the journal *L’Universe Musulman*, a publication exclusively in French aimed at correcting European stereotypes of Islam.³⁰ Mustafa Kamil, himself a Muslim, was more forthcoming. In the salons hosted by Juliette Adam and in the pages of the French press, Kamil maintained that Islamic principles were consistent with the social progress of the modern world and could accommodate female emancipation just as much as a liberal political order. “Does not Islam ordain the love of the fatherland, justice and equality, struggle, activity, concord and union, generosity and tolerance?” he asked in 1898. Egyptians sought to progress in line with their own cultural and historical character, “resting upon Islam while taking what is good and useful from the West,” as he argued.³¹ “In the name of everything that is sacred on this earth, I affirm that religious fanaticism does not exist in Egypt. Islam is dominant there since it is the religion of the great majority. But *Islam in no way implies fanaticism.*”³² In speech after speech, Kamil associated the striving for Egyptian

²⁶ “Abou-Naddara à Stamboul,” *Le Pays*, 7 May 1892.

²⁷ Kamil, *Égyptiens et Anglais*, 43.

²⁸ Mustafa Kamil, *Le Péril Anglais: Conséquence de l’occupation de l’Égypte par l’Angleterre* (Paris: Albert Lanier, 1899), 16.

²⁹ Alfred Lamaitre, *Abou Naddara à Stamboul* (Paris: Imprimerie Lefebvre, 1892), 9.

³⁰ Moshe Behar and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity and Politics* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2013), 11.

³¹ Kamil, *Égyptiens et Anglais*, 206, 283.

³² Mustafa Kamil, “A la nation anglaise et au monde civilisé,” *Le Figaro*, 11 July 1906.

independence with the sentiments of Islamic modernization, making the case that “the cause of Egypt is the cause of Islam.”³³ Writing in *Le Figaro* in 1906 upon the occasion of Britain’s controversial sentencing of Egyptian peasants at Denshawai, Kamil expanded his criticism of colonial injustice to reiterate this central message to a European readership, declaring, “The people of Islam can improve their condition through an Islamic renaissance drawing its strength from science and liberal thought.”³⁴

Such pronouncements were reminiscent of Afghānī and consonant with growing calls for Muslim unity echoing across Africa and Asia at the turn of the century. “The first principle that Islam teaches is the union between all Muslims,” Kamil claimed, and this unity could be both national and universal in his opinion.³⁵ Although these sentiments were not unique to exiles residing in Paris, the experience of exile was important in shaping articulations of Muslim identity and modernity. In their quest to elicit public sympathy and recruit influential supporters abroad, exiles like Sanū and Kamil found utility in associating their cause with broader transformations occurring in the Muslim world, a world which an imperial Europe certainly had a stake in. They spoke of Muslim unity and emancipation, using the British as a foil for more general anti-colonial critiques. They espoused a universalist rhetoric that elaborated core themes of Islamic revival and liberalism, centering Egypt at the heart of these longings. In packaging their demands for foreign audiences and building relationships abroad, exiles formulated programs in universal and democratic terms, reconciling Islam with themes of national sovereignty and emancipation that resonated with European liberals.

The Arab exile community was a mixed lot. It comprised Syrians and Egyptians from varying confessional backgrounds. Despite this diversity, however, exiles collectively appealed to France’s own sense of imperial mission and attempted to direct it toward political projects in British Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. French publicists took the bait, typically using it as an occasion for self-congratulatory praise. “Is it not curious,” remarked the writer Georges-André Vayssière in 1890, “that ideas of progress, independence, and justice radiate from Paris to the tents of the desert and the roofs of the *fellah*, and that the center of this liberal movement, this Arab renaissance is two steps from the boulevards, beside the frivolous joys and gallant festivities where the Folies-Bergères meet each evening.”³⁶ Vayssière’s comments may have oozed with *amour-propre*, but they nonetheless recognized that a phenomenon was underway in Paris. A small cluster of Arab publicists were using their time in the French capital to good effect

³³ Kamil, *Égyptiens et Anglais*, 76.

³⁴ Kamil, “A la nation anglaise et au monde civilisé,” *Le Figaro*, 11 July 1906.

³⁵ Kamil, *Égyptiens et Anglais*, 245.

³⁶ Guy-Valvor [Georges-André Vayssière], “Un journal arabe à Paris,” *La Presse*, 15 January 1890.

as they exploited imperial rivalries and coaxed support from European elites. Imperialism may have been perceived as a threat, but exiles and émigrés discovered it could also be pressed into service as they worked across empires to achieve their own emancipatory goals.

Ottoman Politics à la Paris

Journalists keen to laud Paris as a center of world enlightenment were not restricted to the “Arab renaissance” occurring in the city. The Arab exile community paralleled and occasionally intersected with other foreign communities operating in the French capital at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1892, *Le Figaro* drew attention to a gathering held at a “Café Turc” in Paris where Ottoman diplomats and expatriates had congregated to celebrate the anniversary of Sultan Abülhamid’s ascension to the throne.³⁷ “Strictly speaking, there are no Ottoman colonies in any of Europe’s large cities, and Paris is perhaps the only city where there is an embryonic colony,” the paper noted. This “colony” composed of diplomats, merchants, students, and even an imam numbered roughly a thousand people, it was estimated. Its roots extended back to the 1860s when a handful of Ottoman liberals had come to France for the purpose of organizing an opposition party against the ruling factions in the Sublime Porte. Since that time, Paris had been a preferred location for Ottoman expatriates, a place where all the pleasures and marvels of European society were open to them. “Our city has become a second fatherland for Ottoman subjects,” the article boasted.³⁸

To a certain extent, this was true. Ottoman elites had a special affection for French culture, and many were fluent in French as a second language.³⁹ Yet not all Ottoman subjects sought out this “second fatherland” voluntarily. Some had come to evade the censors and secret police of Abdülhamid. “All those who come here well know that in Paris we are sheltered from the ambushes [of the police] that one encounters on Galata Bridge or virtually right outside the walls of the imperial palace,” claimed Khalil Ghanem.⁴⁰ Silenced and intimidated at home, Ottoman dissidents migrated to European capitals like Paris, London, and Geneva in the late nineteenth century. They were motivated by ideals of liberal government and freedom, collectively assuming an identity as “Young Turks.” A mix of progressive and radical thinkers, Young Turks united around broad principles of Ottoman patriotism, modernization, and inclusive citizenship that they believed capable of saving the ailing empire. “We will work toward the fulfillment of a

³⁷ “La Colonie Turque,” *Le Figaro*, 31 August 1892.

³⁸ V. Tamburiny-Morpurgo, “La Colonie Ottomane,” *Le Figaro*, 1 September 1892.

³⁹ Klaus Kreiser, “Le Paris des Ottomans à la Belle Epoque,” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 91–94 (2000): 333–50.

⁴⁰ Halil Ghanem, “La Lutte,” *Mechveret*, 15 January 1900.

constitution in the name of all Ottomans without distinction of nationality or religion, in the name of justice and humanity,” as Ahmet Riza explained.⁴¹ Determined to continue their opposition from abroad, the Young Turks established newspapers written in French and built up political parties to give voice to their demands.

Yet if exiles were inspired by lofty ideals, they were also realists. Principled opposition could only do so much, they understood. Effecting change in the Ottoman Empire also required support from powerful foreign governments. With the French and British exerting controls over Ottoman economic activities and buying up the government’s public debt, the European powers had a stake in the Ottoman Empire, and exiles were not ignorant of this fact. Ottoman liberty would be dependent upon winning over European opinion and encouraging foreign governments to press liberalizing reforms on the obdurate sultan. As one writer implored, “the European powers will render a very great service, not only to the Ottomans but to the conservation of peace in general and thus to all humanity if they would do what is in their power to accelerate the question of reform touching all Ottoman subjects.”⁴² The newspaper *Meşveret* run by Ahmet Riza and Khalil Ghanem was even more candid in its appeal. “We would like to see [the powers of Europe] defending liberal ideals in the world, protecting the weak and oppressed, giving a hand to those people who have fallen, and providing them with assistance if they struggle against tyranny.”⁴³

On the other hand, liberal opponents realized that European intervention could result in the Ottoman Empire becoming another protectorate like Tunisia or Egypt, an eventuality they sought to prevent at all costs. “We want our country to keep its independence, all its independence, and to ensure that the Ottoman people are called to direct its destiny,” Ghanem made clear.⁴⁴ Given the extremes of Hamidian authoritarianism and European colonialism, exiles were compelled not only to persuade European audiences of the need for reform, but to convince the public they could present a viable alternative to the current system. Retaining independence meant cultivating trust with elites and making the case for Ottoman self-governance to the European public. Without question, this denouement entailed correcting prevailing views on Islam and the capacity of Muslims for progressive change. In the Ottoman press war that raged in Paris during the 1890s, the prospects for an Islamic liberalism would acquire a new meaning and urgency.

Europeans had a poor understanding of the situation in the Ottoman Empire and knew virtually nothing of the issues animating Ottoman society, exiles believed. According to Murat Bey, correspondents for the major European

⁴¹ Ahmet Riza, “Chrétien, Musulman et Humanité,” *Mechveret*, 15 May 1896.

⁴² “Lettre adressée à LL. EE. Ministres et Ambassadeurs des Grandes Puissances,” *Osmanli*, 5 February 1898.

⁴³ “Notre requête au parlement,” *Mechveret*, 15 June 1899.

⁴⁴ Halil Ghanem, “Controle ou Garantie,” *Mechveret*, 1 November 1896.

newspapers showed little interest in covering the actual news coming from Istanbul. They stayed confined to the diplomatic quarters in Pera, drafting quick stories in restaurants between the hors d'oeuvres and main course. "When one writes of the affairs of Turkey in Europe, we Turks a little versed in world affairs cannot help but shrug our shoulders in surprise and . . . pity," Murat claimed.⁴⁵ A liberal monarchist at heart, Murat had left Turkey after being targeted by the police and joined a small Ottoman community in Geneva. From there, he ran the newspaper *Osmanli*, printing editions in both Ottoman Turkish and French. It was clear Murat intended to influence French opinion and apprise readers of the deplorable state of Ottoman politics. The Ottoman press at home was "hobbled and tread under foot by the sinister reign of a great despot."⁴⁶ This criticism was equally applicable to the entirety of Ottoman political society. *Osmanli* endeavored to provide readers with an "accurate" picture of the Ottoman Empire, detailing the injustices and tyranny that Ottoman subjects endured. Believing that the Swiss government would continue to "protect political refugees," Murat and his cohorts took liberties in excoriating the Porte and appealing to European liberal sympathies.⁴⁷

Abdülhamid was not oblivious to the activities of exiles abroad, nor was he indifferent to the criticisms they published in their newspapers. An opposition press in exile was certainly a thorn in his side, but the issue ran deeper than simply attacks against his government and personal character. Articles relating the mistreatment of Christian subjects or criticizing the government's illiberal policies had the potential to be dangerous. They could furnish pretexts for European intervention in Ottoman affairs or jeopardize access to much-needed foreign money. Like his adversaries abroad, Abdülhamid understood that European opinion mattered. And like his opponents, the sultan desired to shift public opinion in his favor. Eager to refute impressions that he was some type of "Oriental despot" or obscure Islamist theocrat, he aimed to rehabilitate his image. Abdülhamid wore many faces, often projecting multiple identities as the situation warranted. If he presented himself as the pious Caliph of the Muslim world to believers across the globe, he was also capable of assuming the identity of a modern, forward-looking monarch when dealing with European dignitaries. Meeting the sultan in 1890, the British politician George Shaw Lefevre found him to be on the whole respectable. "He appears to be simple and unostentatious in his personal habits, without religious fanaticism, and anxious to be held in esteem in Western Europe," he remarked.⁴⁸ However, Lefevre also noted that Abdülhamid was paranoid and kept a close eye on the foreign press for any mention of himself.

⁴⁵ Murat Bey, *Le Palais de Yıldız et de la Sublime Porte: Le véritable mal d'Orient* (Paris: Imprimerie Chaix, 1895), 8–9.

⁴⁶ "La Presse en Turquie," *Osmanli*, 10 May 1898.

⁴⁷ "L'Activité dévorante de M. le Consul," *Osmanli*, 10 May 1898.

⁴⁸ George Shaw Lefevre, "Constantinople Revisited," *The Nineteenth Century*, 28:166 (December 1890), 933.

At home, Abdülhamid clamped down on the press and purchased influence with leading newspaper owners in Istanbul who showered him with praise.⁴⁹ Abroad, he sought to combat opponents and win over European admirers by sponsoring newspapers in leading European cities. For this purpose, he had Nicolas Nicolaïdès, an Ottoman-Greek subject residing in Paris who ran the newspaper *L'Orient*. Initially critical of the government's Pan-Islamic policies, Nicolaïdès changed his tune once he was put on the government payroll.⁵⁰ In 1893, Nicolaïdès launched two new papers, *Les Paillasses Orientaux* published in Paris and *The Bee of the Bosphorus* run out of Brussels. In them, he condemned government detractors, comparing them to "rodents on two legs" who reveled in their own filth. "Like the rat, they dig themselves a hole in a foreign country, and from this hiding place where they believe themselves well protected they poke out the tips of their claws as cautiously as distance permits in an effort to scratch a little at their mother country in the hope that someday it will die from these wounds." And like the rat, he added, they had "made themselves a cheese in France."⁵¹ Both the new papers exhibited a markedly pro-government stance that commended the achievements of the Hamidian regime and railed against "the great anti-Ottoman conspiracy" being hatched in Europe.⁵² Nicolaïdès spelled out his objective clearly, criticizing the "errant cosmopolitans and profiteers . . . writing pamphlets in a venomous ink destined to discredit their mother country in Europe."⁵³ *The Bee* even prided itself on its energetic defense of Sultan Abdülhamid. The bee defended the hive, just as Nicolaïdès and his team aimed to defend the sultan. "For us, our hive is our Sovereign who personifies Turkey. We work for Him and defend Him."⁵⁴

As spokesperson and defender of the sovereign, he praised the "miraculous renewal of Turkey" taking shape through the sultan's wise policies and lauded Abdülhamid as a "*sultan réformateur*" bringing peace and prosperity to his empire.⁵⁵ When covering Abdülhamid's public appearances, the events were made to resemble the familiar conventions of any European monarch. In the spring of 1893 as the sultan's imperial yacht *Falid* arrived off Brindisi, an "immense crowd" gathered at the quay to greet him, *The Bee* reported. In the evening, there was a

⁴⁹ Ipek K. Yosmaoğlu, "Chasing the Printed Word: Press Censorship in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1913," *The Turkish Studies Association Journal*, 27:1/2 (2003): 28–30; Ebru Boyar, "The Press and the Palace: The Two-Way Relationship between Abdülhamid II and the Press, 1876–1908," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 69:3 (2006): 417–32.

⁵⁰ Houssine Alloul and Roel Markey, "Please Deny These Manifestly False Reports: Ottoman Diplomats and the Press in Belgium (1850–1914)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 48:2 (2016): 285.

⁵¹ N. Nicolaïdès, "Les Rongeurs à deux pieds," *Abeille du Bosphore*, 30 June 1893.

⁵² N. Nicolaïdès, "Quelles sont les barbares," *Abeille du Bosphore*, 15 May 1893.

⁵³ "Notre Programme," *Les Paillasses Orientaux*, 1 (January 1893), 3.

⁵⁴ N. Nicolaïdès, "A nos lecteurs," *Abeille du Bosphore*, 15 May 1893.

⁵⁵ "La Turquie et le Sultan," *Abeille du Bosphore*, 15 May 1893.

buffet and ball attended by well-dressed elites and Ottoman officers.⁵⁶ These depictions consciously presented Abdülhamid in terms consistent with other modern European monarchs, challenging the image of the barbarous oriental despot put forward by political opponents. On the occasion of the sultan's birthday in 1893, Nicolaïdès even organized a gala event at a banquet hall in Paris attended by over 250 people, including well-known French dignitaries and Ottoman officials. During the evening, guests toasted to the sultan, indulged in lavish meals, and sung the *Hamidiye* anthem to piano accompaniment.⁵⁷ Similar events were staged over the coming years, all designed to cultivate the image of a beloved and celebrated sovereign for French spectators.⁵⁸

Any goodwill that might have been procured through these types of elaborate spectacles seemingly diminished overnight in 1894 when European public opinion turned sharply against the sultan. That autumn, reports began to circulate on disturbances occurring in eastern Anatolia. Demands for reform on the part of Armenian subjects had escalated into violent confrontations between irregular forces and Armenian radicals. Hoping to put a quick end to the disturbances, Kurdish troops were ordered to suppress the unrest. With little oversight, they proceeded to carry out a murderous campaign on Armenian communities while Abdülhamid quietly looked the other way. By 1896, the death toll had climbed to an estimated 300,000. Christian missionaries sending back reports spared no ink in recounting grisly details of children being burned alive and bodies hung from trees. It was an all too familiar scenario, evoking memories of the "horrors" perpetrated during the last Eastern Crisis two decades previously. "The motto is still the same today as it always was," declared an Austrian missionary: "it continues to be slaughter and murder."⁵⁹ As in the past, religious and humanitarian organizations across the continent sprang into action, collecting subscriptions and printing pamphlets.⁶⁰ "Muslim fanaticism has been pushed to the extreme," accused one anonymous French writer who did not hesitate to brand the incident a "massacre."⁶¹ There were "massacres everywhere" with Christians being slaughtered indiscriminately, the French ambassador Paul Cambon reported.⁶² In an effort to deflect criticism, Abdülhamid blamed the violence on the reforms foisted on him by the European powers. Changes to the existing Islamic status quo had aroused

⁵⁶ N. Nicolaïdès, "Quelles sont les barbares," *Abeille du Bosphore*, 15 May 1893.

⁵⁷ *L'Orient*, 9 March 1893. ⁵⁸ See: "Informations diverses," *Le Temps*, 1 September 1895.

⁵⁹ "Sie es jetzt in Armenien aussicht," *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung für Österreich* (15 January 1898), 21–22.

⁶⁰ Roy Douglas, "Britain and the Armenian Question, 1894–7," *Historical Journal*, 19:1 (1976): 113–33; Margaret Lavinia Anderson, "Down in Turkey, Far Away: Human Rights, the Armenian Massacre, and Orientalism in Wilhelmine Germany," *The Journal of Modern History*, 79:1 (March 2007): 84–93.

⁶¹ *La Vérité sur les Massacres d'Arménie* (Paris: P. V. Stock, 1896), 47.

⁶² Paul Cambon, *Correspondance, 1870–1924* (Paris: Grasset, 1940), 1: 395.

the fury of Muslims, spilling over into anti-Christian rage and communitarian violence, he claimed.⁶³

It was all too easy to blame “Muslim fanaticism” for this latest round of Ottoman atrocities, but the consequences of such rhetoric were painful for Ottoman Muslim reformers to stomach. “Each time that troubles or a political war erupt in the Orient, they immediately attribute it to Muslim fanaticism,” Ahmet Riza moaned.⁶⁴ Taking to the press, Young Turks endeavored to set the record straight. In newspaper articles and pamphlets aimed at European audiences, they refuted claims that the violence against Armenians was the product of religious fanaticism. “Such a policy is in formal opposition to the traditions of Islam and the precepts of the Qur’an,” Riza stated.⁶⁵ The culprit was plain to see, in their opinion. “The crimes readily imputed to a people must be, in all justice, attributed to a single man: Abdülhamid.”⁶⁶ Murat Bey did not always see eye-to-eye with Riza when it came to politics, but he did agree that the brutality of the sultan had to be distanced from Islam in general and the integrity of their faith defended. “It is necessary to scrap the untenable thesis that the vices of the current governmental system derive from the head of the Muslim religion,” he urged.⁶⁷ To drive this message home, Riza went as far as to proclaim Abdülhamid dethroned as Caliph. “A Caliph which is not at once tolerant, clement, and just towards his non-Muslim subjects ceases, according to the laws of Islam, to be Caliph.”⁶⁸ To protect Islam from its critics, Abdülhamid had to be exposed for the tyrant he was. “We should not attribute to an entire system what are in reality the particular vices of an individual,” Riza argued.⁶⁹

Young Turks used the massacre to denounce Hamidian authoritarianism, reproving the sultan for “drowning his country in blood” and “dishonoring his race,” as Khalil Ghanem put it.⁷⁰ Yet it was also evident that the incident provided an opportunity to communicate broader concerns regarding popular perceptions of Islam across Europe. Hostile to Abdülhamid, Muslims within the Young Turk camp were nonetheless receptive to the popular movements for Islamic renewal and modernization growing up internationally. The task at hand required tying Ottoman reform to transnational currents of Islamic modernism and preventing the sultan from claiming the authority to speak for the Muslim world. “Our Sultan

⁶³ Elke Hartmann, “The Central State in the Borderlands: Ottoman Eastern Anatolia in the Late Nineteenth Century,” in Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz, eds., *Shatterzone of Empire: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 183–84.

⁶⁴ Ahmet Riza, “Tolérance Musulmane,” *La Revue Occidentale, Philosophique, Social et Politique*, 19:6 (November 1896), 306.

⁶⁵ Ahmet Riza, “Chrétien, Musulman et Humanité,” *Mechveret*, 15 May 1896.

⁶⁶ “Le Discours qu’on a oublié de prononcer,” *Mechveret*, 15 November 1896.

⁶⁷ Bey, *Le Palais de Yıldız*, 4.

⁶⁸ Ahmet Riza, “Chrétien, Musulman et Humanité,” *Mechveret*, 15 May 1896.

⁶⁹ Ahmet Riza, “Devoir du Calife,” *Mechveret*, 1 June 1896.

⁷⁰ Halil Ghanem, “Révolution et Réformes,” *Mechveret*, 15 November 1896.

and our current muftis have departed from the path of Islam,” Riza criticized. “It is precisely the return to the true traditions of Islam that we demand of them today.”⁷¹ Yet in pursuing these objectives, exiled reformers like Riza did not confine themselves to purely Islamic influences, especially as they acclimatized to the circumstances of exile in a foreign country.

Riza had arrived in Paris in 1889 to attend the centenary celebrations of the French Revolution being staged in the capital that year. What was initially meant to be a short trip turned into a near two decade long stay when Riza decided to ignore the authorities and seek political asylum in France. He worked as an interpreter to make ends meet, although much of his time was given over to writing and scholarly activities. During the early 1890s, he pursued courses at the Collège de France where he made the acquaintance of Pierre Laffitte, a philosophy lecturer at the school. Taken by Laffitte’s erudition and Positivist philosophical outlook, Riza quickly came to consider the teacher his intellectual mentor. He joined the Société Positiviste in Paris run by Laffitte and contributed to Laffitte’s journal *La Revue Occidentale*, publishing various articles on Islam and Ottoman society. More than just lofty philosophical principles drew Riza to the organization. Activism and critique also formed an important part of the group’s activities. Laffitte had earned a reputation as an incisive critic of European colonialism and an advocate of peaceful co-existence between peoples. He deplored the atrocities carried out in the name of industrial “civilization,” noting the violence and inequalities it bred. Race—“an idea as dangerous as it is vague,” in his opinion—had served to create artificial distinctions between men with damaging consequences.⁷² Through delivering lectures at the Collège de France and running the *Revue Occidentale*, Laffitte gathered around him a small group of adherents that would come to share his vision. Parisian Positivists attacked many of the prevailing racial and cultural stereotypes of the day, challenging the moral premise of European colonialism in the process. They opposed the French invasion of Tunisia in 1881 and supported demands for Algerian civil and political rights. They attacked Darwinian ideas of race and rejected Eurocentric notions of cultural supremacy.⁷³ According to the physician Jean-François Robinet, a regular contributor to the *Revue Occidentale*, imperialism was an outdated ideology that had more in common with the traditions of royal absolutism than it did with modern democracy. “It is incompatible with republican morality and the laws of civilization,” he declared.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ahmet Riza, “Chrétien, Musulman et Humanité,” *Mechveret*, 15 May 1896.

⁷² “Considerations sur la Question Islamique et sur la politique de la France à cet égard,” *Revue Occidentale*, 7 (1881), 278.

⁷³ See for example: Jean-François Robinet, “L’Armée coloniale,” *Revue Occidentale*, 11 (1883), 259, 293; Jean-François Robinet, *La Politique positive et la question tunisienne* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1881); Charles Jeannolle, “Algérie et Tunisie,” *Revue Occidentale*, 7 (1881), 412–16.

⁷⁴ Jean-François Robinet, “L’Armée coloniale,” *Revue Occidentale*, 11 (1883), 293.

As a group, the Parisian Positivists were sharp critics of European colonialism and the “false humanitarianism” that accompanied what Laffitte deemed the “unpleasant politics of imperial democracy.”⁷⁵ Moreover, they professed a commitment to universal progress, arguing that non-European peoples could benefit from modern scientific knowledge and obtain their own emancipation regardless of race or religion. “The law of science is the same for all savants, in America as in China, in London as in Paris,” Laffitte’s cohort Charles Mismser explained.⁷⁶ There was nothing preventing non-European peoples from taking part in “the highest degree of civilization that the human species can attain,” argued Robinet.⁷⁷ The anti-colonial and anti-racist platform advanced by Laffitte and the Parisian Positivists was notable as well for its concern with the Muslim world in particular. “Morally, Islam is far superior to the conceptions currently in vogue today among Westerners,” Laffitte claimed. If he desired to change perspectives on the world outside Europe, it was the Islamic world in particular he had in mind.⁷⁸ He envisioned Muslim elites adopting scientific Positivism and demonstrating to the world that they were not backward or impervious to modern progress.⁷⁹

Riza imbibed many of these ideas with alacrity and admired Laffitte’s willingness to defend Muslims against the taunts of European critics. “An imam or shaykh could never have represented Islam as loyally and with such honesty as [Lafitte] has,” he wrote back home in 1890.⁸⁰ In Laffitte, Riza not only found a champion of Muslims; he found a vision of Islam consistent with his own modernizing aspirations.⁸¹ During the early 1890s, he elaborated his ideas on Islamic Positivism and reflected on its implications for France in Algeria. Entering the debate on the ever-present “Algerian question,” Riza claimed that French policy toward its Muslims subjects suffered from the many inaccurate views the French held when it came to Islam and Arab culture. “In order to govern and win over [the Algerians],” Riza advised, “it is necessary to love them, and to love them it is necessary to truly know them.”⁸² He was convinced North Africans could adopt scientific progress without abandoning their faith. Yet in order to grasp this reality, French critics had to first realize that Arabs possessed the capacity for modern civilization. “In my opinion, instructing the Arabs in the name of humanity

⁷⁵ Pierre Laffitte, “Considerations sur l’ensemble de la politique extérieure de la France,” *Revue Occidentale*, 6 (1881), 120.

⁷⁶ Charles Mismser, *Soirées de Constantinople* (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1870), 46.

⁷⁷ Jean-François Robinet, “Haïti,” *Revue Occidentale*, 8 (1882), 413–14.

⁷⁸ “Considerations sur la Question Islamique,” *Revue Occidentale*, 7 (1881), 276–79.

⁷⁹ M. Sait Özervarli, “Positivism in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Young Turks as Mediators and Multipliers,” in Johannes Feichtinger, Franz L. Fillafer, and Jan Surman, eds., *The Worlds of Positivism: A Global Intellectual History, 1779–1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 82–83.

⁸⁰ Ahmet Riza, “L’Islamisme,” *La Revue Occidentale*, 14:1 (January 1891), 116.

⁸¹ Banu Turnaoğlu, “The Positivist Universalism and Republicanism of the Young Turks,” *Modern Intellectual History*, 14:3 (2017): 777–805.

⁸² Ahmet Riza, “Tolérance Musulmane,” *Revue Occidentale*, 19:6 (November 1896), 306.

and science is the only means of making worthy and appreciative citizens out of them.” Riza foresaw secular schools developing young Muslim minds and introducing them to new forms of knowledge. “Arab Positivists?” he remarked. “Yes, it is not all that astonishing.”⁸³

In addressing the Algerian question, Riza was consciously framing broader arguments regarding Muslim liberalism and progress in a context relevant to French audiences. French colonialism, Islamic modernism, and Ottoman politics were never mutually exclusive topics. They overlapped and influenced one another in various ways, and Riza wove them together with skill. He understood that convincing Europeans of the viability of Ottoman liberalism required first changing colonial mentalities and, with it, prevailing ideas on Islam. In the wake of the Armenian massacre, however, a more direct and robust public defense of Islam and Ottoman reform was required. Riza took charge of the Ottoman colony in Paris and assisted in setting up a Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to organize a concerted political movement in exile.⁸⁴ In the group’s central organ, *Meşveret*, Riza addressed issues of Islamic tolerance and liberalism, mixing religious and philosophical arguments. He insisted that the “great principle of Islam” was progress, “a principle that is in no way entombed within the insurmountable limits of a narrow and immutable dogma.”⁸⁵ He envisioned an Islamic society energized by the forms of civic activism and engagement vital to a healthy democracy. The mosque was not simply a house of worship, he claimed, but a place for “deliberating the affairs of the country” and nurturing modern ideas of citizenship. “Islamic government is the power of the collectivity, where each person is linked to a common destiny and each has its part of responsibility.”⁸⁶ These basic practices were evident in the Islamic tradition, as Riza understood it, entailing that Muslims could embrace democracy and modern science without offending their faith. “We have the firm intention of resolutely marching along the path of progress conforming to our mores and with the spirit of our laws,” *Meşveret* proclaimed. “Preserving the character and traditions of our own Oriental civilization, we will borrow from the occident only the general results of its scientific evolution, which alone is truly adaptable and essential to enlighten a people on its march toward liberty and progress.”⁸⁷ It was this very same sentiment, he believed, that would bring forth the “rejuvenation of the Muslim world.”⁸⁸

To give power to these ideas, Riza and the CUP worked to garner public support in France for their cause. Riza used his friendships with Laffitte and the Positivists to publicize his ideas and forged relations with distinguished republican

⁸³ Ahmet Riza, “L’Islamism,” *Revue Occidentale*, 14:1 (January 1891), 117.

⁸⁴ Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 74–77.

⁸⁵ Ahmet Riza, “Tolérance Musulmane,” *Mechveret*, 1 February 1897.

⁸⁶ Ahmet Riza, “Devoir du Calife,” *Mechveret*, 1 June 1896.

⁸⁷ “Programme de la Jeune Turquie,” *Mechveret*, 15 February 1897.

⁸⁸ Ahmet Riza, “Tolérance Musulmane,” *Mechveret*, 15 February 1897.

politicians and journalists like Georges Clemenceau. The Young Turks staged public events that were intended to reinforce solidarity among exiles and draw in French supporters. In late 1896, a dinner organized at the Café Voltaire on the Left Bank memorialized the Ottoman constitution passed in 1876, the very same constitution Abdülhamid had suspended in his consolidation of power. In this public display of mourning for Ottoman liberty, speakers made toasts to Ottoman freedom and vowed to continue the fight against Hamidian authoritarianism from afar.⁸⁹ The event drew attention to the issue of Ottoman constitutionalism and presented the Young Turks as “martyrs of liberty,” as one journalist put it.⁹⁰ Yet it was also telling that Pierre Laffitte and French journalists were present in addition to Ottoman attendees, signaling the incipient relationship between Parisian liberals and the CUP. This support was confirmed that year when *Meşveret* became the center of a public scandal that would make the “Young Turks” a household name in Paris.

Through its network of secret police, the Ottoman government was kept well informed of dissident activities abroad. In typical fashion, it exerted pressure on foreign governments to shut down newspapers run by exiles critical of the regime. In 1896, it scored a victory when British authorities closed down the newspaper *Hürriyet* published in London. Emboldened by this success, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris, Salih Münir Bey, sought to strike a similar blow against the Parisian branch of the opposition. Informants repeatedly assured the government that Riza was an obscure individual that had little influence among “faithful Muslims.” He even “professed ideas of which the French themselves disapprove.”⁹¹ It was doubtful whether action against the CUP would have any serious repercussions for the government. With this intelligence, Münir decided to move ahead.

At the behest of Münir, the French ministry of the interior banned the publication of *Meşveret* and threatened its journalists with expulsion if they persisted in their attacks against the sultan. A year later, the editors were hauled before a tribunal in Paris after the Porte filed a lawsuit against the paper.⁹² Ahmet Riza had little intention of bowing to the will of Istanbul. “I will change the tone of the journal when the sultan changes his manner of government,” he boldly declared.⁹³ Riza’s defiance was backed by French publicists and allies in the press. “France has always considered it a duty as well as an honor to be a land of asylum for victims of despots,” *L’Intransigeant* stated. “It will not betray this sacred tradition to please the *Grand Turc*.”⁹⁴ Georges Clemenceau was even more adamant in his defense. He chided the French government for allowing the “despot of Asia” to presume he

⁸⁹ “Banquet de la Jeune Turquie,” *Mechveret*, 1 January 1897.

⁹⁰ Faud, “Une Question au gouvernement Ottoman,” *Mechveret*, 1 February 1896.

⁹¹ OD-PoHis, HR.SYS-226-42, “Draft Report on Ahmet Riza” (n.d.).

⁹² Taglia, *Intellectuals and Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 68–71.

⁹³ Quoted in Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 111.

⁹⁴ Ph. Dubois, “Expulsion de M. Ahmed-Riza,” *L’Intransigeant*, 13 April 1896.

could “dictate the law on our territory against the ideas of liberty and equity.”⁹⁵ The trial became a *cause célèbre* that summer and reflected poorly on the sultan. Contrary to the expectations of Istanbul, the French court refused to extradite the journalists and doled out a lenient punitive fine that was ultimately rescinded. The Young Turks emerged triumphant from the affair, vindicated in their criticism of the sultanate and celebrated by their Parisian defenders.⁹⁶

The victory scored by the CUP marked the highpoint in the Ottoman press war that had been waged in Paris since the early 1890s. The gibes of pro-government writers like Nicolaïdès and the challenges issues by Young Turks brought Ottoman politics directly into the heart of the French Empire, suggesting the extent to which imperial displacements could be converted into forms of trans-political activism under the proper circumstances. Yet it wasn’t simply that one could hear the *Hamidiye* sung in Parisian banquet halls or see Ottoman subjects gathering in restaurants to commemorate the Ottoman constitution that made the Ottoman exile experience significant. It was how Young Turk exiles like Riza engaged with their host country and the ways in which this experience impacted their ideologies and objectives that proved more noteworthy. Even as they responded to events back home, exile journalists were always communicating with multiple audiences and publics. Ottoman politics was never simply about Ottoman politics. Demands for liberty and constitutional rule were mediated through responses to European colonialism and geopolitics as activists attempted to garner foreign support for their cause and build trust among French liberals. Exiles worked across empires, framing arguments for European audiences that would inevitably have implications for reform back home in the coming years. The Parisian milieu offered Ottoman dissidents a new context in which to work out and formulate ideas of liberal reform and self-governance. If this was true, however, it also hinted at another aspect of imperial trans-politics: whether speaking of an “Arab renaissance” or the Young Turk opposition in the capital, Paris was becoming a center of Islamic modernist thought at the turn of the century.

“An Organ of Islam in Europe”

Exiles and émigrés contributed to a Parisian milieu in which ideas concerning Islamic modernization and Muslim identity were debated and publicized. Yet the synergy between French publicists and Muslim critics had other forums outside the exile press. Questions over Islamic modernism and colonial reform converged, and this convergence could at times create spaces of sociability and exchange that

⁹⁵ Georges Clemenceau, “Pour faire plaisir au Sultan,” *La Dépêche*, 14 April 1896.

⁹⁶ Details of the trial can be found in: *Procès contre le Mechveret et la Jeune Turquie* (Paris: Chevalier-Marescq, 1897).

were shared by exiles and French journalists. While groups like the Parisian Positivists could bring Muslims and French colonial reformers together to promote modernist Islamic ideas, so too could publications like Gaston Dujarric's *Revue de L'Islam*, a journal started the very same year *Meşveret* began publication.

Gaston Dujarric was an active publicist. Initially, he had contemplated a seafaring life. At a young age he enlisted in the French merchant marines, transporting cargo through the South Seas, Africa, and the Levant. In time, however, Dujarric grew tired of the constant traveling and long periods away from home. Settling in Paris, he earned a living writing for various newspapers and magazines, eventually moving into editorial positions that offered greater freedom to explore his many interests. He dabbled in literary criticism, history, and geography. His naval career provided the source for a series of novels and travelogues. He even published a collection of children's stories.⁹⁷ Given his background as both a seasoned voyager and publicist, it was fitting that Dujarric would take an avid interest in French colonial and foreign policy. He wrote widely on the Muslim world and sat on the central committee of the *Société Africaine de France*, a lobby group that regularly hosted lectures and organized events intended to stimulate public interest in African exploration and expansion. Although sharing an interest in the empire with other elites, Dujarric was convinced that many of his cohorts, not to mention the general public, possessed a poor understanding of Islam and contemporary Africa. In meetings and speeches, one heard repeated the same old stereotypes regarding Muslim "fanaticism" and dissoluteness. Troubled by rising sentiments of Islamophobia across France and Britain spurred by the Armenian massacres, Dujarric believed there was now a need to speak out. In 1897, he co-authored a biography of Muhammad, "a useful work in every respect" that intended to enlighten the French public on the life of the Prophet.⁹⁸ He also launched the monthly *Revue de L'Islam* committed to clarifying opinion on Islam in the name of "humanity and justice," as he explained.⁹⁹ Rather than history, however, the *Revue* would focus attention on the contemporary Muslim world.

"The idea that we have generally formed of Islam in Europe is based on prejudice and errors," he contended in the journal's inaugural issue. "We believe it is important to correct the misunderstandings which have persisted for centuries in the conflict between cross and crescent."¹⁰⁰ If this were true of Europe, it was doubly true of France, Dujarric believed. Years of colonial warfare and settler racism had created a wholly negative image of Islam in the French imagination.

⁹⁷ Henry Carnoy, *Dictionnaire biographique international des écrivains* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1987), 1–4: 101–02.

⁹⁸ E. Lamairesse and Gaston Dujarric, *Vie de Mahomet d'après la tradition* (Paris: J. Maisonneuve, 1897), 1: 7.

⁹⁹ "Maschallah!" *Revue de L'Islam*, 1 (November 1895), 1.

¹⁰⁰ "Maschallah!" *Revue de L'Islam*, 1 (November 1895), 1.

“Whenever we speak of Islam among ourselves we only think of Algeria,” he complained.¹⁰¹ Most people had little knowledge of what occurred in Africa and the Ottoman Empire; those who did take an interest in the Islamic world, he added, “only seek to learn what is necessary to exploit it.”¹⁰² This combination of ignorance and self-interest served to reinforce misunderstandings and fuel hatreds. According to Dujarric, European and Muslim civilization need not be antagonistic. Naked imperialist exploitation and old prejudices made them so, nurturing ill-will on both sides. In establishing the *Revue de L’Islam*, he intended “to make known and evaluate Islam in Europe, to justify it and defend it, to explain it everywhere it is misunderstood, accused, or defamed.”¹⁰³ In no uncertain terms, the *Revue* aspired to be “the organ of Islam in Europe.”¹⁰⁴

To this end, Dujarric pressed his extensive network of contacts and acquaintances into service. He gathered together reform-minded members of the colonial lobby—the *parti colonial*—giving them a forum for their views. He published articles by African explorers like Ferdinand de Béhagle and Antoine Bernard d’Attanoux who shared his fundamental belief in Islamic tolerance and moral precepts. Only “ignorant and impassioned men” continued to insist that Islam was a fanatical religion or that the teachings of the Qur’an endorsed the murder of Christians, as Attanoux claimed.¹⁰⁵ The journal also featured articles and reviewed works that underscored its central message. It publicized the views of writers like Henry de Castries, who encouraged Europeans to gain a more accurate understanding of Islamic culture and history. Much as Castries argued, the subject of Islam had too long been the preserve of orientalist and romantic writers who peddled observations “that were more dilettante than serious critique.” Given France’s presence in Africa and the Near East, however, there was a pressing need “to understand [Islam] thoroughly and well.”¹⁰⁶ Dujarric even allotted space for Muslim commentators, publishing interviews with Ottoman dignitaries and featuring articles by writers like Qasim Amin, an advocate of female emancipation and noted Egyptian “feminists.”¹⁰⁷

As the self-proclaimed “organ of Islam in Europe,” the *Revue* was, in effect, promoting a specific brand of Islam. Dujarric and his contributors were certainly conscious of the intellectual debates taking place among Muslim scholars and jurists in the late nineteenth century. They identified their cause with that of the

¹⁰¹ Sellam, *La France et ses musulmans*, 43–44.

¹⁰² Gaston Dujarric, “L’Islam...L’Islam...L’Islam...,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 55 (June 1900), 85.

¹⁰³ Gaston Dujarric, “Pèlerinage à la Mecque et à Médine,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 11 (September 1896), 165.

¹⁰⁴ “Maschallah!” *Revue de L’Islam*, 1 (November 1895), 1.

¹⁰⁵ Antoine Bernard d’Attanoux, “Essai d’étude sur le fanatisme,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 11 (September 1896), 161.

¹⁰⁶ Castries, *L’Islam*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ See: Kassem Amin, “L’émancipation de la femme égyptienne,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 47 (October 1899) and *Revue de L’Islam*, 48 (November 1899).

new Muslim generation coming to prominence across Africa and the Ottoman Empire. With little modesty, some writers even went as far as to argue that since European nations were in fact “Muslim powers” they had a role to play in these deliberations. Much like reformers in Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean, European critics sought to “renew a faith and defend it against the fanatical hordes of the middle ages,” the author Alfred Lemaître boasted.¹⁰⁸ Articles featured in the review commonly emphasized a progressive vision of Islam over one entombed in tradition and immutable doctrine. “We cannot deny that the effects of modern progress and the political transformations that the world has undergone for the past two or three centuries have radically influenced the conditions of existence of Islam,” as one contributor affirmed.¹⁰⁹ At times, these declarations sounded oddly similar to the arguments of Islamic modernists calling for a return to pure Islamic principles. “It is not a matter of changing Quranic orthodoxy,” Hyacinthe Loyson argued in 1897, “but rather medieval scholasticism.”¹¹⁰ In their own way, a small cluster of French critics saw themselves engaging in the great intellectual battles being waged across the Muslim world. And yet, if their arguments shared certain commonalities with Islamic reformers, their motivations sprang from entirely different concerns.

Beneath the lofty aims and modernist views offered in the pages of the *Revue de L'Islam* the specter of French colonialism was always present. Dujarric never doubted that his efforts were consistent with the spirit of France’s “civilizing mission.” He believed that French influence in Africa was dependent upon “the manner in which it will govern its Muhammadan subjects and the sentiments it will inspire in them.”¹¹¹ His support for a tolerant and progressive Islam was envisioned as a corollary to French colonial rule and its status as a “Muslim power” in the modern world. “It is necessary to remake the spirit of the Muslim populations, at least to the extent that they can be. But it is not only through administrative means alone that we can realize such a reform in the world of Islam.”¹¹² France’s “Muslim policy” was a consistent concern in the pages of the *Revue*. Contributors emphasized the need for colonial reform and offered solutions on how best to manage France’s Muslim imperium and relationship with the broader Islamic world. Military men like Jules-Napoléon Ney and Ludovic de Polignac, both vocal proponents of African imperialism, contributed articles alerting readers to the potential dangers that would befall France should it not take its role as a “Muslim power” seriously. “The necessity for France of having a *politique musulmane* is recognized by everyone,” Ney argued. “It is essential

¹⁰⁸ Alfred Lemaître, “Étude sur la théorie du droit musulman,” *Revue de L'Islam*, 48 (November 1899), 175.

¹⁰⁹ H. O'Mahony, “Le congrès panislamique,” *Revue de l'Islam*, 2 (December 1895), 17.

¹¹⁰ Hyacinthe Loyson, “Le Rôle de la France en Orient,” *Revue de L'Islam*, 18 (May 1897), 130.

¹¹¹ Lamairesse and Dujarric, *Vie de Mahomet*, 1: 6–7.

¹¹² Gaston Dujarric, “L'Islam... L'Islam... L'Islam...,” *Revue de L'Islam*, 55 (June 1900), 85.

therefore to adopt one and without delay, because if France does not frame one another power might to our detriment.”¹¹³ As France battled Britain for hegemony in the Mediterranean and faced down the threat of Pan-Islamism directed from Istanbul, there was little room for error or misconception. Reconciling France and Islam was a “fundamental question” for French security concerns no less than its imperial enterprise, according to Polignac.¹¹⁴ A retired lieutenant and veteran of France’s African wars, Polignac was a firm supporter of empire who dreamed of establishing a massive French Africa extending across the north and center of the continent. His imperial vision rested upon his belief in France’s natural and historical relationship with the Muslim Mediterranean. “There can be no doubt about it,” Polignac insisted, echoing Napoleon in Egypt a century earlier. “Our natural penchant is toward Islam. The French are the true Muslims.”¹¹⁵

If the *Revue* touted itself as an “organ of Islam in Europe,” it was ultimately a colonial vision of Islam that it advanced, underscoring the strong connection between colonialism and Islam in France. In the coming years, French publications and reviews claiming to offer a more “accurate” and “factual” interpretation of Islam became ever more closely linked to colonial circles. The *Revue du Monde Musulman*, launched under the direction of Alfred Le Châtelier in 1906, was one of the most explicit of this genre. Le Châtelier was an old hand of the colonial administration in Algeria and an influential presence in the *parti colonial* that congregated in Paris. Fashioning himself an expert on North Africa and Islamic matters, he believed that scientific knowledge and expertise could be pressed into the service of colonialism. He kept abreast of the latest scientific studies and news concerning Islamic affairs, noting the sheer volume of information that was produced on such subjects. “From the Argentine Republic to Vladivostok, there is a continual flourishing of publications—from all countries, in all languages, covering various subjects—interested in Islam,” he insisted.¹¹⁶ The *Revue du Monde Musulman* was intended to serve as an aggregator of these various studies and opinions, presenting the Muslim world in an objective light so as to “help better understand” the changes and events occurring in the Orient. Yet the stated objectivity of the review was not divorced from French colonial concerns. It had been founded as an auxiliary of the Scientific Mission to Morocco then underway and was part of an effort to encourage colonial expansion under the pretext of scientific exploration.¹¹⁷

Colonial concerns were, however, only one facet of the journal. The *Revue du Monde Musulman* possessed a global scope, both in its distribution and coverage.

¹¹³ Napoléon Ney, “La France et L’Islam,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 50–51 (January–February 1900), 1.

¹¹⁴ Colonel de Polignac, “L’Algérie dans L’Islam,” *Revue de L’Islam*, 16 (March 1897), 33.

¹¹⁵ Ludovic de Polignac, *France et Islamisme* (Algiers: L. Remordet, 1893), 25.

¹¹⁶ Alfred Le Chatelier, “A un maître d’école de médinet El-Fayoum,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 1 (November 1906), 3.

¹¹⁷ Burke III, *The Ethnographic State*, 57–65.

Run out of its office on the Rue Bonaparte in the sixth arrondissement, the review was sold across Europe and available in Algeria, Tangiers, Tunis, Istanbul, Egypt, India, Russia, and even China. Its wide distribution said something about the extent of its contents, with articles reporting on everything from the opening of Islamic schools in Johannesburg to the first Muslim communities established in Japan. Moreover, it regularly featured articles written by Muslims coming everywhere from Persia to Bosnia. The Algerian historian and critic Ismael Hamet wrote a number of pieces for the review on diverse subjects relevant to colonial North Africa and the Muslim world at large, and he was only one among other colonial subjects that the review published.¹¹⁸ Progress and Islam's modern "evolution" remained a consistent theme that cut across many of the articles it featured, prompting the question of whether Islam was consistent with modern society.¹¹⁹ According to Le Châtelier and his contributors, the answer was clear.

It was hard to deny that publications like the *Revue de L'Islam* and *Revue du Monde Musulman* exhibited many of the familiar tendencies embedded within Europe's colonial culture and mindset. Even as they claimed to clarify and revise preconceived understanding of Islam, they continued to subordinate knowledge to colonial aspirations, often unapologetically so. Nevertheless, the new reviews were distinct from the stuffy academic journals that had conventionally approached questions of Islamic history and society in the past. Nor were they propaganda organs in the explicit sense that newspapers claiming to speak for Islam were in the French colonies. They brought together an array of journalists, colonial spokespeople, scholars, and reform-minded Muslim writers. Contributors wrote at length on the modern influences and changing attitudes impacting Muslim societies at the turn of the century, challenging the idea that Islam was beyond the pale of modern civilization. They drew attention to and publicized ideas of Islamic modernization, showing the face of a new "Muslim world" with little resemblance to the conservative 'ulamā and sclerotic theologians of the past. Moreover, the new reviews reported on the "Muslim world" broadly, and in doing so brought France within its purview. In the pages of *Revue de L'Islam* and *Revue du Monde Musulman*, Paris was being re-imagined as part of a global Muslim space defined by energetic debates and concerns on the future of Islam.

The creation of explicitly "Muslim" organs in the French capital bolstered convictions of Islamic modernism and opened up new channels for dialogue and conversation in the public sphere. Yet the fact that editors like Dujarric and Le

¹¹⁸ See for example: Imza Mahfouz, "L'Islam en Bosnie et Herzegovina," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 1:5 (May 1907), 289–309; Ismael Hamet, "Le Congès Musulman Universel," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 2:1 (January 1908), 100–07; Ismael Hamet, "Le Commerce et les indigènes algériens," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 1:4 (February 1907), 472–85.

¹¹⁹ For example: Alfred Le Chatelier, "Le Pan-Islamisme et le Progrès," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 1:4 (February 1907), 465–71; Hosayn Djahid, "Le Modernisme en Islam," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 3:9 (September 1909) 104–08.

Châtelier had deep ties to colonial lobby groups and actively campaigned for colonial reform and expansion did raise a key question. Who spoke for Islam? This was a question that was by no means settled as the currents of Islamic modernism, imperial politics, and Muslim solidarity ran together and converged in the heart of one of Europe's premier empires.

As a trans-imperial metropole, Paris was a center of conflicting aspirations and objectives. It created a space in which exiles, imperial publicists, and reformers all operated. While these various groups pursued differing objectives, there existed ample possibilities to find common ground at points where British, French, and Ottoman imperial policies intersected. These convergences became all the more dynamic as imperial displacements and intellectual currents connected empires in new ways. Journalism and exilic activism brought the politics of the eastern Mediterranean directly into Parisian life. Yet exile also encouraged a rethinking of these politics as Egyptian and Ottoman exiles communicated their ideas to continental audiences and responded to European colonialism. Activists universalized ideas of Islamic modernization, arguing that Muslims were fit for self-rule and could assimilate modern society in line with their own traditions and "Oriental" character. As French publicists came to see Paris as a center of Arab and Islamic ferment, French imperialists were not hesitant to adopt modernist ideas within colonial contexts, arguing for a French Muslim empire rooted in notions of Islamic regeneration and modernization. These converging trajectories created a trans-imperial nexus that connected various threads, anchoring Paris in wider networks of exchange and cultural transfers. However, as the Mediterranean grew increasingly unstable, it became evident that these connections not only had the potential to stimulate intellectual ferment. They could also generate political agitations across borders with grave repercussions.

5

Fragile Empires

Writing in early 1907, Alfred Le Châtelier gave his prognosis on the Muslim world as it entered the twentieth century. Taking note of political agitations erupting from West Africa to India and the growing number of calls now heard for Muslim unity, he was under no illusions that change was on the horizon. “Islam, on which Renan had such a negative opinion, is in the process of doing exactly what he thought it incapable of doing,” he remarked. “It is evolving.” This evolution could be seen in the political ferment of exiles, in the unrest brewing in colonies, and the increasing boldness of demands being made in the Muslim press. European critics might insist that a hostile Pan-Islamism was encouraging this widescale social and political unrest, but Le Châtelier believed there was something else at work in this process. “It is not about Pan-Islamism. It is about revolution,” he contended. The Muslim world was “in the midst of its own ’89,” he claimed in his final assessment, and this impending revolution would have important consequences for the entire world.¹

Le Châtelier’s observations were prescient. That year, uprisings in Morocco against European residents prompted a French response, sending shockwaves through the Maghreb. The following summer, revolution erupted in the eastern Mediterranean as the Young Turks rallied crowds against Abdülhamid and imposed constitutional reforms on the state. From one end of the Mediterranean to the other, unrest grew and regimes teetered on the brink of collapse. “The whole soil from which Islam springs is today a vast field of rubble littered with the debris of states,” one Austrian critic opined.² These pronouncements held ominous implications for European states with colonies in the region. Would their empires become part of this accumulating “debris” as the political tumult convulsing the Mediterranean spread? Making matters worse, in 1911 Italy would put in a bid to carve out its own “Arab empire” with an impromptu invasion of Ottoman Libya, throwing the region into complete disarray. Confronted with militarized conflict on their borders and a radicalized Pan-Islamic activism generated by revolution in the Ottoman Empire, French authorities wrestled with questions of how to preserve the “Mediterranean equilibrium.”³

¹ Alfred Le Châtelier, “Le Pan-Islamisme et le progress,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 4 (February 1907), 465–67.

² “Kampf zweier Welten,” *Bukowinaer Volks-Zeitung*, 23 January 1908.

³ ANOM, GGA/27H/8, “Revue de la Presse et des Questions musulmans,” 1 July 1913.

In the years following the Young Turk revolution, France found itself in the middle of a storm that rattled every part of its Mediterranean empire. Movements from Morocco to Istanbul played out across North Africa and threatened to destabilize the imperial edifice. Pan-Islamism, Ottomanism, and imperial nationalism all brought into sharp relief the many cross-border connections and ties that linked the French Empire to territories beyond its frontiers. As populations succumbed to the emotional resonance of religious and nationalist appeals, France became drawn into wider imperial struggles taking place across the region. Trans-imperial connections fed into trans-political movements, creating centrifugal forces that pulled communities in opposite directions. Tunisia in particular became a focal point for these various ideologies and movements as war in Libya and a revived Italian nationalism threatened to tear the protectorate apart. Between 1908 and 1912, French authorities discovered just how disruptive trans-imperial networks and flows could be for an empire with a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional population. Under the circumstances, French authorities were permitted to wonder whether the fragile “equilibrium” could hold.

“We Were Ecstatic”

In the autumn of 1908, Istanbul was in a state of frenetic agitation. People gathered in the streets and gave speeches praising freedom and the Ottoman nation. They waved flags, sang the French Marseillaise on squares, and cried out “Long Live the Constitution!” to uproarious applause. “What changes . . . !” one observer claimed. “There is now a general neglect [for conventions] everywhere. We speak in raised voices and the street is animated with a candid and sincere sense of life.”⁴ This triumphant mood dated back to July when a mutiny in Salonica led by members of the revolutionary Committee of Union and Progress started a chain reaction of popular protests against the government that quickly spread across the Ottoman Empire. Unable to suppress the popular movements, Sultan Abdülhamid was forced to restore the Ottoman constitution and agree to parliamentary elections, ending thirty years of ruthless authoritarian rule.

As these events unfolded, the world watched in astonishment. “[Seeing] the movement which has so completely and abruptly changed Ottoman life, it can be considered, despite its peaceful nature, a veritable revolution,” reported a correspondent for *Le Temps*.⁵ Others, like the French deputy Joseph Reinach, went further, claiming the revolution marked “an Ottoman adaptation of the principles of 1789.”⁶ It was not simply the peaceful, liberal momentum of the revolution that

⁴ “Courrier de Constantinople,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 1 October 1908.

⁵ Jean Rodes, “Une Révolution Pacifique,” *Le Temps*, 12 August 1908.

⁶ “Au Pays de la crise,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 8 (15 June 1909), 225–26.

demanded commentary. The revolution itself was a challenge to all those who repeatedly insisted Islamic society was static and beyond the pale of modern civilization. “The Ottoman nation is perfectly ready for the most complete political liberty,” declared the Tunisian newspaper *Omrane*. “Its current state of civilization and intellectual culture allows it to live and develop under a regime of absolute liberty in the same capacity as the other parliamentary nations of Europe.”⁷ In dramatic fashion, the Ottoman Empire was revising old assumptions and proving that Muslim societies could modernize and reform. “Never has Islam had a greater occasion than today of proving its qualities of adaptation to the times and the environment [of the modern world],” one critic exclaimed.⁸ Across the Muslim world, journalists and Westernized elites lauded the revolution’s transformative potential. “Judging by the attitude of the Muslim press and the agitation manifest in different intellectual centers of Islam, a great work is occurring within the Mohammedan world,” the French minister Stephen Pichon acknowledged.⁹ Observing from Paris, the Ottoman émigré Shukri Ghanem summed up the mood. “We were ecstatic,” he claimed. “We applauded the sight that Turkey offered of a new evolution without precedent, inspiring, harmonious, and glorious for all humanity.”¹⁰

For a Syrian émigré like Ghanem, the Young Turk revolution was not a distant occurrence to be followed in the pages of newspapers and magazines. It was a global event, one demanding not only immediate attention but action on a broad scale. This conviction was shared among members of the small Ottoman community in the French capital that fall as the revolution took its course. Even before the CUP incited the popular resistance movement of 1908, Young Turk exiles had organized and planned the revolution from their base in Paris. “If the field is Ottoman, the seeds which sprout and grow are French,” as the CUP delegate Nazim Bey told a French audience.¹¹ From its inception, the revolution had been developed through political and journalist networks spanning the two empires. Organizers like Ahmet Riza may have left France and returned to Istanbul to take part in the revolution they had prepared from afar, yet others remained, entailing that Paris would continue to serve as a theater of Ottoman trans-politics.

With crowds assembling in Istanbul, Shukri Ghanem and Georges Samné, a Greek Melchite doctor from Damascus, set to work mobilizing opinion in Paris through the newly created Association des Amis de l’Orient. A lobby group dedicated to fostering good relations between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the association attracted a range of individuals interested in diplomatic and

⁷ ANT, series E, carton 533, dossier 2, *L’Omrane*, “La constitution et la liberté,” 2 January 1909.

⁸ “Les Landemains de la Victoire Jeune-Turque,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 20 (15 July 1909), 679.

⁹ CADN, 1TU/1/V/989, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Alapetite, 22 December 1908.

¹⁰ Chékri Ganem, “Hier, Aujourd’hui, Demain,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 2 (15 October 1908), 39.

¹¹ “France et Turquie,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 3 (1 November 1908), 83.

colonial affairs. "Our aim is to assist, in our humble measures, the rapprochement of the Orient and Old Europe and support their increasingly intimate collaboration in the work of progress and civilization," as Henry Aubanel, a French writer who joined the organization, explained.¹² Yet following the outbreak of the Young Turk revolution, Ottoman politics assumed a more prominent role in the group's activities. In October, the organization started its own bi-monthly newspaper, the *Correspondance d'Orient*, a publication meant to serve as an "Oriental book of hours," in the words of the editors. In principle, the Amis de l'Orient stood behind the Young Turk platform of "union and progress," expressing support for the new government in Istanbul and its reform program. Aside from offering moral encouragement, members stressed that the association intended to serve as a "sympathetic spectator," and nothing more. Through public lectures and their central organ, the Amis de l'Orient would faithfully report on all the major events of the day occurring in the Near and Middle East, offering an informed opinion on Oriental affairs.¹³

From the start, however, the Amis de l'Orient revealed that it was not simply content to sit back and spectate. The association aspired to play an active role in Ottoman politics from the other side of Europe. Organizers like Ghanem and Samné publicly supported the revolution, but they nonetheless had reservations when it came to the CUP. As Syrian Christians, they feared the new regime in Istanbul might turn to Turkish nationalism or encourage Pan-Islamic movements as it consolidated power. To counter these impulses, the Amis de l'Orient intended to give a voice to the Ottoman Syrian émigré community.¹⁴ It presented itself as a resolute champion of a liberal Ottoman revolution, placing equal social and political rights for Ottoman minorities and administrative decentralization at the center of its platform. "Now is the time to prove to the world that this great movement was not and is not at base a petty movement, that its magnificence and sweeping gesture cannot be reduced to egoism and narrow-mindedness," insisted Shukri Ghanem. Bolstering Turkic nationalism or Pan-Islamism would only alienate the empire's Christian and Arab minorities, "an irreparable fatality from which there would be no recovery," Ghanem claimed.¹⁵ Openness and inclusion were the way forward if the Young Turk revolution was to succeed, and the Amis de l'Orient sought to ensure this outcome.

Syrian émigrés opposed any move toward Muslim-Turkish domination and advanced demands for greater Arab freedoms within the empire. A proto-Arab nationalist, Ghanem harbored dreams of securing Syrian autonomy within a

¹² Henry Aubanel, "La Révolution Turquie," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 1 (1 October 1908), 14.

¹³ Marcel Saint-Germain, "L'Heure Unique," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 1 (1 October 1909), 4.

¹⁴ María del Mar Logroño Narbona, "Information and Intelligence Collection among Imperial Subjects Abroad," in Martin Thomas, ed., *The French Colonial Mind: Mental Maps of Empire and Colonial Encounters* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 1: 151.

¹⁵ Chékri Ganem, "Macédoine," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 7 (1 January 1909), 207.

reconstituted Ottoman imperial framework. By 1908, moreover, he was in a position to act on these aspirations. Ghanem hailed from a notable Maronite family. Like his brother Khalil, he had received an education at a French missionary school in Lebanon and served the French colonial administration. Working in Tunisia, he forged connections to influential social and political circles in France, eventually settling in Paris.¹⁶ An accomplished Francophone playwright as well as a political activist, Ghanem was known for regaling Parisian audiences with his depictions of Arab heroism and moving appeals to Arab nationalism in his work. “As he cultivates the French muse he does not forget about the brothers of his race,” as one critic claimed.¹⁷ His ideas were not, however, confined to the stage. On various occasions, he took his message directly to the French public, writing for dailies like *Le Figaro* and *Le Temps*. He drew attention to Syria’s Maronite community and the *bilād ash-shām*, the Arab-Ottoman provinces in the Levant.¹⁸ As the Young Turk revolution continued, Ghanem would increasingly become invested in the cause of Syrian autonomy and seek to warm opinion to the idea of a Syrian French protectorate should the Young Turk revolution take an undesirable turn.¹⁹

His cohort, Georges Samné was similarly active in promoting the Syrian cause and would later serve as an advisor on Syrian affairs to the French government during the First World War. Like Ghanem, Samné integrated himself among French elite circles through participation in scholarly and political societies. He took an avid interest in questions relating to French colonialism and imperial expansion, usually offering his advice freely on the subject. When France began its “peaceful penetration” of Morocco in 1905, Samné gave policy recommendations on how to organize the new protectorate.²⁰ As a naturalized foreigner, Samné exhibited a particular attachment to the empire, seeing in it an affirmation of the universal values and sense of global mission that made France unique. A tireless colonial publicist, he urged French policymakers to reconsider their approach to empire and not get distracted by “historic memories” and “vestiges of our colonial empire from another time.” The Orient was the future of the French Empire, he insisted, and this realization entailed a more comprehensive and coordinated policy for the region.²¹ Samné was keenly aware of the importance the Ottoman

¹⁶ D. K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East, 1914–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 248.

¹⁷ Jean Louis, “Quelques Croix,” *Le Figaro*, 21 February 1913.

¹⁸ Shukri Ghanem, “La Patriarchie d’Orient,” *Le Figaro*, 12 October 1905; “Arabes et Turcs,” *Le Temps*, 11 April 1910.

¹⁹ Christopher M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Climax of French Imperial Expansion, 1914–1924* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), 51–52.

²⁰ Georges Samné, “La Volte-Face du Maghzen,” *Le Figaro*, 3 January 1905; Martial Perrier, “Propos d’un colonial,” *Le Courrier de la Rochelle*, 19 January 1905.

²¹ Georges Samné, “La Politique extérieure et colonial de la France et la question d’Orient,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 23 (1 September 1909), 763–65.

Empire held within the Muslim world and contended that good Franco-Ottoman relations should be a cornerstone of French policy given its imperial presence in North Africa.²² These calculations were never wholly divorced from the Syrian question, which Samné believed would require French diplomatic involvement on some level.

As in the past, Syrian spokesmen proved adroit at aligning goals of Arab autonomy with French imperial objectives. And as in the past, French circles were receptive to this potentially synergistic relationship. Within a year, the Amis de l'Orient boasted over 800 members, including deputies like Lucien Hubert and the French Algerian senator Marcel Saint-Germain.²³ The association also developed strong ties to the *parti colonial*, the prominent lobby group that drew together a small but influential constellation of business owners, journalists, and French political elites. It would even forge relations with the Quai d'Orsay in the coming years, leaving Samné and Ghanem well-positioned to pursue their Syrian objectives through backdoor diplomatic channels. With the Ottoman Empire in a moment of transition, the Young Turk revolution offered a window of opportunity that neither were about to let slip through their fingers. The Syrian cause, as they understood it, was the cause of liberal Ottomanism. Should the CUP fail to deliver on its liberal promises, French backing could force its hand.

By cultivating relations with French elites, Ghanem and Samné sought to use their clout as a carrot when it came to the CUP. They could deliver the foreign recognition coveted by the new leadership in Istanbul and provide access to high-level officials in Paris. Support was, however, dependent upon the CUP pursuing a liberal course of action at home. That November, the Amis de l'Orient signaled its intentions when CUP delegates arrived in France as part of a multi-stop public relations tour of the major European capitals. Assuming the role of intermediary, the Amis de l'Orient organized a dinner that brought together French representatives and the visiting Ottoman delegation. As expected, the CUP delegates blandished the dignitaries in attendance with saccharine speeches recounting the two empires' long friendship and Ottoman appreciation for French culture. "The new Turkey is the intellectual daughter of France and it wants, by its example, to develop and prosper," claimed Nazim Bey to loud applause. Taking the podium, Georges Samné expressed his hopes of forging better relations between the Orient and France, solidifying what he called "the intellectual fatherland of humanity." So as not to leave any room for ambiguity, he elucidated what this common humanity entailed. "[It is important] that we do not forget the rule of strict equality," he stated, "without which justice is only an empty word between peoples as

²² Georges Samné, "La Politique extérieure et coloniale de la France et la question d'Orient," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 23 (1 September 1909), 771.

²³ "Assemblée Générale des Amis de l'Orient," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 21 (1 August 1909), 705–06.

between individuals.”²⁴ Behind these exalted declarations of peaceful co-existence and overcoming cultural difference was a more direct message: the Young Turk revolution must be a liberal one rooted in universal values of tolerance and equality for all.

Whether the CUP would take this message to heart had yet to be seen. Political organizers in Paris were not, however, satisfied to sit around and wait. Taking a proactive approach, Ghanem announced the creation of an Ottoman League movement following the dinner banquet. “Some might find it strange, the creation of an Ottoman League in Paris,” he remarked, “but nothing is more justified than this choice.”²⁵ Paris had consistently been an intellectual center for Ottoman modernizers and was the birthplace of the Young Turk party. In founding his Ottoman League in the French capital, Ghanem was merely perpetuating this tradition, he claimed. The league movement reiterated support for the liberal and egalitarian values driving the Young Turk revolution and acknowledged the intellectual debt Ottoman revolutionaries owed to France. Setting up the initial body in Paris, Ghanem envisioned further international sections or “sister leagues” being established in America, Africa, and the Middle East. These bodies would draw together liberal patriots and work to “instruct the people and prepare them for their new role” as Ottoman citizens.²⁶ By associating Ottoman subjects and promoting a vision of the greater “Ottoman collectivity,” the leagues were intended to function as a microcosm of Ottoman cosmopolitanism in action. “*Liguons-nous, liguons-nous donc* is the song heard from Paris to Peru, from Japan to Rome and across the two Americas,” Ghanem wrote as he chronicled the success of the league movement in early 1909.²⁷ In encouraging this form of grass-roots association, he was careful to underscore the movement’s broad implications for the Ottoman Empire as a whole. “Although of Syrian foundation, this league, as its name and aims indicate, is fundamentally Ottoman and national, opened, by consequence, to all Ottomans of goodwill.”²⁸

From his position in France, Ghanem was claiming a role for the Ottoman diasporic community in the revolutionary project unfolding in the east. For some back home, however, this input was not a welcome addition to the debates taking place across the empire. Critics dismissed émigrés as interlopers who were out of touch with Ottoman politics and society. Their imperial patriotism and support for autonomist movements diverged from Syrian politicians in Aleppo and Beirut who either favored a stronger nationalist platform or accused émigré publicists of

²⁴ “France et Turquie,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 3 (1 November 1908), 80.

²⁵ Chékri Ganem, “Une Ligue Ottomane,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 3 (1 November 1908), 74.

²⁶ “Appel aux Ottomans,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 3 (1 November 1908), 76.

²⁷ Chékri Ganem, “Macédonie,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 7 (1 January 1909), 212.

²⁸ “Appel aux Ottomans,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 3 (1 November 1908), 77.

“sowing the seeds of separatism in the heart of the empire.”²⁹ Ghanem took these accusations in his stride, replying it was imperative that “Ottoman subjects living in foreign lands . . . remain faithful and attached to the fatherland.”³⁰ In no uncertain terms, the Young Turk revolution was their revolution as well. Whether one organized and made appeals from Paris or spoke out in the parliament gathering in Istanbul made little difference. As Ottoman patriots, they belonged to the same community.

As was evident, Ghanem and his fellow émigrés imagined an Ottoman revolution stretching from the banks of the Seine to the shores of the Bosphorus and beyond. Whether Ghanem’s envisaged Ottoman Leagues sprouted up around the world “like mushrooms” as he imagined is doubtful. However, the imagined geography in which Ghanem conceptualized the Young Turk revolution testified to the fact that conceptions of Ottomanism did, indeed, “go global” by the twentieth century, as Isa Blumi has argued.³¹ As Ottoman politics were played out in Paris through organizations like the Amis de l’Orient, they gave credence to ideas of Ottoman cosmopolitanism and nurtured competing conceptions of imperial citizenship and belonging. Activists encouraged dialogue between Ottoman statesmen and French elites, and in the process attributed a universality to the Young Turk revolution that underscored ideals of inclusion and pluralism prized by exiles. These efforts, as Samné insisted at one of the dinner banquets staged by the Amis de l’Orient, would serve to guarantee the “new-born Ottoman liberty” stirring in the empire and, with it, the place of exiles in the revolution itself.³²

As the banquets and speeches continued in Paris, however, many French observers began to wonder whether the Young Turk revolution was, in fact, the liberal and cosmopolitan one celebrated by Ottoman émigrés. According to Georges Blondel, an academic at the Collège de France, there was good reason to doubt it. “The people who compare the Ottoman revolution with the revolution of 1789 are deluding themselves,” he stated bluntly in late 1909.³³ This conclusion was troubling. If political activities in Paris exposed the trans-political currents unleashed by the revolution, the entanglements binding France and the Ottoman Empire ran deeper than the capital. Moreover, these trans-political movements could have a nasty habit of boomeranging, potentially drawing France into an Ottoman quagmire. Reports coming from French representatives abroad were hardly encouraging. By late 1909, the patriotic street celebrations and liberal declarations of the previous autumn were beginning to seem a distant memory as

²⁹ “Lettre de M. Sulāïman al-Bustany,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 11 (1 March 1909), 324; Eliezer Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 91–92.

³⁰ “Appel aux Ottomans,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 3 (1 November 1908), 77.

³¹ Blumi, “Reorienting European Imperialism.”

³² *Bulletin de la Conciliation Internationale: Les Parlementaires Russes et Ottomans en France*, 10 (Paris: Delagrave, 1909), 51.

³³ Georges Blondel, “La Jeune Turquie,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 16 (15 May 1909), 490.

the Ottoman Empire succumbed to religious demonstrations, coups, and sectarian conflict. A “nationalist religious chauvinism” appeared to be spreading, the French consul in Salonica warned that spring.³⁴ These rumblings might be felt in Paris as Ottoman émigrés mounted their campaigns, but more importantly, would they be felt across French North Africa?

Pan-Islamism and Morocco

Those worried about the impact of the Ottoman revolution further afield did not need to look far to justify their fears. Reaction across the Muslim world had been instantaneous, bringing forth a host of energetic declarations in the Arab press. Discussion of liberty and revolution in Egypt or Lebanon unnerved officials, but more disquieting still were the reverberations heard in French colonial territories. Authorities blanched in October 1908 when it appeared Tunisians might be drawing inspiration from the Young Turks. “The time has come where you are no longer permitted to sleep,” an Arab Tunisian newspaper informed its readers. “The time to act has come, to strive and apply ourselves.”³⁵ The article urged Tunisians to “get up!” and enact progressive change in their society. It was even more galling to think that liberty and reform might not be the only message imparted to Muslims worldwide. As the Ottoman revolution progressed, expressions of Pan-Islamic solidarity and Muslim unity proliferated. The tenor and message of the revolution appeared to be changing, especially as the new Ottoman government became embroiled in violent disputes and international conflicts.

From the moment the CUP took power, they faced challenges on every front. Religious conservatives and separatist movements agitated at home while the actions of the European powers only exacerbated the situation. In 1908, when Austria-Hungary used the Young Turk revolution as a pretext to annex the Ottoman province of Bosnia and satisfy longstanding strategic goals in the Balkans, it appeared the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of complete disintegration. According to Lucien Hubert, a French politician with an interest in Eastern affairs, the situation was a tinderbox waiting to explode. “We cannot calculate the extent of fanatical reactions that will be produced in certain parts of the domain of Islam against a new and perhaps fatal mutilation to the Ottoman Empire,” he cautioned.³⁶ He predicted a sharp spike in Pan-Islamic sympathies as the empire crumbled, and the news coming from Istanbul bore out his warning. In early 1909, the *‘ālim* Mustafa Asim Effendi gave a speech before the Ottoman parliament, urging the government to make Pan-Islamic association official policy.

³⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/989, Consul France à Salonique to Stéphen Pichon, 13 April 1909.

³⁵ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1469, “Debout, ô mes compatriotes, debout!” *l’Abou Guescha*, 1 October 1908.

³⁶ Lucien Hubert, “La Crise Balkanique,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 2 (15 October 1908), 38.

“Muslims have their eyes fixed on us,” he asserted. “We must convince them that our mission is to work for the future of Ottomanism and for the moral interest of Islam.”³⁷

Ottoman Pan-Islamism certainly posed a threat for Algeria and Tunisia, but French officials had to worry about Morocco especially. Since 1900, France had steadily secured its grip over the Moroccan Makhzan by floating loans to the weak-willed sultan ‘Abd al-Aziz and gathering intelligence on the tribes and terrain of the region under the pretext of “scientific” exploration. Officials wanted to avoid an expensive military occupation on the scale of Algeria and Tunisia, arguing for a primarily “defensive” policy aimed at securing the Moroccan–Algerian border.³⁸ Should all go according to plan, they anticipated a slow and progressive takeover of the Makhzan with minimal resistance. The plan unraveled, however, in 1907 when angry mobs began attacking European works in the kingdom and ‘Abd al-Aziz was momentarily deposed in a palace coup. Faced with the prospect of a widescale rebellion, France abandoned its cautious policy, opting for a direct military presence in the kingdom. Placed under the command of General Hubert Lyautey, a veteran military administrator trained in Algeria and Indochina, French forces found themselves suppressing native combatants and setting up a native administration to oversee the conquered populations. Despite their best intentions, French officials had a new colonial administration on their hands.³⁹ The “quiet” Moroccan policy had failed.

Yet war in Morocco was never simply a war in Morocco, as colonial authorities soon realized. In 1907, the prefect of Algiers reported that marabouts in the colony were criticizing the French invasion and mobilizing support for the Moroccan sultan.⁴⁰ Outraged marabouts were, however, just the tip of the iceberg. With French forces pushing into Morocco, members of the royal government sought to find out whether the CUP’s Pan-Islamic rhetoric was in fact sincere. The Ottoman government was reluctant to intervene directly in the Moroccan conflict and denied requests for military aid. Less conventional options were, however, available, as the Moroccan agent Muhammad al-Muqri soon discovered. In Egypt, al-Muqri encountered a number of Ottoman military personnel in search of work. Most were victims of the recent CUP purge that had cleansed the Ottoman military of Hamidian loyalists. Unemployed, they had turned to mercenary work or hired out their services as military advisors. The Ottoman government had little desire to keep these potential troublemakers in the area, and Morocco seemed a perfect fit. In 1909, al-Muqri met with ‘Aarif Tahir, an officer recently exiled to Egypt by the CUP for his participation in political

³⁷ CADN, 1TU/1/V/989, Consul France à Salonique to Stéphen Pichon, 13 April 1909.

³⁸ Millet, *La Conquête du Maroc*, 3.

³⁹ Moshe Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco: Colonialism and its Consequences* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 54–66; Burke III, *The Ethnographic State*, 76–77.

⁴⁰ ANOM, Alger/2U/20, Prefect of Algiers to Governor General, December 1907.

demonstrations against the government. He asked whether Tahir might be interested in assembling an unofficial team to assist in training native Moroccan forces. He agreed and arrived in Fez that November with a small twelve-man military mission. When it was learned that foreign troops were working alongside the Moroccan military, French authorities protested and ordered the auxiliary forces to leave the kingdom at once.⁴¹ Dependent upon the loans provided by French financiers, the new sultan ‘Abd al-Hafid had little choice but to abide.

Despite the French insistence, members of the military mission stayed in the country and maintained communication with ex-officers in Cairo. During his brief tenure in Morocco, moreover, Tahir had not only been assisting the Moroccan government. He had also been busy creating a Pan-Islamic youth group, Young Maghreb, composed of Algerians, Tunisians, Egyptians, and Moroccans. The secret society was short-lived, but returning to Egypt Tahir used his experience in Morocco to begin organizing Tunisians and Algerians studying at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, creating a new organization entitled Maghreb Unity (*al-Ittihad al-Maghrabi*). Within a year, a branch had been set up in Tunis.⁴² French intelligence kept a close watch on these developments, tracking the movements of Tahir and his associates as they moved across North Africa. At times, the picture that emerged from these reports was opaque. All indicators pointed to Egypt as the base of these secret Pan-Islamic organizations growing up throughout the Maghreb since the start of the Moroccan war. The diplomatic chargé François Charles-Roux could only throw his hands up in frustration in 1910 as he poured over intelligence briefings. “Even when they are not explicitly coordinating,” he wrote, “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.”⁴³

If French intelligence officers were unable to clearly identify the channels and cells that were being set up, they were convinced that Maghreb Unity was coming to act as a paramilitary organization that was recruiting Muslims from across North Africa to fight in anti-colonial conflicts.⁴⁴ Pan-Islamic networks like those built by ‘Aarif Tahir were finding fertile ground in the new militarized environment created by the Moroccan war. Moreover, as French intelligence acquired a better picture of these networks, they began to notice a disturbing detail: Young Turks were participating in them.⁴⁵ By the time this information

⁴¹ Burke III, “Pan-Islamism and Moroccan Resistance,” 106–09; Olide Moreau, “Aref Taher Bey: An Ottoman Military Instructor Bridging the Maghreb and the Ottoman Mediterranean,” in Moreau and Scharr, *Subversives and Mavericks*, 60–61.

⁴² CADN, 1TU/1/V/989, “Note: Panislamisme en Tunisie,” 11 April 1913.

⁴³ ANT, E 550, dossier 30/4, Charles Roux to Stephen Pichon, 19 October 1910.

⁴⁴ Burke III, “Pan-Islamism,” 110–12.

⁴⁵ ANT, Series E, Carton 550, dossier 30/4, Margerie to Dobler, Délégué to the Résident Générale in Tunis, 28 August 1913.

was made apparent, however, it was already clear that the Moroccan war had only been a precursor of things to come.

Libya and the Cause of Islam

Four days shy of Christmas in 1911, a correspondent for *Le Temps* made a tour of an encampment just outside Tripoli. Walking through the mud, he saw people laid out on stretchers, bodies riddled with bullets, and men missing arms and feet. Doctors milled about in the cold, meandering from tent to tent as they amputated limbs and offered what relief they could.⁴⁶ The encampment was a field hospital run by the Red Crescent Society, an international humanitarian organization that provided aid to victims in combat zones. This carnage was the latest grisly detail in an ongoing war being fought between Italy and the Ottoman Empire in Libya. Two months earlier, an Algerian newspaper had welcomed Italian forces into North Africa, claiming Italy could help France in its efforts to “clean up the region.”⁴⁷ The sights on display at the field hospital that December revealed that “cleaning up” had not been Italy’s top priority.

Over the course of the late nineteenth century, Italian political elites and intellectuals had made little secret of their desires to carve out an empire in Africa. With Italian expatriate communities existing in places like Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, many imperial publicists believed that Italian expansion into the Mediterranean was only natural. Italy was after all an “emigrant nation,” to use Mark Choate’s phrase, and yet by the turn of the century, Italy still did not possess any formal settler colonies of its own. Tunisia, with its large Italian population, had appeared the logical place to establish one, but these aspirations were bitterly disappointed in 1881. In the late 1880s, Liberal policymakers invested hopes in overseas colonial settlement as a remedy to mass emigration. Africa would be a land where Italy might “direct all that mass of unfortunates who run to America in search of fortune,” as the Italian prime minister Francesco Crispi stated.⁴⁸ Attempts to carve out colonies in Eritrea and Ethiopia during the 1890s had been an embarrassment, however, with Italian forces suffering a humiliating defeat at Adwa in 1896. As Italian empire-building faltered, voters grew restless.⁴⁹

By the turn of the century, Italy was undergoing a nationalist revival. Political spokesmen like the Florentine novelist Enrico Corradini commanded attention with their demands for a robust national policy befitting Italy’s past grandeur.

⁴⁶ Reprinted in “La Guerre Italo-Turque,” *L’Echo d’Oran*, 9 January 1912.

⁴⁷ L. Berthet, “Tout est bien qui bien finit,” *L’Impartial* (Djijelli), 29 October 1911.

⁴⁸ Mark I. Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 32.

⁴⁹ Giuseppe Finaldi, *A History of Italian Colonialism, 1860–1907: Europe’s Last Empire* (London: Routledge, 2017).

Forming lobby groups and running newspapers with titles like *L'Idée Nationale*, they called for regenerating the Italian people and encouraged ordinary citizens to become “apostles of heroic national life.”⁵⁰ This right-wing nationalism emerged just as changes were occurring in the Mediterranean. France had begun its push into Morocco and the Ottoman Empire appeared on the verge of collapse. The moment seemed opportune for Italy to make a bid for Africa, and nationalists set their sights on the Ottoman provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the only territories in North Africa yet unclaimed by European powers.⁵¹

On 28 September 1911, Italy issued an ultimatum to the Ottoman government, demanding it cede the provinces. “The Empire may perish, but it cannot commit suicide,” an Ottoman newspaper cried out at this affront. “Our citizens of Tripolitania are ready to spill their blood for the fatherland and they can rest assured that we will make every sacrifice in assisting them.”⁵² Twenty-four hours later, the invasion commenced. Italy’s attack violated international law, but European powers proved reluctant to condemn the action. With a free hand, Italy unilaterally annexed Tripolitania and Cyrenaica by royal decree on 5 November. Three months later, the Italian parliament formalized the annexation, recognizing the two provinces as the Italian territory of Libya. Presiding over the parliamentary session, the prime minister Giovanni Giolitti announced that Italy had always considered its influence in the Mediterranean a “vital interest” for the nation. It could not “renounce the mission that has been imposed on it by history, its geographic situation, and its social conditions.”⁵³ Simply put, Italy was joining the ranks of the European colonial empires.

The Italian invasion and annexation of Libya provoked widespread anger among Muslim communities worldwide and elicited public declarations of support in favor of the Caliphate. The Ottoman government capitalized on this emotional resonance to fight the war.⁵⁴ They allied with the Senusiyya entrenched in Cyrenaica to recruit local resistance fighters and relied upon Ahmad al-Sharif al-Senusi’s spiritual clout to attract foreign support for defense. To this end, al-Sharif published *The Desire of The Helper*, a pamphlet laying out theoretical arguments for jihad and the obligations of the *mujāhid*. Recounting legal and scriptural justifications for Muslim religious duties, *Desire of The Helper* went as far as to claim it was permissible to wage “jihad with money” and fulfill obligations by funding the war effort and associated charitable causes. These dictates, while

⁵⁰ Enrico Corradini, *La Patria Lontana* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1911), 70.

⁵¹ Giuseppe Parlato, “The War in Libya and Italian Nationalism,” in Luca Micheletta and Andrea Ungari, eds., *The Libyan War, 1911–1912* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), 39–58; Jonathan McCollum, “Reimagining Mediterranean Spaces: Libya and the Italo-Turkish War, 1911–1912,” *Diacronie*, 23:3 (2015): 2–8; Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 165–70.

⁵² Reprinted in *L’Echo d’Oran*, 1 October 1911.

⁵³ “La Guerre Italo-Turque,” *L’Echo d’Oran*, 24 February 1912.

⁵⁴ Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830–1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 114–32.

backed by scripture, were quite novel compared with prior declarations issued by Muslim rulers and scholars.⁵⁵ Unequivocally, al-Sharif's prescriptions sought to change the context of jihad in order to enlist the efforts of the broader Muslim community beyond North Africa.

The Libyan war infused Pan-Islamic rhetoric with a marked anti-Western and militant element.⁵⁶ 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 against European imperialism. In his appeals to Muslims worldwide, Arslan publicized the war 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 1911.⁵⁷ Muslim organizations across the globe responded with protests and anti-Italian demonstrations. "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 claimed upon hearing the news.⁵⁸ The London branch of the All Moslem League similarly made known its opposition to the war, warning it would "only add to the resentment which prevails among the people of Islam against the injustice and intolerance of Europe."⁵⁹ A proclamation signed by "Brothers of Islam living in Germany" was distributed internationally, urging Muslims to give "material and moral support" to the Ottoman government. "Muslims are brothers who must help and protect each other," it stated.⁶⁰ These declarations and pamphlets were read aloud in prayer rooms and mosques throughout the world or reprinted in newspapers, spurring the global Muslim community into action.

The experience of Muhammad Wali Khan, a journalist from Peshawar, testified to the power such rhetoric had on the imagination. In 1912, Wali Khan traveled 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.⁶¹ British authorities monitored Wali Khan with trepidation, noting that his experience abroad had radicalized his political outlook and made him "addicted to speaking against the English and Europeans." His ambition was to create "a Muhammadan republic

⁵⁵ Knut S. Vikør, "Religious Revolts in Colonial North Africa," in Motadel, *Islam and the European Empires*, 181–82.

⁵⁶ Aydin, *The Muslim World*, 97–117.

⁵⁷ William L. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 21.

⁵⁸ "Cape Muslims and the War," *The Cape Times Weekly Addition* (11 October 1911), 1.

⁵⁹ Hubert, *L'Islam et la Guerre*, 22.

⁶⁰ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, "Traduction" (n.d.).

⁶¹ IOR/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), Kitchener to E. Grey, 16 February 1913.

embracing the whole of the Muhammadan world.”⁶² 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.”⁶³ Muhammad Wali Khan was only one of many Muslim writers and activists to answer the call for international support coming from Libya.

Assistance also took the form of humanitarian efforts. The Red Crescent Society, created in 1877, was reconstituted in 1911 and deployed by the Ottoman state as an auxiliary to the medical units of the Ottoman army and 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.⁶⁴ Between 1911 and 1914, various Islamic organizations were set up to facilitate cooperation and aid-related activities, many through independent initiatives. Indian Muslims raised over \$17 million through local subscriptions and donations for the Ottoman Red Crescent between 1912 and 1914.⁶⁵ They also organized medical relief missions and field hospitals on the frontlines of war zones to assist the wounded.⁶⁶ 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 Pan-Islamism,” one memo reported.⁶⁷

The Libyan conflict marked a watershed in the politics of Pan-Islamism, mobilizing international political and humanitarian networks on a scale never before seen. Yet it also marked a new phase in the evolution of the Young Turk revolution begun in 1908. To repel the Italian invasion, the CUP abandoned its cosmopolitan liberalism for a more vigorous Pan-Islamic ideology.⁶⁸ There was a feeling “it was the duty of every Muslim to help the Turks,” as the Lahori newspaper owner Maolwi Mahub Alam stated.⁶⁹ Moreover, as imams railed against the Italian

⁶² IOR/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), “Criminal Intelligence Office: History Sheet of Qazi Andul Wali Khan up to May 1913,” 1–3.

⁶³ IOR/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), Kitchener to E. Grey, 16 February 1913.

⁶⁴ 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*, 15:2 (2002): 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*, 43:5 (September 2007): 805.

⁶⁵ Michael O’Sullivan, “Pan-Islamic Bonds and Interest: Ottoman Bonds, Red Crescent Remittances and the Limits of Indian Muslim Capital, 1877–1924,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 55:2 (2018): 184.

⁶⁶ Syed Tanvir Wasti, “The Indian Red Crescent Mission to the Balkan Wars,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45:3 (May 2009): 393–400.

⁶⁷ IOR/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), “Notes on the Panislamic Movement and its Effect on Political Agitation in India” (19 March 1914), 1.

⁶⁸ Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993), 102–03; Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany’s Bid for World Power* (London: Penguin, 2011), 74–75.

⁶⁹ IOR/L/PS/11/62 (P3682/1913), “Notes on the Panislamic Movement and its Effect on Political Agitation in India” (19 March 1914), 4.

invasion in mosques and journalists denounced Italy's unprovoked aggression against the Ottomans, France felt the repercussions. As in 1908, the two empires were linked through the dense webs of trans-imperial connections cutting across the Mediterranean.

The recoil was immediately felt in Paris that October as the Ottoman expatriate community in the city declared its support for the "Ottoman nation." Samné and the Amis de l'Orient censured Italy for its "monstrous act," consciously framing their arguments in a language of national rights and sovereignty. International law and the "justice of peoples" were on the Ottoman Empire's side, they argued. In a nudge to the French government, the organization stressed that "respect for the principles of civilization and humanity" compelled an international response.⁷⁰ The French government was not swayed, but it was not for lack of trying on the part of expatriates and sympathetic French activists. In early October, the Amis de l'Orient formed committees and organized a rally at the editorial offices of the *Dépêche Coloniale*. Speaking to a crowd consisting of Ottoman diplomats and French dignitaries, the Comité de l'Orient announced its goal was to bring together all those "interested in the social progress of nations and developing useful relations with all the countries of Islam."⁷¹ According to the senator Pierre Baudin who was in attendance, "the duty of neutrality" did not prevent Frenchmen from "loudly affirming" their sympathies for the Ottoman Empire.⁷² Others agreed. That same day, a second "Turcophile meeting" organized by the Socialists was held at the Hôtel des Sociétés Savantes, with some 1,500 people attending. The assembly unanimously passed a resolution declaring that the Ottomans could not be denied the basic "rights of people" and read aloud statements of support from French luminaries such as the author Anatole France and art historian Gabriel Séailles.⁷³

Organizations like the Amis de l'Orient gave the Ottomans an informal channel to work through in the French capital. The question was whether these groups could keep up the momentum and exert an effective influence on French public opinion and, ultimately, the government. According to Suleiman Bustani, an Ottoman emissary in Paris at the time, these types of pressure groups could prove effective. Bustani had been dispatched to Paris in February to gauge French opinion on the war. After meeting with political notables like the former premier Alexandre Ribot and Stephen Pichon, who had just assumed the presidency of the Amis de l'Orient, Bustani was convinced there was support for the empire

⁷⁰ "Appel du Comité Union et Progrès à l'opinion publique européenne," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 74 (15 October 1911), 359.

⁷¹ "Au Comité de l'Orient," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 74 (15 October 1911), 361.

⁷² "Au Comité de l'Orient," *Le Gaulois*, 8 October 1911; "Au Comité de l'Orient," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 74 (15 October 1911), 361.

⁷³ "Au Comité de l'Orient," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 74 (15 October 1911), 363; "Manifestation en faveur de la Turquie," *La Jeune Turquie*, 11 October 1911.

within certain circles. He also believed that working through small groups like those in Paris would “produce the best effect.”⁷⁴ Yet these small circles of support had to be brought together, in his opinion. “With some effort it would not be impossible to organize here a permanent committee to defend the interest of the Ottoman Empire,” he claimed.⁷⁵ His suggestion was to set up an Ottoman Committee in France and furnish it with a monthly budget of 200 to 300 francs to pay staff costs and organize events.

As the Porte was weighing its options in the French metropole, however, the war was beginning to acquire a different character, especially from the perspective of French colonial officials on the ground in Africa. For the French colonial administrations, Libya was not some distant crisis to be deliberated over and assessed in the abstract. It was right in their backyard, and the repercussions of the invasion were felt almost at once. With the Italian ultimatum delivered on 28 September set to expire, French nationals and protégés swarmed the French embassy in Tripoli in search of protection. Others boarded boats and fled the province. By the following day, vessels were arriving in Tunisian ports carrying civilians demanding entry into the protectorate.⁷⁶ While French politicians and the press occupied themselves with diplomatic questions and sent off communiqués to Rome and Istanbul, colonial administrators were grappling with the fallout of militarized conflict and political destabilization directly on their eastern border. A host of new problems arose, almost overnight, demanding immediate attention.

France had committed itself to a policy of neutrality, but it was easier said than done. There were Ottoman officials in the Regency and merchants who regularly traveled between eastern Tunisia and Tripolitania. The declaration of war had also provoked a stream of incoming refugees that the administration was ill-equipped to handle. How were these groups to be treated given France’s neutral status? Under the Hague Convention, individuals performing civilian administrative duties were not classified as belligerents, permitting the French administration to allow “isolated individuals” free passage through Tunisia. Groups, however, were a different matter and were classified as “belligerents” under the terms of the international convention, as were any military units “momentarily isolated from a troop” and found in Tunisian territory.⁷⁷ Authorities monitoring the border imposed these restrictions as best they could. When Rehouma En Najjar, a resident of Ben-Gardane some thirty miles from the Libyan border, was found hiding Ottoman officers in December 1911, police handed him a fifteen-day prison

⁷⁴ OD-PoHis, HR.SYS-224-4, Suleiman Bustani to Moustafa Assim Bey, 7 February 1912.

⁷⁵ OD-PoHis, HR.SYS-224-4, Suleiman Bustani to Moustafa Assim Bey, 28 February 1912.

⁷⁶ “La Guerre Italo-Turque,” *L’Echo d’Oran*, 3 October 1911.

⁷⁷ CADN, “Guerre Italo-Turque: Decisions prises pour l’application des conventions de La Haye et la surveillance du territoire” (1912), Telegramme 357.

sentence.⁷⁸ Over the next several months, colonial officials disciplined various Tunisian natives in the Ben-Gardane vicinity for offenses concerning assisting foreigners with clandestine travel across the border or provisioning Ottoman detachments.⁷⁹

The fact that Tunisians showed themselves willing to defy orders by hiding Ottoman soldiers or smuggling them back into Tripolitania to re-join the fight was troubling. Moreover, investigations into these activities brought to light networks on the ground that demonstrated these cross-border operations were neither isolated occurrences nor limited to border towns like Ben-Gardane. Throughout the war, agents working out of Tunis made a lucrative business assisting people cross the Tunisian–Libyan frontier and funneling arms to combatants, all under the noses of French officials.⁸⁰ European rifles circulated freely through the region and were easily accessible on the streets of Tripoli and Benghazi, some going for as low as fifteen to twenty francs.⁸¹ The underground arms trade was a constant source of frustration for officials attempting to uphold neutrality. In December 1911, English authorities in Egypt allegedly discovered that the Ottomans were using the Red Crescent to smuggle arms shipments into Libya.⁸² Shortly after this revelation, the French coastguard in Tunisia captured a boat off the Kerkennah Banks thirty miles from Sfax carrying twenty-five tons of cartridges for Mauser rifles.⁸³ For every shipment confiscated by authorities, however, another slipped through. Officials seeking to contain the conflict and uphold neutrality faced an uphill battle.

As Italy tightened its grip over Tripolitania in 1912 and attempted to cut off Ottoman supply lines to fighters in the interior, Ottoman military personnel found their access restricted. Posing as “civilian” administrators or businessmen became increasingly difficult, encouraging Ottoman officials and agents to get more creative with their travel arrangements. By the middle of 1912, Ottoman military personnel were traveling by boat from Istanbul to Tunis via Marseille in order to circumvent Italian authorities. The Istanbul–Marseille–Tunis triangle, while inconvenient, allowed access to Tripolitania via the French side.⁸⁴ The route

⁷⁸ CADN, “Guerre Italo-Turque: Décisions prises pour l’application des conventions de La Haye et la surveillance du territoire” (1912), letter no. 303, Resident General to Commandant militaire, 19 December 1911.

⁷⁹ CADN, “Guerre Italo-Turque: Décisions prises pour l’application des conventions de La Haye et la surveillance du territoire” (1912), letter 312, Resident General to Commandant militaire, 22 December 1911; CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, “Note pour le Résident Général: Direction de la Sûreté Publique,” 12 January 1912.

⁸⁰ CADN, 1TU/1/V/989, “Note: Panislamisme en Tunisie,” 11 April 1913.

⁸¹ “Dans le camp ottoman,” *L’Echo d’Oran*, 24 November 1911.

⁸² “Le Croissant-Rouge disguisait la contrebande de guerre,” *La Tunisie Française*, 18 December 1911.

⁸³ CADN, 1TU/1/V/325, “Telegramme de Sfax, 41-50-9-19-40” (1912).

⁸⁴ For example: CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, “Note: Sûreté Publique,” 6 May 1912, and “Note: Direction de la Sûreté Publique,” 23 March 1912.

worked for Hadji Djemal Effendi who left Marseille on 30 August 1912. Disembarking at Tunis, he dropped by an “English store” on the Avenue de Carthage where he met with Ali Frawa and Nouman Georges, both of whom had recently arrived in Tunis as part of an international relief effort headed by the Red Crescent. A few hours later, he was en route to a “Turkish camp” in Tripolitania. The French authorities only got wind of the escape after the fact, by which point it was out of their hands.⁸⁵

From the start of the conflict, the movement of Ottoman officials and military through Tunisia raised eyebrows. European residents in the Regency, perpetually dissatisfied with the protectorate government, cited the security risk that the porous border with the Ottoman territories posed. In November 1911, Henri Tridon, a journalist known for his combative retorts in the paper *La Tunisie Française*, drew public attention to the influx of Ottoman subjects arriving in the protectorate. “Before the Italo-Turk conflict, the coming of an Ottoman officer to Tunisia was an absolutely exceptional event,” he stated. “For some days now, they have been arriving in droves.”⁸⁶ These foreigners arrived bearing passports identifying them as architects, businessmen, or date merchants, but Tridon urged readers not to be fooled. These men were seeking to recruit young combatants among Tunisian Muslims, bringing with them a radical Pan-Islamic ideology. In the coming weeks, *La Tunisie Française* issued repeated warnings on the incursion of Turkish “tourists” in Tunisia, insisting their activities not only violated French neutrality but also threatened the very stability of the protectorate. Ottoman agents were accused of intentionally stoking Arab “fanaticism” and building an army of volunteers who “every day come in droves to enroll under the banner of the sultan.”⁸⁷ By December, the situation had become so dire that the journalist Armand Ravelet claimed if the French government did not crack down on these activities swiftly “the Turkish military will take Tunisia.”⁸⁸ Hyperbole for certain, but not without purpose. Journalists whipped up support among the European community, getting them to apply pressure on the government to secure the border. The jihadist rhetoric emanating from Libya had broad consequences for the region, they claimed. To do nothing was to invite catastrophe.

In reality, the danger posed by “foreigners” was minimal. Nevertheless, the government did attempt to exert more control over cross-border movements where it could. In January, four natives from Oued et Touzaine were arrested after trying to join a contingent of Turco-Arab forces fighting in Tripolitania.⁸⁹ Seven

⁸⁵ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, “Telegramme: Resident Général à Diplomatie,” 7 September 1912.

⁸⁶ Henri Tridon, “Que doit être notre neutralité dans le conflit italo-turc?” *La Tunisie Française*, 5 November 1911.

⁸⁷ “Les Officiers Turcs,” *La Tunisie Française*, 8 November 1911.

⁸⁸ Armand Ravelet, “Trop de Turcs Nuits,” *La Tunisie Française*, 1 December 1911.

⁸⁹ CADN, “Guerre Italo-Turque: Decisions prises pour l'application des conventions de La Haye et la surveillance du territoire” (1912), Telegramme no. 5660, 25 June 1912.

months later, two Tunisians from Accara were caught returning from the front, with the commanding officer who had discovered them requesting harsh disciplinary measures.⁹⁰ Punitive measures posed obstacles, but they did not deter volunteers coming from Algeria and Tunisia to take up arms in Libya. The local Arabic press publicized the war, with newspapers like *Al-Zuhra* celebrating the valiant efforts of “the Arabs fighting for the faith.”⁹¹ As was customary, articles recounting the heroic exploits of *mujāhideen* and carrying Pan-Islamic invocations filtered down to communities through the local cafés where newspapers were read aloud and commented upon publicly.⁹² A military testimonial after the war provided a picture of the situation as it unfolded throughout the year. Volunteers were typically young North African males between the age of 18 and 25 who had been motivated by the urgings of local religious authorities or inspired by the Pan-Islamic rhetoric filling the Arab press. Most volunteers never made it to Tripolitania. The trip from Morocco or Algeria was grueling and determination often dwindled along route. Those that did arrive, however, were placed under the command of Ottoman generals, given basic training, and incorporated into the ranks of the Ottoman military forces.⁹³

Despite the allegations made in the colonial press, the Ottoman government did not have any formal mechanisms for recruiting fighters in place. The relatively small number of volunteers were either self-motivated or sought out through local agents sent to attract foreign support. These informal networks opened opportunities for some individuals like Gastowt Thaddé, a French national of Polish extract who found himself in Tunis as the war broke out. A questionable journalist, Thaddé boasted he had secret connections to Tunisian radical circles and had assisted Ottoman officers in Tripolitania on numerous occasions.⁹⁴ In the spring of 1912, he traveled to Paris and there, donning a fez, approached the Ottoman Legation claiming to be a Muslim convert. Without any credentials or letters of introduction, Thaddé offered to help recruit Arab fighters in Tunisia on their behalf, requesting funds to finance these operations. The Ottoman diplomats turned him away out of hand.⁹⁵ By July, Thaddé was back in Tunisia attempting to recruit *mujāhideen*. Stopping in towns and cities between Tunis and Ben-Gardane, he introduced himself under the pseudo-Arabic name Seïf-ed-Dine and claimed to be a reporter with the journal *Le Jeune Turc*. He met young men in cafés, promising 30 francs a month, food, and lodgings with the opportunity of

⁹⁰ CADN, “Guerre Italo-Turque: Décisions prises pour l’application des conventions de La Haye et la surveillance du territoire” (1912), Telegramme no. 298, Delegate of the General Division, 30 July 1912.

⁹¹ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, Press Arabe Tunisie: “Le démentis italiens,” *Zohra*, 5 January 1912.

⁹² For Maghrebin society and the spread of news see: Asseraf, “La Société coloniale face à l’actualité internationale,” 110–11; Asseraf, *Electric News*, 40–41.

⁹³ CADN, 1TU/1/V/997, Capitaine Desvaux, “La Guerre Italo-Turque en Tripolitaine.”

⁹⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, “Rapport: Direction de la Sûreté Publique,” 16 June 1912.

⁹⁵ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, “Note: Sûreté Publique,” 18 June 1912; CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, “Note: Sûreté Publique,” 26 September 1912.

upward mobility and promotion in the Ottoman military.⁹⁶ As to who Thaddé worked for was anyone's guess. The Ottomans thought he was a German spy. The French were uncertain. In all likelihood, Thaddé was attempting to exploit the porous border between the Ottoman and French empires in order to solicit funds from the Ottoman government. Having failed in Paris, he took it upon himself to recruit volunteers on the ground, believing his efforts would put him in the good graces of those with deeper pockets.

Hustlers like Thaddé were well attuned to the intricacies that trans-imperial flows engendered. As military conflict destabilized Tripolitania, it had the potential to create ripples in neighboring states, especially as calls to jihad and Pan-Islamic unity multiplied and encouraged cross-border solidarities. As French intelligence officers found, arms and people went back and forth across the Tunisian–Libyan frontier, and these activities hinted at the vulnerabilities of the French Tunisian protectorate, if not France's entire North African Muslim empire. Authorities worried in the spring of 1912 when a local qaid in Béjà received a letter posted from Salonica urging him to incite Pan-Islamic agitation against all those “killing our brothers in Africa, those of Tripoli as well as Morocco.”⁹⁷ The Libyan war was rapidly becoming a regional one. French authorities in Tunisia could try to control the border, but could they control the implications the war held for the interior? A report from the civil controller in Grombalia in May 1912 was not encouraging. Pan-Islamic propaganda was clearly spreading since the war began, he stated, and native Tunisians appeared receptive to it. “The inhabitants are convinced that the outcome of this war will be favorable to their coreligionists and that Italy cannot hold out for long. All their sympathies go to the forces struggling against the Italians.”⁹⁸

North Africa and the Libyan War

As authority collapsed in Libya over the course of 1911, the implications of the crisis for greater colonial North Africa became manifest. Officials had to worry about the centrifugal impulses of movements like Pan-Islamism and Italian nationalism. They had to contend with disputes between Muslim and European communities as the politics of the war bled into the colonial population. Officials also had a pressing refugee crisis on their hands that demanded attention. The problems were manifold and seemed to metastasize daily as the war continued.

⁹⁶ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, “Note: Sûreté Publique,” 8 February 1912; CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, “Note: Sûreté Publique,” 3 July and 26 September 1912.

⁹⁷ ANT, Series E, Carton 550, dossier 30/1, Lettre, 24 May 1912.

⁹⁸ ANT, Series E, Carton 550, dossier 30/1, Contrôleur civil de Grombalia à Alapetite, 25 June 1912.

The refugees streaming across the border into Tunisia were a principal concern. War threatened to create a refugee population on French soil without any means of support. While French authorities had no desire to shoulder this burden, displaced Libyans posed a more urgent dilemma than just supplying people with food and shelter. They had the potential to generate international disputes that could undermine France's hold over Tunisia. French administrative rule in the protectorate had never been absolute. Not only did the French have to share sovereignty with the Bey. They also had to accommodate the foreign European communities residing in the Tunisian Regency. Many of the privileges permitted under the capitulations had been retained or renegotiated, entailing that foreign nationals like the Italians and Maltese were entitled to be tried under European law and enjoyed extraterritorial rights. The Tunisian administration persistently attempted to get around these awkward arrangements, usually finding itself hamstrung by British and Italian demands to honor its agreements. The problem for French officials was that European nationals gave foreign governments a lever of influence in Tunisia and provided pretexts for foreign intervention in the internal affairs of the protectorate.

The Italian decision to annex Libya raised a serious question: would the Italian government attempt to claim displaced Libyans as Italian subjects? If so, it would mean Libyan residents in Tunisia would be considered "Europeans" under the law and swell the ranks of the Italian population in the protectorate. To pre-empt this eventuality, the French government moved to stanch the flow of refugees. In March of 1912, authorities were ordered to refuse entry to any natives who did not have travel papers issued by the French Consul General.⁹⁹ The *mujāhideen*, however, pushed the nationality issue that French authorities had been fearing. In May, the Italian government wrote to the Tunisian Resident General, Gabriel Alapetite, informing him that Italy would be issuing mandatory passports for Tripolitanians in order to weed out and prevent foreign Arab volunteers sneaking across the border.¹⁰⁰ "All people arriving without a passport will be sent back," the Italian consul declared.¹⁰¹ While sensible, passports stamped Libyans with an Italian nationality and could serve as a precursor to claiming them as Italian subjects. The French administration fretted over the issue but given Italian desires to stem the flow of *mujāhideen* into the province, there was little that could be done. As European officials grappled with the presence of foreign fighters lured to Libya by a Pan-Islamic ideology, the context for a modern passport regime in North Africa was born, and with it all the resulting complexities associated with claims to nationality and foreign status.

⁹⁹ CADN, "Guerre Italo-Turque: Decisions prises pour l'application des conventions de La Haye et la surveillance du territoire" (1912), Telegramme, Resident General to Consul General de France in Tripoli, 6 March 1912.

¹⁰⁰ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, Consolato Generale di Italia to Alapetite, 11 May 1912.

¹⁰¹ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, Consolato Generale di Italia to Alapetite, 13 October 1911.

The French certainly worried over the thought of Italy using the Libyan population as a diplomatic lever. However, fears generated over the prospect of an Italian-Libyan population in the Regency ran deeper than international affairs. As Italian subjects, Libyans would be considered “Europeans” and entitled to judgment by French courts. Native Muslims, however, continued to remain under native jurisdiction, subjecting them to different laws and taxes. Much as with prior concerns over Algerians claiming a French status in the Regency, the Libyans threatened to subvert strict colonial categories distinguishing “Europeans” from “natives.” It was not unthinkable that Arabs enjoying European rights could elicit calls for equality among Tunisians and highlight the unequal treatment that underpinned French colonial rule.¹⁰² Conflicts between Tunisia’s European and Arab communities were a reality, and the war was driving this point home in other ways as well.

The French position on the war was a problem. The government’s stated neutrality drew anger from both European and Muslim communities in the colonies. As one Algerian newspaper noted, neutrality did not necessarily imply a refusal to take sides. “Our government has said nothing,” which, under the circumstances, “gives the impression of approval.”¹⁰³ Yet if some believed that France tacitly supported the Italian invasion, diplomatic relations between the two countries were hardly cordial as the war continued. In early 1912, frictions became apparent when Italy seized two French paquebots—the *Carthage* and *Manouba*—in international waters on the pretext the ships were carrying an airplane and Red Crescent doctors intended to assist Ottoman forces. The seizure of the ships sparked outrage. “This aggression of pirates against our ships! This affront to our flag! How to explain this sudden and conceivable reversal?” one Algerian journalist asked.¹⁰⁴ Colonial newspapers urged that in light of this recent aggression France should condemn Italy’s brazenness. “When a government forgets to defend the honor of the country which it represents and keeps quiet, whether out of fear, complicity or ill-advised politics, in the face of an audacious attack like the one committed by Italy in Tripolitania,” claimed the *Courrier de Tlemcen*, “it merits the opprobrium of all honest people.”¹⁰⁵

It did not help that Italian nationalists were mobilizing behind Italy’s colonial endeavor, promoting aggressive claims to Italian dominance in the Mediterranean and the acquisition of a *quatra sponda* or “fourth shore” for Italy in North Africa.¹⁰⁶ According to one journalist writing for the Italian paper *La Stampa*, Italy owed nothing to France. “An Italy seeking to expand into the Mediterranean

¹⁰² Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 103–05.

¹⁰³ Jacques Vadroit, “D’Agadir à Cagliari,” *Courrier de Tlemcen*, 26 January 1912.

¹⁰⁴ Verax, “A Propos du recent incident franco-italien,” *L’Echo de Bougie*, 28 March 1912.

¹⁰⁵ Jacques Vadroit, “D’Agadir à Cagliari,” *Courrier de Tlemcen*, 26 January 1912.

¹⁰⁶ McCollum, “Reimagining Mediterranean Spaces,” 2–3.

can only have France for its natural enemy," it stated.¹⁰⁷ Behind diplomatic pleasantries always lurked an element of realpolitik and imperial rivalry. The remarks of Carlo Pisani, a lieutenant in the reserve Italian forces, drew criticism in French colonial journals when he insisted that "France is not a sister to us, but a future prey." As Pisani claimed, the stakes were high, and Italy might even consider moving into Tunisia once it had concluded its Libyan mission. "The stupidity of one of your ministers has permitted us to install ourselves in the ports of Tunisia and, in a not too distant future, the 110,000 Italians who inhabit the regency will be politically united with their compatriots in Tripolitania. It is the law of life: the most numerous will replace the weaker, and international morality will count for nothing before the necessities of Italian expansion."¹⁰⁸ Certain journalists were aware of how the press in both Italy and the French colonies was heightening tensions and generating divisions that could have consequences for French North Africa no less than European diplomatic relations.¹⁰⁹

The fact that Algeria and Tunisia had sizable Italian populations was an issue of concern as Italian nationalism stoked by the war spread. With international Muslim public opinion condemning Italy for its invasion of Ottoman Libya, the French government found itself thrust between opposing camps. Algerian Muslims complained of harassment by Italian and Spanish residents espousing ideas of "Latin" unity and superiority. The Algerian reformer Benali Fékar freely expressed his discontent with this situation, citing recent Italian outbursts in Algiers and elsewhere that were reprehensible. Algerian Muslims had proven themselves to be loyal subjects, he maintained, unlike certain European residents in the colony, leading him to question why the French government was not doing more to rein in this appalling behavior. "We do not intend in any way to abdicate our rights or suffer flagrant inequalities with regard to Italian and Spanish immigrants," he warned.¹¹⁰ France's reluctance to condemn Italian aggression was also an issue that alienated many Muslims in the colony. A self-identified "Moslim" writing for the Algerian paper *L'Islam* dismayed over France's inability to understand why Muslims were protesting against Italy and the ease with which French officials dismissed their concerns. Algerian discontent was not related to some fanatical Pan-Islamic attachment to the Ottoman sultan, he argued, but grounded in the sense of injustice stimulated by the Italian attack. "Let's hope that France takes account of the sentiment of the twenty million Muslim subjects it has adopted each time its global policy is forced to address questions which interest all the natives of North Africa," the author declared.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Verax, "A Propos du recent incident franco-italien," *L'Echo de Bougie*, 28 March 1912.

¹⁰⁸ "Lune de Miel," *L'Echo de Bougie*, 1 February 1912.

¹⁰⁹ "L'incidents franco-italiens," *Correspondance d'Orient* (1 February 1912), 130–31.

¹¹⁰ "Notre Loyalisme," *L'Islam*, 25 February 1912.

¹¹¹ "La Guerre Italo-Turque et le sentiment des musulmans algériens," *L'Islam*, 10 March 1912.

Refusing to be cowed by Italian nationalists, Algerian Muslims actively made known their support for the Ottoman cause. They hung placards on the doors of Arab cafés, on streets along the Place du Gouvernement, and in mosques urging Muslims to donate money to the Red Crescent and organize boycotts against Italy.¹¹² Algerian humanitarian efforts were impressive. “The élan of charity which has manifested itself in Muslim countries in favor 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* stated.¹¹³ Themes of martyrdom and sacrifice prevalent to jihadist rhetoric were reinterpreted to accommodate colonial loyalties and expressions of public support. Benali Fékar, 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!”¹¹⁴ In total, the Algerian subscription campaign raised 410,000 francs (roughly \$1.7 million) with separate funding campaigns run by Algerians in Tunisia and the M’zab.¹¹⁵ Noting the energetic response of Algerian Muslims, the Tunisia paper *Al-Zuhra* congratulated them for “their magnificent generosity” and hoped their Tunisian brethren would follow suit.¹¹⁶

Pan-Islamic sympathies were equally strong across the border, where the Libyan conflict mapped itself onto colonial politics in even more dramatic fashion. In response to the war, the Tunisian activist Ali Bash-Hamba launched the paper *The Islamic Union* hoping to mobilize Tunisian Muslims and add to the international chorus supporting the Ottoman Empire. He was careful to clarify that “a united Islam” did not seek to foment hostile attitudes toward Christians or undermine the French protectorate. Yet he did denounce Italian aggression and criticize Europe’s telling refusal to condemn Italy’s violation of international law, declaring, “[the current war] leaves little doubt for us Muslims . . . that what afflicts us in this war is without contest an evident demonstration of Christian fanaticism against Islam.”¹¹⁷ In defending his stance, Bash-Hamba underscored the emotional ties that compelled Muslims to protest against what they perceived to be a great injustice. “In Tunisia, as well as almost everywhere, the current war has impacted Muslims emotionally. Could anyone, in all justice, ask us to remain impassive before the massacre of our Tripolitanian brothers?”¹¹⁸ Bash-Hamba was hardly an isolated voice. His plea was representative of many Tunisian

¹¹² “Les Musulmans d’Alger et les événements de Tunis,” *La Tunisie Française*, 14 November 1911.

¹¹³ “Souscription au profit des blessés victimes du conflit Italo-Turc,” *L’Islam*, 18 February 1912.

¹¹⁴ Benali Fékar, “Notre Loyalisme,” *L’Islam*, 25 February 1912.

¹¹⁵ Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders*, 85.

¹¹⁶ CADN, 1TU/1/V/990, Compte rendu analytique de la presse tunisienne, *La Zahra*, 6 April 1912.

¹¹⁷ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, Press Arabe Tunisien: “L’Union Islamique,” No. 4, 30 October 1911.

¹¹⁸ “Lettre de M. Bach Hamba,” *Le Temps*, 9 April 1912.

Muslims who took to the press and opened their pockets in support of the suffering Tripolitanian people.

Outpourings of Pan-Islamic sympathy were met with strong displays of support for Italy as Italian residents succumbed to the “sacred delirium” of Italian nationalism, according to Henri Tridon.¹¹⁹ In cities across the Regency, Italians antagonized Muslims, echoing the anti-Arab and Islamophobic sentiments heard in political speeches and the press. In October 1911, a group of drunk Italians drove a car through the Muslim neighborhoods of Bizerte shouting *Viva L'Italia!* and throwing vegetables at pedestrians. The incident left a “painful impression” on the local Muslims and resulted in formal complaints with the government, an official recorded.¹²⁰ In other places, violence was more overt. That November in Tabarka, an Italian named Manca Giovanni Raymondo fired three shots into cows belonging to a native Tunisian “without any plausible motive,” according to the police. That same month, an Italian resident, Scola Gasparo, fired shots at native seamen who were standing about the docks at the Tabarka port.¹²¹ In April, the cobbler Si Mohammed Chaouch and his assistant were pelted with stones by a group of Italians as they waited to catch a train at the Tunis station. Stone throwing appeared to be a favorite means of attack by rowdy Italians, *Al-Zuhra* noted, with many unprovoked incidents of stoning occurring. The attacks were indiscriminate, targeting children, women, and the elderly. Ben Sliman, a Muslim from Tunis, sustained injuries which proved fatal after a volley of stones was hurled at him by Italians shouting *Viva L'Italia!* “Animosity against the natives really exists among the Italians,” *Al-Zuhra* stated as it pleaded with the *Direction de la Sûreté* to take action against these perpetrators in order to “protect the Muslim population and put it at ease.”¹²²

Tunisian Muslims did not, however, plan to sit around and wait for the government to protect them. They staged demonstration and vented their anger in letters to the press. In October, boycotts were organized against Italian stores as part of an international campaign launched by Muslim activists to pressure European government into condemning the Italian occupation.¹²³ Taking note of the international dimensions of the protest, certain European journalists in Tunisia did not hesitate to attribute the boycotts to “Turkish emissaries.”¹²⁴ *La Tunisie Française* saw these same “Turkish emissaries” at work in a variety of

¹¹⁹ Henri Tridon, “L'Italie en Tripolitaine et le point de vue Français,” *La Tunisie Française*, 12 October 1912.

¹²⁰ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, Contrôleur Civil de Bizerte to Alapetite, 17 October 1911.

¹²¹ ANT, series E, carton 550, dossier 13/2, Contrôleur Civil suppléant, chef d'Annexe à Tarbaka to the Délégué à la Residence Générale, 30 November 1911.

¹²² CADN, 1TU/1/V/990, Compte rendu analytique de la press tunisienne, “Les attentats des Italiens,” *Zohra*, 15 April 1912.

¹²³ “L'agitation islamique,” *Le Temps*, 30 October 1911.

¹²⁴ “Effets de la Guerre Italo-Turque,” *La Tunisie Française*, 11 October 1911.

activities. They stirred up trouble in the streets, posted notices in public spaces condemning the war, and bullied Italian merchants.¹²⁵ The arrival of Red Crescent personnel in Sfax in early 1912 provided an occasion for mass demonstrations in favor of the Ottoman Empire that brought Tunisian loyalties into question.¹²⁶ Many of these stories took their subject matter if not their actual content from the Italian newspaper *L'Unione: Patria e Unione Riunite* run out of an office on the Avenue Jules Ferry in Tunis. Published in Tunisia, the Italian language paper was distributed in Algeria and southern Italy, giving it a broad influence among the Italian populations scattered about the Mediterranean. It was edited by Corrado Masi, a noted Italian nationalist and supporter of Italian colonial expansion whom French authorities suspected of being a paid agent of the Italian political bureau in Tripolitania.¹²⁷ By parroting the Italian press, French colonial journalists assisted in spreading its version of events.

When covering Muslim responses to the war, pro-European publicists like Henri Tridon sought to whip up anti-Muslim sentiments latent among the European Tunisian community. His paper *La Tunisie Française* made it clear it was important to stand by France's "Latin sister" and prevent Tunisian Muslims from impugning European states and spreading a hostile Pan-Islamic politic. "Today it is Italy which is targeted," Tridon claimed. "Tomorrow it will be France."¹²⁸ Muslim agitation could imperil France's position in North Africa and set a dangerous precedent for the future. "Latin solidarity" was the most effective bulwark against "Muslim solidarity," he believed.¹²⁹ These convictions freely bled into his journalistic coverage of Tunisian politics and society as the war continued. He printed stories hinting at the growing rebellious character of native protests, claiming Muslims were forming gangs, hunting down Italian in the streets, throwing stones, and firing guns. When Muslim protestors organized on the Avenue Bab-Djedid in February 1912, *La Tunisie Française* printed alarmist reports that "Ottomanism" was growing in Tunisia. "During these last years, we have allowed a Young Turk party to form and prosper in Tunisia which has for its program Islamic unity and does not bother to hide its clearly Turcophile tendencies."¹³⁰ Moreover, Tridon placed the blame for this rising unrest squarely on Gabriel Alapetite, who seemed to be doing nothing to stop the slide into the abyss. "The Resident General is responsible," he charged, "that man who is never there when we die of cholera or are beaten in the streets but who afterward

¹²⁵ "Et Maintenant, assez!" *La Tunisie Française*, 19 October 1911.

¹²⁶ "Le Croissant Rouge à Sfax," *La Tunisie Française*, 9 February 1912.

¹²⁷ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, "Note: Sûreté Publique," 6 December 1919.

¹²⁸ "Et Maintenant, assez!" *La Tunisie Française*, 19 October 1911.

¹²⁹ Henri Tridon, *La Tunisie Française et le commissaire du gouvernement: les interpellations tunisiennes* (Tunis: Imprimerie de la Tunisie Française, 1913), 16.

¹³⁰ "La Manifestation Turcophile du 4 février 1912," *La Tunisie Française*, 6 February 1912.

defends his place in Paris and all the advantages derived from it.”¹³¹ According to Tridon, the Libyan war demanded “a strong and guarded policy” from the government against this Ottomanism slowly creeping into the protectorate.¹³²

Hysterical warnings against Ottoman subversion and Pan-Islamic violence were designed to sow fear and convince the government that the European community was a faithful pillar of support and the best guarantee of French rule in the Regency. However, the intended effect of this message went far beyond expectations. Taking in the accounts of streets brawls and Muslim gangs firing pistols, European residents flew into a panic. In late 1911, residents of Sfax expressed their concerns to local authorities that they feared being subject to attacks from Muslims in the area. The civil controller wrote to the Resident General conveying this unease and believed that providing a military presence in the region would stifle any notions of native violence that might exist. However, he also floated the idea of having 100 guns distributed to isolated colonists for self-defense. While he assured at the moment all was clam in the area, he feared that “one day or another an insignificant quarrel between two individuals could degenerate into a more serious brawl and bring about unfortunate events.”¹³³ If Tridon and his ilk were set on exploiting fears of native retaliation, others attempted to keep Tunisian society from going over the edge. In early 1912, the newspaper *La Tunisien* called for “a strong dose of sang-froid and self-control” among Muslims and Italians living in the colony before ethnic and religious conflicts boiled over into all-out war.¹³⁴

Keeping the peace in Tunisia posed a formidable challenge as discord between Muslims and Italian nationals roiled the protectorate. The French government might have declared itself neutral in the war for Libya, but it was clear that neutrality did not necessarily insulate the French Empire from the conflict raging on its eastern border. Despite efforts to contain the conflict, the Libyan war spilled over into Tunisia and played itself out in communitarian battles that frayed the social fabric of the protectorate. As trans-imperial movements like Pan-Islamism and Italian nationalism agitated the region, the French government persistently found itself caught in the crossfire. Communitarian violence exposed just how easily trans-imperial flows could be converted into trans-politics as the colonies were dragged into the orbit of exterior political struggles. For alarmed colonists and officials on the ground, it appeared the protectorate might be coming apart at the seams.

¹³¹ Henri Tridon, “Une Journée sanglante,” *La Tunisie Française*, 8 November 1911.

¹³² “La Manifestation Turcophile du 4 février 1912,” *La Tunisie Française*, 6 February 1912.

¹³³ CADN, 1TU/1/V/998, Contrôleur Civil de Sfax to Delegué à la Residence Générale, 3 December 1911.

¹³⁴ “Conseils de sagesse,” *La Tunisien*, 8 February 1912.

Imperial Crucible

Speaking in 1908, René Millet gave an optimistic assessment of French empire-building, noting that sound policies and the promotion of civilized values were creating an imperial community bound in common unity. “For us,” he proclaimed, “it is a subject of legitimate pride to see that our country is capable of grouping around its flag these religions, races, and diverse interests for the greater good of the country.”¹³⁵ Within three years, however, events occurring in Morocco and the Ottoman Empire revealed just how fragile this supposed imperial community was. Nationalism, Pan-Islamism, and Ottomanism exposed the fault lines running through France’s imperial edifice as Muslims took up Pan-Islamic platforms and Italians succumbed to a revived nationalist fervor generated by war and conquest in Libya. These cross-border currents exerted a destabilizing force on France’s North African territories, fracturing communities and engendering conflicts that colonial authorities were compelled to contain. While Millet spoke confidently of the unity that empire fostered in 1908, a politician like Lucien Hubert had already been able to see what events like the Young Turk revolution might portend for the future. “The people of Islam look fervently toward Constantinople,” Hubert wrote that autumn. “This attempt at patriotic revolution, at resistance through a progressive evolution to the encroachment of Europe is followed passionately by every observer.”¹³⁶

The empire was always subject to the trans-imperial flows and movements that coursed through the Mediterranean, indicating that events in one empire had the potential to unfold in others. The Young Turk revolution was played out in Parisian newspaper offices and banquet halls as it unfolded in Istanbul. French advances into Morocco encouraged the formation of radical paramilitary organizations in Cairo. Militarized conflict in Libya spilled over into neighboring Tunisia and Algeria, producing humanitarian campaigns and political debates that were linked to wider international events. These details testified to the imperial and popular politics that grew out of trans-imperial connections forged through migrations and networks. Just as empire-builders pressed cross-border networks into service to expand their imperium, those repelling imperialism did likewise. The forms of trans-politics that emerged in the early twentieth century exposed the porous nature of imperial borders as well as the emotional and ideological ties that challenged territorialized notions of sovereignty and state jurisdiction.

Authorities might point the blame at foreign influences like Pan-Islamism but looking elsewhere failed to acknowledge why exactly such ideas could find fertile

¹³⁵ “Discourse de M. Millet,” in Charles Depincé, ed., *Congrès de L’Afrique du Nord: Compte Rendu des Travaux* (Paris: Comité d’Organisation du Congrès, 1909), 1: 69.

¹³⁶ Lucien Hubert, “La Crise Balkanique,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 2 (15 October 1908), 37.

soil in French colonial territories to begin with. Observing the situation as it played out in 1912, the writer Espé de Metz realized that Pan-Islamism among French Muslim subjects amounted to support for the Ottoman Empire and Young Turks, in reality. “The truth is they are passionately *turcophiles*, and by *turcophiles* it is necessary to understand that they are partisans of the movement which, casting off the tyranny of old, has revolutionized Turkey,” he claimed.¹³⁷ As CUP revolutionaries bolstered their program of Muslim modernization and freedom, Muslims across the world were taking heed in light of their own circumstances. “Our natives are not anti-French because of Pan-Islamism, but they are *Turcophiles because they are discontented*,” Espé de Metz insisted.¹³⁸ His critique was incisive and signaled an important issue when it came to the sustainability of France’s North African empire. Was combating the allure of trans-imperial influences dependent upon reforming colonial injustices and integrating natives into a French North African community as equals? This question was one among many as officials and reformers reflected on how to address the troubles afflicting France’s North African imperial domain.

¹³⁷ G. Espé de Metz, “Le Panislamisme et les batons flottants,” *La Presse Coloniale*, 10 September 1912, in G. Espé de Metz, *Vers l’Empire* (Paris: Librairie Ambert, 1913), 62–63.

¹³⁸ Espé de Metz, *Vers l’Empire*, 67.

6

Imagining French North Africa

In the spring of 1914, French newspapers across the empire drew attention to one Captain Reimbert of the Algerian aviation squad. An early forerunner in the development of military aviation, France was experimenting with the use of airplanes in its colonial territories for defense. That March, Reimbert was ordered to travel by car from Morocco to Tunisia assessing potential landing sites for military aircrafts along route. Two months earlier, the French stunt flyer and aviation pioneer, Marc Pourpe, had successfully made an airmail flight from Cairo to Khartoum which drew international acclaim. Journalists believed that the planned flight from Tunisia to Morocco would be even more spectacular, as the planes would be passing “across all French North Africa, from Tunis to Casablanca.”¹ In the end, the squadron only traveled between Tunis and Oujda just over the Moroccan border. The slightly abbreviated flight pattern did nothing to dampen public enthusiasm for the feat, however, with newspapers praising “this remarkable raid” of over 1,400 miles.² The flight was notable as an early achievement in French aviation, but it also indicated a relatively new outlook in the French popular imagination. Journalists praised the mission as one of the first attempts to traverse “French North Africa” in its entirety. Up in the air, military pilots gazed upon the expanse of France’s impressive empire, providing the public with a spectacle that offered a sense of the geographic and spatial definition bounding a “French” North Africa extending from Casablanca to the eastern edges of Tunisia.

The notion of “French North Africa” was relatively new and had acquired saliency as France expanded its colonial reach into Morocco. The “natural movement of conquest,” as René Millet claimed, had secured French domination across the bloc of Muslim states extending from Morocco to the Libyan frontier.³ With threats from outside destabilizing the empire in the early twentieth century, critics and officials seemed increasingly eager to speak of “French North Africa” in its entirety. The Muslim Mediterranean was shaped by networks and connections that bled across borders and formed part of an imagined Muslim cosmopolis. It consisted of cultural and social ties connecting multiple centers that resisted territorialized ideas of sovereignty. Yet French North Africa was an imperial space.

¹ “En vue de traversée de l’Afrique,” *Le Journal*, 22 March 1914.

² Terryn, “Une Randonnée Fantastique de l’escadille aérienne du Sahara,” *Excelsior*, 7 May 1914.

³ Millet, *La Conquête du Maroc*, 1.

It was imagined as a geographic and territorialized entity bounded by political borders. The cross-border connections and migrations that constantly exasperated colonial authorities constituted a “struggle over geography,” to use Edward Said’s phrase.⁴ Through texts and images, critics came to imagine North Africa as a “French” space, imprinting a specific cultural identity on the territory.⁵ These imaginative undertakings mentally sealed off the Maghreb from the outside, providing a conceptual framework for further administrative and political definition as authorities attempted to combat the pull of centrifugal movements like Pan-Islamism and demarcate the boundaries of its North African empire.

Yet what did the French mean when they spoke of “North Africa”? The answer was contingent. In 1860, Jules Gérard, a military explorer known popularly as “the lion killer,” published his work *LAfrique du Nord* with the aim of “making known North Africa in all its aspects.” His book gave an account of the region’s topography, people, and history. The only problem was the volume covered primarily Algeria with a single chapter on Morocco.⁶ Forty years later, the colonial engineer Émile Gauthrone’s book of the same title included Algeria and Tunisia.⁷ During the 1880s, Jean Ernest Mercier, a former military interpreter and academic at the School of Letters in Algiers, produced a history of North Africa focused on *Bérberie*, which established a larger geographical framework encompassing the entire southern Mediterranean from the Nile to the Atlantic inhabited by a nominally “Berber” race.⁸ Building upon these foundations, by the early twentieth century “North Africa” had been revised yet again. In 1908, the professor of geography Henri Lorin claimed that North Africa was a “natural region” defined by geography and common environmental traits. Yet his conception of the region was clearly political, encompassing Algeria, Tunisia, and now Morocco.⁹ The authors of the book *Our Colonial Empire* published two years later had similar ideas on the naturalness of this concept. “North Africa—if one leaves aside Tripolitania and Egypt—forms a natural region very clearly characterized and very distinct from the rest of Africa.”¹⁰ This imaginative geography was even mapped onto the distant past. In 1913, Stéphane Gsell, professor at the Collège de France, categorized “North Africa” within a familiar imperial geography when examining the period from the pre-Roman era to the Arab conquest. “The

⁴ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 6.

⁵ See: Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles, eds., *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Denis Cosgrove, *Geographical Imagination and the Authority of Images* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006).

⁶ Jules Gérard, *LAfrique du Nord* (Paris: É. Dentu, 1860), 1.

⁷ Émile Gauthrone, *LAfrique du Nord: Algérie et Tunisie* (Algiers: Giralt, 1899).

⁸ Jean Ernest Mercier, *Histoire de l’Afrique septentrionale (Bérberie) depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu’à la conquête française* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1888).

⁹ Henri Lorin, *LAfrique du Nord: Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1908).

¹⁰ Henri Busson, Joseph Fèvre, and Henri Hauser, *Notre Empire Colonial* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1910), 17.

country... extends, in the north, between the Straits of Gibraltar to the extreme north-east of Tunisia; in the south, between the Anti-Atlas and the Gulf of Gabès," he insisted. "To designate [this area] we use the conventional term North Africa."¹¹

This imperial geography even crept into the education curriculum across the nation. In 1910, the study guide given to students taking the *agrégation* at the Université de Lyon listed under the heading of "General Geology" the subject "North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Sahara)."¹² In a similar vein, the geographer Albert Métin demarcated Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco as a single "Africa minor" located in the north of the continent in his textbook written for primary school students.¹³ A second textbook written by the director at the École Normale in Bouches-du-Rhône in 1913 on the "Elementary Geography of North Africa" only saw fit to treat the three French colonies. The rationale for this decision was by now a conventional one: "Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, separated politically, form a natural region called North Africa." This region was "clearly delimited" by nature as it was by history, the book informed students.¹⁴ "North Africa" was always an imperial concept in the French imagination, one that changed as the French Empire expanded.¹⁵

Dry history books and lectures given to scholarly societies were not the only sources informing conceptions of French North Africa. Colonial travel helped flesh out the concept of North Africa as writers provided accounts of trips to Algeria, Tunisia, and later Morocco, creating the framework for imagining a comprehensive geographic space shaped through tourist itineraries, travel routes, and familiar landmarks. Magazines and periodicals also had a part to play in this imaginative process, often providing more appealing forums that reached wider audiences. By the twentieth century, publications like *Mauritania* and *L'Afrique du Nord Illustré* covered stories relevant to the three North African colonies, offering readers slick layouts and photographs that brought the idea of a "French" North Africa to life. Printed in Algiers, they featured articles with titles like "Tunisian Life" and "On Campaign in Morocco" that chronicled daily life in the colonies covering everything from yacht racing to military parades and public celebrations. Started in 1906, *L'Afrique du Nord Illustré* was a veritable pioneer in the new genre of colonial reportage. The editors eschewed "pure and simple reporting," offering readers a stylish publication that attracted a wide readership over its thirty-year publishing run.¹⁶ It featured works of fiction and poetry, exposés on colonial tourism, fashion advice, and even provided updates on local

¹¹ Stéphane Gsell, *Histoire Ancienne de L'Afrique du Nord* (Paris: Hachette, 1913), 1: 1.

¹² *Annuaire de l'Université de Lyon: livret de l'étudiant* (Lyon: A. Rey, 1909), 230.

¹³ Albert Métin, *Cours de géographie* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1912), 176.

¹⁴ A. Gleyze, *Géographie Élémentaire de L'Afrique du Nord: Maroc, Algérie, Tunisie* (Marseille: Ferran Jeune, 1913), 1–2.

¹⁵ Florence Deprest, "Découper le Maghreb: Deux géographies coloniales antagonistes (1902–1937)," *Mappemonde*, 91:3 (2008): 1–13.

¹⁶ Gaucher Mahiet, "Une Soirée mémorable," *L'Afrique de Nord Illustré*, 60:3 (18 January 1908), 2.

sporting events like the auto racing clubs popular in Algeria and the Tunis Croquet-Tennis Club. Columns also gave in depth coverage of the many balls and cultural events hosted in Algiers. Despite being a society magazine, *L'Afrique du Nord Illustré* did have an underlying message to convey. In its panoramic coverage of colonial social life, it focused attention on "Algiers, the intellectual and artistic capital of North Africa."¹⁷ Readers were encouraged to consider the city as a new regional center rather than a colonial periphery, anchoring growing perceptions of North Africa as a French social and cultural space.

Judging from its advertisements, *L'Afrique du Nord Illustré* had a primarily Algerian readership, despite coverage dedicated to Morocco and Tunisia. Yet the image of Algiers the magazine projected was a powerful one and had an influence on the way French imperial ideologues and European colonists were coming to understand their empire. In 1908, when a speaker requested funds for improving public services in the city from the municipal council of Algiers, he proudly noted that such amenities were essential to preserve Algiers's status as "the capital of North Africa."¹⁸ The travel writer and member of the French Geographic Society Eugène Gallois came to a similar conclusion in 1912 when drafting a report on the port cities along the south Mediterranean littoral. Given its high volume of trade and its popularity as a travel destination, Algiers was clearly the "capital of French North Africa," he claimed.¹⁹ While the citizens of Algiers took pride in their city's new status as an imperial capital, this identity was always a reference point in a larger mental map.

As it appeared Morocco was set to become a new protectorate in the early twentieth century, colonial officialdom and lobby groups gave more serious thought to what a French North Africa would entail. "Morocco truly completes the French work in North Africa," as Lucien Hubert stated, "at first politically and territorially because it gives us mastery of the entire Muslim bloc, next administratively and economically because it will profit from our earlier experience and constitute a unity."²⁰ Such ideas motivated the *Union Coloniale Française*, which in 1908 sponsored a four-day *Congrès de l'Afrique du Nord* in Paris. As with colonial congresses in the past, the event brought together business interests, colonial publicists, and officials.²¹ The event attracted the top brass from Algeria and Tunisia, with Gabriel Alapetite, Charles Jonnart, and René Millet all in attendance. The specific theme of the congress indicated that colonial officialdom was coming to think in terms of a broader North African bloc, an idea which the congress was

¹⁷ R. D'Artenac, "Les Oeuvres destinées au Musée Alger," *L'Afrique de Nord Illustré*, 64:3 (15 February 1908), 4.

¹⁸ *Bulletin Municipal Officiel de la ville d'Alger*, 263:11 (20 January 1908), 25.

¹⁹ Eugène Gallois, "Les Ports de l'Afrique Française du Nord," Séance 7 December 1911, *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Lille* (1912), 268.

²⁰ Lucien Hubert, *Une Politique Coloniale: Le Sault par les colonies* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1918), 152.

²¹ J. Anmdrieu, "Le Congrès Colonial," *Journal Général de l'Algérie et la Tunisie*, 8 October 1908.

certainly meant to encourage. The president of the *Union Coloniale*, Joseph Chailley, set the tone in his opening address, urging the importance of studying France's North African territories collectively. "For the first time, we are going to envisage them as a single colony or as a group of colonial possessions... that we can see as comparable," he claimed.²² Participants concurred. Over the next four days, speakers waxed lyrical on the future of "our North Africa," proposing economic and political policies intended to integrate Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia on a large scale. At one point, the Tunisian colonist Paul Ducroquet went as far as to argue that "North Africa is one settler colony where 800,000 European colonists are scattered across an enormous surface."²³

These latest assessments marked a new departure in the collective imagining of North Africa. The region had always been an imperial construct, but French critics were now insisting on the need to transform this imaginative geography into a political reality. This task would require more than textbooks and flashy magazines to will it into existence. It necessitated a concerted and determined effort on the part of politicians and colonial officials to create the administrative machinery essential to governing the North African empire in its entirety.

A Bushel of Thorns

Calls for greater integration were a response to the convoluted administrative structures that directed France's North African domain. No uniform imperial policy existed. African territories were subject to different ministerial oversight. Algeria, annexed to the nation, was placed under the ministry of the interior. The foreign affairs ministry held the portfolios for the Tunisian protectorate. Morocco, still in the process of being conquered, was governed through a power sharing arrangement between the ministry of war and the ministry of foreign affairs. On various occasions, the African territories also liaised with the Ministry of the Colonies responsible primarily for the overseas French territories. Considering the different jurisdictional bodies that governed the region, each territory had its own idiosyncratic regime.

As France's first colony in the Maghreb, Algeria had been conquered by the military and the land opened to wide-scale European settlement. With an entrenched settler community living amidst a large indigenous population, conflict was unavoidable and deep-rooted resentments lingered on both sides. The colonial government retained a near pathological suspicion of the native Muslims, whom they believed liable to revolt and wreak havoc at a moment's

²² "Discours de M. J. Chailley," in Depincé, *Congrès de L'Afrique du Nord*, 1: 8.

²³ Paul Ducroquet, "Réflexions au service militaire des indigènes," in Depincé, *Congrès de L'Afrique du Nord*, 2: 132.

notice. Heavy surveillance, harsh punishments for infractions, and practices of collective responsibility to discipline native communities were all part of an Algerian system designed to enforce and preserve French rule.²⁴ The European settler population had little desire to alter these structures and were in a strong position to exercise influence over colonial policy. With the three Algerian provinces of Oran, Algiers, and Constantine designated as French departments, Algerians had representatives in the National Assembly. They could express their grievances to the public and vote on laws that directly benefited their position in the colony. They also enjoyed local representative institutions weighted in favor of the European electorate over natives. In every respect, the Algerian civil administration was a colonial regime *par excellence*. It allowed a small but vocal European minority to dominate and exploit a native populace subject to egregious inequalities in taxes and political rights and cowed into submission through the *Indigénat*.²⁵

As a rule, settlers were averse to talk of “reform,” fearing it might endanger the colonial system from which they benefited. They persistently demanded that natives assimilate to European social and economic norms and were averse to any state efforts to accommodate Islam in the colony. If the government attempted to deter further colonization out of fears it might generate conflicts over land and resources, colonists lashed out in the press and pressured officials to expand European landholdings. Assimilation and colonization remained the lynchpin of “French Algeria” as it was understood by the settlers, and they were never reluctant to defend their vision of *Algérie Française* when it appeared under threat. While the Algerian General Government was largely unsympathetic to the plight of Algerian natives, the insistence of the settler community created problems that the government could not ignore. Time and time again, the inequalities of the Algerian system came to light, drawing criticisms from metropolitans horrified by the poor conditions under which natives lived or the reckless ways in which the colonial regime flouted basic republican ideals of justice and equality.²⁶ Yet at every turn, settlers mobilized their base and thwarted any hope of remedying the situation. Settlers constantly strong-armed the administration, forcing it into a defensive crouch every time it looked as though the metropole might prove amenable to modifying the Colonial Republic.

In establishing the Tunisian protectorate in the 1880s, officials had largely hoped to avoid creating a second Algeria. The government had little desire to set up a centralized Bureau of Native Affairs or deal with the incessant complaints of land hungry settlers. This preference was first and foremost a matter of money,

²⁴ Trumbull III, *An Empire of Facts*, 7–21; Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa*, 20–21.

²⁵ Laure Blévis, “Les Avatars de la citoyenneté en Algérie colonial ou les paradoxes d’une catégorisation,” *Droit et Société*, 48 (2001): 557–80; Gilbert Doho, *Le Code de l’Indigénat, ou le fondement des États autocratiques en Afrique francophone* (Paris: Harmattan, 2017).

²⁶ Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France*, 1: 438–55.

with legislators seeking to eschew the costly administrative expenses of running native institutions and retaining a strong military presence on the ground.²⁷ The protectorate amounted to empire on the cheap, or at least French authorities thought it did. In light of these concerns, the Tunisian government was to be free of “Algerian prejudices,” as Paul Cambon argued. “There exist profound differences between Tunisia and Algeria, not only from the perspective of a system of colonization, but also and especially from the perspective of the character of the natives and their degree of civilization.”²⁸ Rather than getting bogged down in efforts to assimilate Muslims and manage colonial settlements, Cambon favored a lighter touch. Others were inclined to agree. As the Algerian legal official Louis Khoudja remarked, Tunisia would “benefit from the imprudence and faults committed in Algeria.”²⁹

Despite these differences, the various African administrations were hardly hermetic enclaves and demonstrated a fair amount of interdependence when necessary. Colonial officials cooperated on a variety of issues, not least of all the tribal networks that cut across colonial boundaries. In 1904, the Algerian government had few reservations expressing concerns to the West African governorate regarding military operations undertaken in the Sahara where the Arab Chaamba tribal confederation was being used to suppress Tuareg groups in northern Mauritania.³⁰ These policies, Jonnart feared, could generate ethnic conflicts among the Chaamba and Tuareg populations along Algeria’s south-west border. He therefore urged a policy of moderation, remarking, “Our two great colonies of Algeria and Western Africa are going to find themselves in immediate contact and will be called, in a very near future, to take a common policy with regard to the overlapping populations of both their territories.”³¹ Tunisian–Algerian border authorities also took a collective approach when it came to tribes like the Chaamba and Gherib which spanned the two territories. It was not uncommon that tribal elders worked in conjunction with the Tunisian civil controllers and Algerian Bureau of Native Affairs to resolve issues relevant to missing people or tribal disputes.³² On the whole, local officials did not seem overly territorial when it came to these types of border issues. In 1902, when Brahim Ben Hamadi Ben Kherida of the Chaamba murdered an officer in the Arab Bureau in Algeria, authorities freely crossed the border into Tunisia while conducting their

²⁷ Lewis, *Divided Rule*, 62–63; Julia Clancy-Smith, “Islam and the French Empire in North Africa,” in Motadel, *Islam and the European Empires*, 93–94.

²⁸ AN 20020495/21, Cambon to Ferry, 9 August 1884.

²⁹ Louis Khoudja, *La Question indigène: à la Commission du Sénat* (Vienne: Imprimerie L. Girard, 1891), 61.

³⁰ Douglas Porch, *The Conquest of the Sahara: A History* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984), 252–53.

³¹ ANOM, AOF/IV/4, Governor General of Algeria to Minister of the Colonies, 30 May 1904.

³² ANT, Series A, Carton 237, dossier 10, Général de Division Leclerc, commandant la division d’occupation de Tunisie to Résident Général, 9 December 1897.

investigation without incident.³³ When it was proposed in 1916 that changes in administrative procedure be made to facilitate cooperation and information sharing among Algerian communes and Tunisian civil controllers along the border, some questioned if official changes were in fact needed. According to the civil controller in Thala, the border did not pose “any hindrance” to cooperation and “no longer had importance other than delimiting administrative districts,” in his opinion.³⁴ The two administrations already worked closely together on minor issues such as surveillance and animal theft, making any reforms otiose.

The Moroccan invasion similarly indicated the extent to which cross-border collaboration was becoming routine by the early twentieth century. Officials drew upon manpower from Algeria and Tunisia to suppress resistance. Some saw the deployment of native forces within the Armée d’Afrique as an opportunity to bolster sentiments of imperial patriotism and highlighted demonstrations of native loyalty to the French.³⁵ When troops departed from Philippeville, Algeria in 1908, *L’Afrique du Nord Illustré* printed photos of large crowds congregating on the docks and noted the lively “enthusiasm” of both troops and spectators. There was little doubt, the magazine stated, that the troops would “maintain the glorious name of the *Chasseurs d’Afrique* before the enemy.”³⁶ Not all officials agreed that dispatching Muslim forces to quell the Moroccan resistance was a good idea, with some warning of the consequences that might result from introducing Muslim soldiers to Morocco’s conservative brand of Islam.³⁷ Nevertheless, native forces did contribute, as did other colonial contingents. Algeria furnished several administrators and “technical agents” to assist in setting up the native administration under Lyautey. Tunisia dispatched civil controllers and officials “particularly specialized in questions of estate and finance” to assist.³⁸ In pacifying Morocco, the government clearly used the expertise of its entire colonial administration. For this reason, it was not surprising that the Moroccan administration would share many institutional features with its colonial neighbors.³⁹

Administrative cooperation and integration were not, however, without their obstacles. Officials considering the big picture occasionally found that local interests could complicate expectations. Financial assessors and municipal legislators in the colonies were guarded when it came to budgetary issues. Fundamental questions regarding tariffs, planning, and who exactly would pay for what posed stumbling blocks that exposed tensions running through France’s North African

³³ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1212, General of the Division of la Bégassière to Resident General, 17 May 1902.

³⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1212, Contrôleur civil de Thala to Alapetite, 7 March 1916.

³⁵ “Les Affaires Marocaine,” *L’Afrique de Nord Illustré*, 70:3 (28 March 1908), 4.

³⁶ “Embarquement de Troupes à Philippeville,” *L’Afrique de Nord Illustré*, 60:3 (18 January 1908), 9.

³⁷ Millet, *La Conquête du Maroc*, 162.

³⁸ AN 475 AP 111, “Sur l’organisation du personnel des divers services au protectorate” (15 July 1914), 35–36.

³⁹ Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco*, 79–85.

territories. In 1899, for example, Algerian legislators complained that Tunisia, as a protectorate, was not subject to the same French tariffs, effectively making foreign goods cheaper across the border and undercutting Algerian producers.⁴⁰ Others worried whether Tunisia would divert state funds away from Algerian projects. A score of new issues arose as Algerian colonists were forced to consider how a Tunisian protectorate on their eastern border would impact the regional economy or how new strategic considerations across Tunisia and southern Morocco might influence government assessments of infrastructure and transport.

In 1909, a heated dispute over access to resources in the mountainous Ouenza region on the Algerian–Tunisian border revealed just how divisive these issues could be in certain cases. Plans had been made to build a rail line linking the Algerian port of Bône to Ouenza, giving Bône a veritable monopoly over the mineral and iron deposits located in the mountains. The problem was that citizens in the Tunisian port city of Bizerte had been expecting access to these same resources as part of a plan to expand the port and fuel local commercial growth. When the government proposed building two sets of rail lines that would give both cities access to the deposits, the citizens of Bône “rose up in a furious protest” and petitioned the government.⁴¹ The border was ambiguous, with each side claiming mining rights over Ouenza. Fearing that shared access to the deposits would undercut Algerian trade, the Algerian deputies sitting in the National Assembly applied pressure on the government in Paris to have the Bizerte–Ouenza line jettisoned. The civil controller in Bizerte wrote to the Tunisian administration, alerting the Resident General that the people of Bizerte “have not hidden their fears of seeing this question decided by the chamber in favor of Algeria to the detriment of Bizerte.”⁴² Spurred into action, citizens in Bizerte formed an interest group—the *Union de Défence*—and pushed their campaign in the Tunisian press. They were also willing to make their voice known in the National Assembly if necessary and formed a small delegation to petition Paris.⁴³ By 1914, the issue remained unsettled, with Bône continuing to uphold its demands for exclusive rights to Ouenza and Bizerte urging the government to reconsider the issue.

While officials spoke of French North Africa in the abstract, reconciling competing interests at the local level was not always easy. Questions concerning authority and jurisdictional prerogative were not absent either, especially as talk of French North Africa provoked suggestions of establishing a unitary administration for the region. In late 1911, Paul Bluysen, a deputy from French India, floated the idea of creating a comprehensive North African ministry to oversee the three colonial territories. As a representative of the small French

⁴⁰ *Gouvernement Général de l'Algérie: Délégations Financières Algériennes*, Session November 1899 (Algiers: Galmiche, 1899), 264–65.

⁴¹ CADN, 1TU/1/V/325, “La Question de l'Ouenza,” 16 August 1909.

⁴² CADN, 1TU/1/V/325, Còntroleur civil de Bizerte to Alapetite, 9 March 1910.

⁴³ CADN, 1TU/1/V/325, Petition to the Chambers by the Citizens of Bizerte, 10 November 1909.

colony on the Asian subcontinent, Bluysen was a political outlier in many respects. Yet siding with the Radicals in the National Assembly following his election in 1910, he was determined to play an active role in steering foreign and colonial affairs. The North African question was just the opportunity to give a French representative from Pondicherry a political presence in the metropole, and he approached the issue with alacrity. "The leading voices in the parliament are favorable to it, the major newspapers are fascinated with the idea and speak of it frequently," he claimed. The three North African colonies were so inextricably "entangled," Bluysen believed, that keeping each of the territories under a different ministerial portfolio made little sense.⁴⁴ In general, many agreed with Bluysen, although his specific proposal for a North African ministry remained a hard sell. Critics questioned whether entirely rearranging the existing administrative structures of the colonies was wise.⁴⁵ Bluysen even encountered resistance among his own Radical cohorts. The deputy Adolphe Messimy rejected the idea outright. He agreed that the administration of Africa was "absurd," but he did not see what adding yet another ministry to this mix would accomplish save for more bureaucratic procedure that would most likely impede colonial government.⁴⁶

Bluysen himself realized there was little consensus when it came to the nuts and bolts of managing French North Africa as a bloc. Moreover, he was not obtuse enough to think political elites in the national parliament were the primary obstacle to his plan. Bluysen understood that the Algerian government had reservations about the proposal. The new Governor General, Charles Lutaud, was guarded when it came to relinquishing authority. Should a future North African government be established, he was demanding full powers to appoint all the administrative portfolios, effectively ensuring Algerian predominance over French North African affairs. Barring this outcome, he was loath to subject the Algerian administration to outside influences that might destabilize the delicate situation between European settlers and natives in the colony. There was also the question of how to deal with the fact that Algeria was the only colony to have deputies in the National Assembly and how its special arrangement with the metropole would influence the creation of a colonial ministry. If a North African government was indeed established, Algeria would have to accept some level of oversight from a joint colonial administration, and Bluysen was uncertain whether the Algerian government would agree to these measures.⁴⁷

The French government was not ignorant of these tensions. In fact, as Bluysen was building support for his proposal, the government was already getting a taste

⁴⁴ "La Nécessité de créer un Ministère de l'Afrique du Nord," *Le Miroir*, 2 August 1914.

⁴⁵ See for example: Louis Baillon, "Création d'un sous-secrétariat d'état de l'Afrique du Nord au Ministère des Colonies," *Comité Nationale des Conseillers du Commerce Extérieur de la France: Bulletin Mensuel*, 84:7 (May 1914), 315–20.

⁴⁶ "L'Afrique Française," *Le Sémaphore Algérien*, 17 April 1914.

⁴⁷ "Ministère de l'Afrique du Nord," *L'Islam*, 11 February 1913.

of the problems that North African integration could pose. With the Libyan war and rise of Pan-Islamic activism destabilizing North Africa, the government decided to form a *Commission Interministérielle des Affaires Musulmanes* in Paris to discuss issues relevant to Islam and the colonies. The body was composed of academics and officials representing Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and the Ministry of the Colonies. Jean Gout, who would later serve as deputy director of the Asia Department in the foreign ministry, was selected to preside over the commission and arbitrate between members. Although committed to hashing out a comprehensive *politique musulmane* for the empire, the commission could not avoid the thorny issues that collective colonial government presented. From the start, it was embroiled in debates over jurisdictional authority and how best to frame a comprehensive North African policy.

The evident shortcomings of native administration were plain to see. Colonial officials typically had an unsatisfactory understanding of North Africa's population, and in certain instances did not even possess a working knowledge of Arabic. Jean-Baptiste Marchand, a seasoned African military official, placed the blame on recruitment policies, insisting training did not encourage specialized knowledge of the area and people. Officials would spend five or six years in the colonies before moving on, he explained, while officers in the Algerian Native Bureau tended to enter their posts at high-ranking positions rather than working their way up through the administration. As a result, they usually lacked the kind of detailed knowledge of the colonial environment developed through work in the field. The situation was unsatisfactory, in Marchand's view. The North African colonies required "a corps of functionaries closely attached to the environment where their careers will be carried out."⁴⁸ To this end, he proposed setting up a specialized North African section at the *École Coloniale* in Paris, the premier institution established in 1885 responsible for training future colonial administrators. Providing a "common education," the curriculum would include Arabic instruction, courses on North African geography, and cover subjects on Islamic studies in order to mold a cadre of North African officials that could be deployed across Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia at will.

The idea received broad approval, with committee members noting the utility of possessing a specific contingent of North African officials to run the empire. The guiding intentions behind the proposal were, however, subject to dispute. According to Émile-Félix Gautier, a geographer and ethnologist sitting on the commission, the plan had the added benefit of creating a staff of imperial administrators possessing a conspicuous "metropolitan mentality." It would not only assist in the process of imperial integration, he argued, but also combat

⁴⁸ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, "Note sur le projet de création d'une section de l'Afrique du Nord à l'École Coloniale" (31 October 1912), 76.

“local” influences that acted against such integration.⁴⁹ It was hard not to see Gautier’s remarks as a veiled criticism of the Algerian administration. Suggestions of training officials in Paris and instilling them with the proper “metropolitan mentality” were a direct affront to the perceived Algerian “localism” and “prejudice” that many colonial ideologues believed detrimental to the empire.⁵⁰

The proposal to recruit through the *École Coloniale* was bound to touch a sensitive nerve. Lutaud had previously indicated his unwillingness to compromise when it came to questions of additional administrative oversight. If there was to be a North African ministry, Algeria would be the one calling the shots. This position entailed, without question, controlling recruitment procedures and ensuring the Algerian model was the *modus operandi* for the colonies. On this issue no ground could be ceded, lest the Algerian government find itself staffed by a new generation of officers trained abroad and inspired by principles at odds with the current native policy in place. At the next committee meeting, the Algerian representative made known Lutaud’s wishes “to institute in Algiers a single school for the three countries” in addition to any instruction that might be offered through the *École Coloniale* in Paris.⁵¹ A counterproposal drawn up by Octave Dupont called for a School of Native Affairs at the Université d’Alger with a curriculum “utilizing all the elements to the grand profit of our domination not only in Algeria but in all of North Africa.” The objective, as he saw it, was to foster a “unity of views and doctrines regarding the governing and administration of North African natives.”⁵² Stated otherwise, the Algerian school would be the model for French North Africa. Any training that might be acquired in Paris would be offset by further training received in Algiers, making the *École Coloniale* inconsequential in the arrangement. It didn’t help that Algerian spokesmen pressed their case with boasts of Algeria’s privileged position when it came to all things North African. “It’s only natural that this recruitment school be established in Algeria which is the oldest of our establishments in North Africa and the most advanced on the path toward civilization at the same time,” Dupont smugly remarked.⁵³ Despite the grumbling of opponents, the Algerian proposal passed, leaving in doubt the future of a metropolitan North African policy.

Algerian insolence aside, for those supportive of the protectorate model, imposing Algerian administrative procedures on Tunisia or Morocco was nothing short of a recipe for disaster. It would upset the delicate balance between the

⁴⁹ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Procès-Verbal” (28 November 1912), 90.

⁵⁰ Sbaï, *La Politique Musulmane*, 33–35.

⁵¹ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Procès-Verbal” (30 January 1913), 95.

⁵² ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Note sur un double projet de création” (30 January 1913), 100–01.

⁵³ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Procès-Verbal” (27 June 1913), 137.

native and European communities and unquestionably invite resistance. They simply could not agree to the measure. Gautier reminded the commission that there was a unique “state of mind” in Tunisia that ran counter to the protocols and methods employed by the Algerian government. “Whatever the value of the professed course in Algiers,” he contended, “Tunisia will not recognize in any way the necessity of sending its candidates to attend lessons outside those that are given on site.”⁵⁴ Under no circumstances would Tunisian civil controllers be trained by officials steeped in the Algerian philosophy of colonial rule. Representatives from Morocco were equally hesitant to relinquish the protectorate to Algerian officialdom. While the head of the Moroccan bureau in the foreign affairs ministry, Jean Baptiste Cruchon-Dupeyrat, acknowledged “we could unify the cadre of personnel in all North Africa in a pinch,” it did not necessarily mean that the outcome was desirable.⁵⁵ In the end, Jean Gout gave up in frustration and deferred to the Moroccan position. “We should not confuse unity with uniformity,” he conceded. “Morocco is in a state of creation. It seeks its path and cannot be criticized for not taking the established path.”⁵⁶ The hope for a unitary administration had failed.

Imagining French North Africa proved eminently easier than giving it administrative shape. Internal power rivalries and competing opinions of how to govern North African populations presented stumbling blocks that proved insurmountable. Cross-border collaboration might exist among Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, but attempting to transform these informal relationships into an operative philosophy of government proved elusive. “The Maghreb appears at first sight like a bushel of thorns that pricks the hand that plunges into it,” René Millet once remarked.⁵⁷ It was a maxim that colonial authorities found to be all too true as they maneuvered through the thorny complexities of France’s colonial administrations seeking to give political definition to the idea of a French North Africa.

Toward a French Muslim North Africa?

Arguments over recruitment and jurisdictional authority were never divorced from a more fundamental question: what was France’s relationship to its colonial Muslim subjects? This question lay at the heart of the disagreements over native policy that divided the inter-ministerial commission. It also divided many critics.

⁵⁴ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Procès-Verbal” (30 January 1913), 97–98.

⁵⁵ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Procès-Verbal” (31 October 1912), 71–72.

⁵⁶ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Procès-Verbal” (27 June 1913), 137.

⁵⁷ “Discourse de M. Millet,” in Depincé, *Congrès de L’Afrique du Nord*, 1: 69.

Writing in 1912, Joseph Chailley expressed doubts concerning the creation of a unitary North African administration. "Our North Africa is not homogenous," he stated. "What might work in Fez is not suitable for Tunis or Algiers." In Chailley's opinion, France's policies toward its Muslim subjects remained "too rudimentary." Trying to impose a single *politique musulmane* on the region threatened to transform policy into a "preachy doctrine" that could cause more damage than good.⁵⁸

Here lay the crux of the issue. North African integration was not simply a matter of smoothing over ministerial egos or finding the correct balance of administrative structures to accommodate the three territories. It entailed developing a comprehensive policy toward North African natives. Since the 1880s, colonial publicists had been touting the idea of France as a "Muslim power." Yet there was little agreement, if any, on what this phrase constituted. French administrators repeatedly assured Muslim subjects that French rule in no way inhibited the practice of their religion. Accommodating Islam was, as the Comité de l'Afrique Française declared in 1897, a veritable French colonial "tradition," without which rule in Muslim Africa would be impossible.⁵⁹ While this widely held assumption was repeated *ad infinitum* in declarations and policy statements, by the turn of the century analysts both within and outside the colonial administration were beginning to ask what this idiom entailed exactly. Did France have a comprehensive *politique musulmane* and if so, what was it? Any hope of shaping an integrated French North Africa hinged on this question.

These queries emerged at a pivotal moment as France was expanding its empire into West Africa. During the 1890s, colonial officials encountered populations which, although Muslim, were not necessarily Arab. A new generation of colonial theorists and administrators like Xavier Coppolani and William Ponty, the Governor General of French West Africa, began to forge relations with Sufi networks in the region and flesh out a full-scale "Islamic policy" independent of North Africa.⁶⁰ At the same time, advances into the Sudan revised conventional understandings of Islam as administrators grappled with questions of how best to accommodate *Islam Noir*, the form of "black Islam" popular in the region.⁶¹ Policy analysts like Robert Arnaud were convinced that Islam was the best means of directing policy. "Native policy in Africa is by necessity a *politique musulmane*," as he claimed in 1906.⁶² Yet the distinctiveness of Saharan society and new racial considerations begged the question whether the gospel of the "Algerian school" could prove an effective guide for action. France may have been a "Muslim

⁵⁸ Pierre Ma, "La Politique Musulmane de France," *L'Aurore*, 29 March 1912.

⁵⁹ ANOM, GGA/10H/81, "Comité de l'Afrique Française: Articles qui ont servi à la rédaction du Bulletin Arabe," 47.

⁶⁰ Robinson, "France as a Muslim Power in West Africa"; Harrison, *France and Islam in Western Africa*.

⁶¹ Brian J. Peterson, *Islamization from Below: The Making of Muslim Communities in Rural French Sudan, 1880–1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 106–09.

⁶² Arnaud, *Précis de Politique Musulmane*, 10.

power,” but it was doubtful whether North Africa could serve as the alpha and omega of a French *politique musulmane*. “We do not want to say that this policy be uniform and rigid,” claimed Henri Merlin, Governor General of West Africa, in 1913. “It must be, on the contrary, varied according to the regions, the populations, and the degree of sovereignty which we enjoy in each country... Islam, in effect, varies from one region to another.”⁶³

Even when confining the debate to North Africa the picture became murky. An article appearing in *Le Temps* in late 1911 pointed out that France did not need to devise a *politique musulmane* for the region. It already had two, one in Algeria which excluded Muslims from public life and one in Tunisia under which natives controlled their own administration. The question was whether these were compatible. According to the author, the answer was a flat “no.” Imposing the Algerian model on Tunisia or Morocco would ineluctably invite native revolt, while imposing the Tunisian model on Algeria would incur opposition from European settlers. Given these scenarios, *Le Temps* found the proposal to create a single North African ministry “extremely dangerous.”⁶⁴ However, critics were also aware that proposals to create a territorialized North African government and reflections on what a far-reaching *politique musulmane* might look like were generating new assessments. If anything, observers were compelled to reflect on the current situation of Muslims in Algeria and Tunisia, a fact that was not insignificant in itself. “Considerations on the affairs of French North Africa have aroused greater interest in the metropolitan public than ever before in the past,” the conservative newspaper *L’Action Nationale* admitted in early 1913. In its opinion, this development gave a cause for optimism that some type of reform might be possible. “The experience of our colonies in North Africa permit us to hope that we will think to realize a happy synthesis on matters respective to Tunisia and Algeria and avoid the faults of one and the other.”⁶⁵

The evident differences between the Algerian and Tunisian systems were in part due to the administrative rationales governing the two territories. During the 1890s, the Tunisian Resident General René Millet had been instrumental in defining the protectorate’s approach to the native question. Taking up his post in 1894, Millet intended to make a “good debut” by winning over the European settlers in the Regency.⁶⁶ To “pacify” their demands, he opened up the Conference Consultative to a wider section of French residents, giving them a greater say in public affairs.⁶⁷ The European residents repaid him with spite. Over his six-year tenure, Millet was subject to “violent attacks” in the press and fought back

⁶³ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Procès-Verbal” (6 March 1913), 116.

⁶⁴ “Le Ministère de l’Afrique du Nord,” *Le Temps*, 26 December 1911.

⁶⁵ “Problèmes Coloniaux,” *L’Action Nationale*, 6:6 (10 January 1913), 98–99.

⁶⁶ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 10, René Millet to M. Hanotaux, MAE, 10 December 1894.

⁶⁷ AMAE, Tunisie, NS 10, “Organisation de la Conférence Consultative,” 10 February 1896.

constant demands for French annexation by colonists.⁶⁸ French “patriots” in the Regency desired colonial institutions similar to Algeria, a prospect completely contrary to the spirit of the protectorate. The settler lobby became a constant thorn in Millet’s side, prompting him to reach out to the native community and create a counterweight to the Europeans. Millet believed he could use the protectorate’s dual administrative structures to blunt the rowdy settler lobby. The protectorate was like a cart being pulled by a team of different horses, he insisted. “The first rule . . . is never mix up the reins.”⁶⁹

Millet was forward looking in his approach to the Tunisian community. Although he understood the influence wielded by the traditional ‘ulamā, he was more impressed with the small circles of French-educated liberals coming of age in the Regency. Most of these young liberals were graduates of the Sadiqi College created by the Tunisian government to train civil servants and educators. As the school often employed a number of European professors, students were exposed to Western ideas and inclined to put them into practice if given the chance. By the 1890s, liberals were forming clubs as they attempted to work out a program of cooperative reform with the French occupiers. They organized debating societies and ran newspapers like *Al-Hādīra* which advocated for progressive change against the conservative Islamic establishment.⁷⁰ Taken by their enthusiasm, Millet saw a clear benefit in nurturing this indigenous liberal movement and drawing it closer to the protectorate.

In 1896, the government authorized the creation of Al-Khaldounia, a society committed to “seeking out the best means of developing the instruction of Muslims,” as its founding charter claimed.⁷¹ The organization ran a school with a modern education curriculum where students could pursue a diploma in “practical knowledge” and obtain professional credentials for jobs in the public services. The school also had rooms for conferences and a library stocked with modern works in French and Arabic. Talks and lectures were open to the public and covered topics relating to agriculture, economics, public hygiene, and the applied sciences. Situated directly across from the Al-Zaytuna Mosque in the Tunis medina, the Khaldounia consciously presented itself as an alternative to the traditional center of Islamic learning. It endeavored to serve as a fountainhead of scientific and progressive ideas, promoting “the moral and intellectual awakening of Muslims,” as one member stated.⁷² Muhammed Larsam, one of the chief founders of the school, extolled the society’s mission of cultivating a new Tunisian elite armed with the skills necessary to bring the country into the modern age.

⁶⁸ CADN, 1TU/1/V/317, “Note pour le Résident Général,” 8 July 1897.

⁶⁹ Millet, *La Conquête du Maroc*, 219.

⁷⁰ Green, *The Tunisian Ulama*, 166–68; Kenneth J. Perkins, *Tunisia: Crossroads of the Islamic and European Worlds* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 81–82.

⁷¹ ANT, Series E, Carton 509, dossier 2, “Project de Statuts de la Société El-Khaldonia” (1896).

⁷² Mohamed Larsam, “La Khaldounia à Tunis,” in Depincé, *Congrès de L’Afrique du Nord*, 2: 179.

“We will all be proud of having contributed our energies to creating a generation of Muslim students sufficiently initiated into modern forms of knowledge which are the pride of European nations,” he claimed.⁷³ This objective was consistent with the goals of the French protectorate, reformers maintained, and should be understood as a corollary to France’s civilizing mission in the Muslim world. As the reformer Béchir Sfar insisted in 1904, “we are making known and, by consequence, loved and respected, France which, today a great Muslim power, reserves to its Mohammedan subjects and protégés not servitude but liberty, progress, and civilization.”⁷⁴

Elites promised reform, but reform coming from within the protectorate. By presenting themselves as a trustworthy ally to the French, reformers sought to open up channels for Muslim social and economic improvement and, most importantly, advance claims for greater native participation in the government.⁷⁵ “It is only by the knowledge of its language, its history, or its evolution in the domain of science that the protector nation can impose itself to the esteem and respect of the populations placed under its influence,” Larsam told a French audience in 1908. “All domination based on force is ephemeral and undignified of a generous nation such as France.”⁷⁶ Epitomizing the “modern” Arab, reformers crafted an identity for themselves as *évolutionnistes*, connoting their dedication to progressive modernization. While this branding won over French officialdom, the settler community was less impressed. They dubbed them “Young Tunisians” who possessed wild ideas “destined to become a bastion of hostility against French influence sooner or later.”⁷⁷

Despite the suspicion of Europeans, the French government was receptive to the Young Tunisian program. It worked with them to develop the school’s education curriculum. It subsidized their newspapers and even assisted with their printing. By 1906, natives managed to win the right to sit in the Consultative Conference by official appointment, giving them representation in the government. The backlash from settlers was so fierce that the Resident General was forced to amend the decision and split the body into two distinct sections—one European and the other native—with a *Conseil Supérieur* charged to mediate. Four years later, native representatives attempted to capitalize on this gain, putting forward a request to have delegates elected by the people. “Tunisia has arrived at a sufficient degree of civilization to allow many of its children to appoint those who they judge the best qualified to defend the interests of the collectivity,” a petition claimed. The

⁷³ ANT, Series E, Carton 509, dossier 2, “Copy of memo by Larsam” (1899).

⁷⁴ Mohamed Larsam, “La Khaldounia,” in Depincé, *Congrès de l’Afrique du Nord*, 2: 179.

⁷⁵ Charles-André Julien, “Colons Français et Jeunes-Tunisiens (1882–1912),” *Revue Française d’Histoire d’Outre-Mer*, 54 (1967): 130–31.

⁷⁶ Larsam, “La Khaldounia,” in Depincé, *Congrès de l’Afrique du Nord*, 2: 175.

⁷⁷ *La Tunisie Française*, 15 February 1902. On the evolution of the term “Young Tunisians,” see: Daniel Goldstein, *Libération ou Annexation: Aux Chemins croisés de l’histoire tunisienne, 1914–1922* (Tunis: Maison Tunisienne de l’Edition, 1978), 16–17.

signatories stopped short of calling for elections under universal suffrage.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, an elected native franchise was a bold step and predictably drew strong opposition. The opposition was so intense that the proposal was deemed “unrealizable” given the fury of the Europeans.⁷⁹

The work undertaken by the Young Tunisians was a clear step forward for natives in the protectorate. It also had a broader imperial resonance. By the turn of the century, native elites in Algeria were drawing inspiration from Tunisian successes and engaging in similar activities. A small coterie of journalists and professionals borrowed the strategies of their Tunisian counterparts, forming “French-Muslim” circles and publishing newspapers in which they called attention to the abuses of the colonial system.⁸⁰ These so-called “Young Algerians” were particularly taken by the dual system of rule in the protectorate that allowed natives to run their own justice and administrative institutions independent of the settler community. The protectorate model allowed Tunisian Muslims to “follow their normal path,” as the Algerian journalist Sadek Denden claimed.⁸¹ In Algeria, by contrast, the colonial administration and Native Affairs Bureau ruled on everything from taxes to Islamic religious institutions as the Algerian people “groaned under the burden” of a exploitative regime.⁸² More remarkable was the fact that the state encouraged Tunisian elites to modernize and reform Islamic institutions in partnership with the French, all without compromising their Muslim identity. “The marks of this Muslim renaissance show themselves there clearly,” Benali Fékar admitted, leaving him to wonder whether he and his fellow Algerians could similarly become “valuable collaborators.”⁸³ The prospects were not auspicious. The type of dynamic Westernized elite found in Tunis did not yet exist in the colony, nor did it necessarily possess the prestigious educational institutions for producing one. Such a class would have to be actively created, amounting to a veritable social revolution within native Algerian life.

Working with his brother Larbi Fékar, a Tlemcen schoolteacher and journalist open to ideas of Arab modernization, Benali co-founded the French language newspaper *El Misbah* in 1904 with the intention of promoting the “intellectual emancipation of Muslim society.”⁸⁴ According to Larbi, the paper’s mission was summed up in a simple, concise program: to work for “the grandeur of Muslim

⁷⁸ CADN, 1TU/1/V/324, “Séance Plénière de la Section Tunisienne de la Conférence Consultative: address par M. Zaouch” (1910).

⁷⁹ CADN, 1TU/1/V/324, Secrétaire Général du Gouvernement Tunisien pour la Justice to Resident General, 3 December 1910.

⁸⁰ Rabah Aissaoui, “Between Two Worlds: Emir Khaled and the Young Algerians at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century in Algeria,” in Rabah Aissaoui and Claire Eldridge, eds., *Algeria Revisited: History, Culture and Identity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 58–59.

⁸¹ Sadek Denden, “La Moralité d’une politique,” *L’Islam*, 3 March 1912.

⁸² “Les Réformes administratives en Tunisie,” *L’Islam*, 21 November 1913.

⁸³ Benali Fékar, “Une ère nouvelle,” *El Misbah*, 2 September 1904.

⁸⁴ Abdallah, “Notre Devise,” *El Misbah*, 10 June 1904.

France and the wellbeing of the Arab population.”⁸⁵ True to its word, the paper made energetic appeals to “Arab youth,” urging Algerians to improve their lot through education and civic engagement at the local level.⁸⁶ “We have the firm hope that instruction given to the new generation at every level will bear fruit and from this start produce capable and worthy elected officials and electors conscious of their duties,” Larbi explained.⁸⁷ Algerian opinion would only be taken seriously when expressed by a class of “enlightened and liberal” natives, Benali argued in a nod to the Young Tunisian movement.⁸⁸ *El Misbah* intended to serve this purpose by providing a forum for native ideas and encouraging the emergence of an educated class that could speak on behalf of the community. The message imparted to Young Algerians was not one of opposition, but cooperation. The editors never hid the fact they were “tireless pioneers of French civilization.”⁸⁹ They promised to “strengthen the links between the inhabitants of French Africa” and elevate Algerians through their progressive contact with French culture.⁹⁰

Young Algerians amenable to French rule maintained that native assimilation did not entail sacrificing one’s Muslim identity. “For us, as for all Muslims of good sense,” stated the journalist Ghomri Hamida, “our single desire is to work toward forging a more intimate union of two races without altering our laws or the traditions that our fathers have bequeathed to us.”⁹¹ This proposition was controversial. Conventional French perspectives on Islam saw it as a totalizing identity. It was not simply that Islam was believed to be a fundamentally irrational and “fanatical” religion. Islam was a complete way of life guided by rigid theological laws and practices deemed incompatible with the habits of a modern secular society.⁹² On these grounds, the government ruled that anyone adhering to Muslim law could not be subject to secular republican law, and was thus ineligible for citizenship.⁹³ For an Algerian colonial regime that made sharp distinctions between Muslims and citizens, the proposal of assimilation without abandoning Islam was a direct affront. “What characterizes [these natives], in effect, is the fact that they don’t want to and can’t abandon Islam,” claimed the political essayist Philippe Millet, “and yet nonetheless... they give their adhesion to French domination in North Africa and can hardly be suspected of insincerity.”⁹⁴ Switching the emphasis to loyalty and adhesion, Young Algerians were seeking to define a

⁸⁵ Larbi Fékar, “Solidarité,” *El Misbah*, 21 June 1904.

⁸⁶ Bénali El Hassar, *Les Jeunes Algériens et la mouvance moderniste au debut du XXème siècle: Les frères Larbi and Bénali Fekar* (Paris: Edilivre, 2013).

⁸⁷ Larbi Fékar, “Après la Bataille,” *El Misbah*, 21 June 1904.

⁸⁸ Benali Fékar, “A la jeunesse arabe!” *El Misbah*, 10 June 1904.

⁸⁹ Abdallah, “Notre Devise,” *El Misbah*, 10 June 1904.

⁹⁰ Larbi Fékar, “Notre programme,” *El Misbah*, 3 June 1904.

⁹¹ Ghomri Hamida, “Décret du 7 Avril 1884,” *El Misbah*, 29 July 1904.

⁹² Naomi Davidson, *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 1–3.

⁹³ Smith, “Citizenship in the Colony,”

⁹⁴ Philippe Millet, “Les Jeunes Algériens,” *Revue du Paris*, 6 (November–December 1913): 160–61.

place for themselves within French colonial society. In the past, the Algerian administration had relied upon conservative *‘ulamā* and *shaykhs* to buttress its rule on the ground. The Young Algerians were offering themselves as a more faithful colonial interlocutor supportive of assimilation and the ideals of the civilizing mission. Their admiration for France was intended to win favor with the colonial government and establish themselves as equal partners in the empire.

To cement this partnership, North African elites adapted modernist ideas circulating through the Muslim world. They promoted a progressive and even “liberal” interpretation of Islam that was compatible with Western values without appearing synthetic or doctrinally perverse. Some even had direct knowledge of modernist debates taking place abroad. The Young Tunisian journalist Abdelaziz Thâalbi spent time in Egypt and met with key leaders of the Salafist movements like al-Afghānī and ‘Abduh. Returning to Tunisia, he co-authored the book *The Liberal Spirit of the Qur’an* which laid out a series of arguments against “false” interpretations of scripture. For Thâalbi, the Qur’an, when read “correctly,” provided a blueprint for a liberal, modern society. Tolerance and rationalism were the “dominant ideas” within Islam, and these principles extended from politics to gender relations and law. “It is only through a healthy, truthful, human and social interpretation of the Qur’an’s principles, which conform to the principles of the French Revolution, that Muslims will obtain the elements capable of modifying their mentality and make themselves men truly worthy of the name,” Thâalbi wrote.⁹⁵ Given its tenor and message, *The Liberal Spirit of the Qur’an* received the endorsement of the French colonial administration and garnered praise from French orientalist scholars in the metropole.

That Islam was compatible with Western society formed a veritable mantra of the native elite reform movement. “Our religion... has never been an obstacle to our accession to modern civilization or our admission into the French family,” Sadek Denden stated.⁹⁶ If native elites drew upon currents of Islamic modernism coming from places such as Egypt and the Ottoman Empire to make their arguments, they did not appropriate them outright. They were hardly advocating a return to a classical Islamic civilization, as many leading Salafists were. Rather, they sought to combat popular stereotypes of Islam as a religion of “fanatics” and make a case for the integration of Muslim imperial subjects.⁹⁷ “Moral and intellectual improvement, such is the motto that must be imprinted on the hearts of all Muslims who are truly friends of progress,” Benali explained. “The work and aim are not exclusively Muslim, but also French.”⁹⁸ In the outlooks of new North African

⁹⁵ César Benattar, El Hadi Sebaï, and Abdelaziz Ettéalbi, *L’Esprit libéral du Coran* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), 99.

⁹⁶ Sadek Denden, “L’Indigénat devant le chamber,” *L’Islam*, 19 December 1913.

⁹⁷ Lizabeth Zack, “French and Algerian Identity Formation in 1890s Algeria,” *French Colonial History*, 2 (2002): 115–43.

⁹⁸ Benali Fékar, “A la jeunesse arabe!” *El Misbah*, 10 June 1904.

elites, Islamic modernism was elaborated within a colonial context.⁹⁹ They asserted that France was “pushing the Muslim population toward a progressive evolution” and offered their assistance in this project.¹⁰⁰ The essentially “French” character of these movements was important and provided a telling indication of the cultural orientation of the new native elite. “This elite has invested a great deal in France,” Benali assured metropolitan readers in 1909.¹⁰¹ This admission not only conveyed native expectations for equal rights and treatment in colonial society. It was a candid acknowledgment that a Francophone North African Muslim class existed. They had attended the schools set up by the colonial government, if not received some education in the metropole. They spoke French and wore Western clothing. They identified with European culture and articulated their Muslim identity accordingly. Their newspapers were written and published in French for a Francophone audience. “France has made us what we are,” as one writer for *El Misbah* proclaimed.¹⁰²

Be that as it may, assimilated elites also maintained roots in their local communities that were not always easy to square with a French identity. Subject to different laws and constantly monitored by colonial officials, they were subject to settler racism on a daily basis and never fully accepted as equals within European society. The successful Tunisian entrepreneur and politician Abdeljelil Zaouche repeatedly complained of being harassed by government officials on the merest pretext and was arraigned on various occasions for his journalism despite consistent professions of loyalty. Zaouche’s experience was hardly unique and made up a common grievance among Francophone elites conscious of the inequalities that colonialism engendered. On the other hand, elites were often alienated from native social circles due to their secular attitudes and Francophone orientation. In 1912, as Muslim anger was ratcheting up due to the Libyan war, Belkacem Bentami, an ophthalmologist at the Hôpital de Mustapha in Algiers and prominent Young Algerian spokesman, was assaulted in a bakery by an Algerian worker. The assailant accused him of betraying his fellow Muslims and stabbed Bentami twice before fleeing the scene of the crime. These occurrences, *Le Temps* claimed, revealed “the mournful situation” confronted by European-educated elites.¹⁰³ They were at once a *m’tourni* (turncoat) to their fellow Muslims and a pariah in the eyes of the colonial administration, as Philippe Millet explained in his lengthy exposé on the Young Algerians.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Philippe Millet, “Les Jeunes Algériens,” *Revue du Paris*, 6 (November–December 1913): 160–61.

¹⁰⁰ “L’Islam africain,” *L’Islam*, 11 February 1912.

¹⁰¹ Benali Fékar, “Le Représentation des musulmans algériens,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 3:1–2 (January–February 1909), 21.

¹⁰² Abdallah, “Notre Devise,” *El Misbah*, 10 June 1904.

¹⁰³ “Le Cas de l’élite indigène,” *Le Temps*, 17 February 1912.

¹⁰⁴ Philippe Millet, “Les Jeunes Algériens,” *Revue du Paris*, 6 (November–December 1913): 162–63.

This double alienation gave Westernized elites a distinct sense of social cohesion that fed into their reform movements. They sought to create a more just system and tear down the barriers that barred them from full membership in colonial society. At the same time, they adopted modernist views on religion and society that set them apart from their fellow North Africans in fundamental ways. They were products of an imperial world dominated by European norms and the changes wrought by seventy years of French colonial rule. As such, they were an entirely new feature within North African societies, a fact that many elites understood. As the Algerian translator and writer Ismael Hamet asserted, there now existed “a community [defined by] French intellectual culture” among North African Muslims with little historical precedent in the region.¹⁰⁵

Hamet was aware of these circumstances because he himself was a product of this community. A Mauritanian by birth, he had moved up the ranks of the colonial administration serving as a military interpreter in Algeria and West Africa. While carrying out his duties, he took an interest in Islamic studies and produced a score of ethnographic and historical works on Muslim Africa in the coming years. His publications earned him the esteem of notable French orientalist and writers, among them Alfred Le Châtelier. Hamet wrote regularly for Le Châtelier’s *Revue du Monde Musulman*, turning out an impressive number of articles and book reviews. His scholarly writings commonly served as reference works on Africa and Islam for colonial ideologues in France and Britain.¹⁰⁶ In 1906, Hamet took up the subject of French North Africa directly in his book *The French Muslims of North Africa*. More than simply a balance sheet on the French civilizing mission, the work gave a detailed historical account of the Maghreb and paid special attention to the changes that had occurred under French colonialism. Hamet noted that colonial economic development had created the first common market for the region and that rail networks were stitching together disparate localities and communities that had previously been isolated. He was also mindful of the ways in which French education policies and native military service in the *Armée d’Afrique* were serving to break down ethnic and local identities. “The Muslims are more and more mixed into a single people,” Hamet insisted.¹⁰⁷ These developments marked a significant evolution in the history of North Africa. For the first time, an integrated and connected Maghreb world outside the traditional unity provided by Islam appeared on the horizon.

The French Muslims of North Africa was not only notable for its sharp analysis of the contemporary Maghreb. Its very title was suggestive. In unambiguous terms, Hamet was affirming there was, indeed, a French Muslim community in

¹⁰⁵ Ismael Hamet, *Les Musulmans Français du Nord de l’Afrique* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1906), 248.

¹⁰⁶ Douglas W. Leonard, *Anthropology, Colonial Policy and the Decline of French Empire in Africa* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 54–55.

¹⁰⁷ Hamet, *Les Musulmans Français*, 6.

North Africa. More precisely, he traced the evolution of this community through the social changes occurring in the region, furnishing it with a history and sociological rationale outside religion. Hamet was convinced of the “essentially secular constitution of Muslim society,” as he put it. Historical and social forces, rather than religious doctrine, were what gave embodiment to this society, implying that “Muslim” was a social rather than strictly religious category. He foresaw the “Africans of the future” increasingly acquiring European habits and adopting secular ideas as they progressed toward a more stable unity. Yet in Hamet’s assessment, this transformation was not a deviation from North African Islam’s historical development. He was convinced that the changes brought by the French marked an “evolution” in its development, placing the French conquest and occupation within the *longue durée* of North Africa’s march toward modernity. “The inhabitants of North Africa are unifying through the benefits offered by French institutions,” he insisted.¹⁰⁸ While many of these arguments reinforced Hamet’s conviction that a secular and modern Muslim subjectivity was possible, they also provided the raw materials for imagining a French Muslim community in North Africa, making it appear natural and rooted in historical certainty.

Whether using recourse to history or endorsing French cultural values, native elites were beginning to find common accord in a vision of French North Africa that was consistent with their own aspirations for rights and social inclusion by the early twentieth century. Each in their own way endeavored to inscribe North Africa with a distinct cultural identity, one that effectively aimed to territorialize North African Muslim identity and, with it, Muslim loyalties. Although independent of one another, the Young Algerian and Young Tunisian movements clearly shared similar goals and influenced one another, establishing a broader imperial framework that helped re-conceptualize familiar imperial geographies and flesh out common goals. In elaborating their own concept of French North Africa, natives found a new sense of solidarity both as North African Muslims and French imperial subjects.

At a moment when France was re-evaluating its empire and speculating on what the future held for a nominally “French” North Africa, native elites were seizing the initiative. They sought to wrest control of the discussion from European officials and colonists, furnishing an alternative viewpoint to the critical assessments and administrative reports directing the conversation. For colonists and colonial officials, the entrance of natives into these ongoing debates was an unwelcome addition. Not only did it present a vision of French North Africa that many colonists were loath to agree to. It also appeared that the arguments of native elites had some currency among intellectuals at home. As colonial subjects marshalled their arguments and movements like the Young Turk revolution

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 269, 298.

inspired new reflections on the ability of Muslims to embrace modern liberal ideas, French attitudes appeared to be warming to the notion of “cultivating more intimate moral relations” with Oriental peoples, as the politician Marcel Saint-Germain stated in 1908.¹⁰⁹ Publicists like Le Châtelier spoke openly on the prospects of Islamic progress and modernization, noting that Muslim societies appeared to be “evolving” in ways previously unimaginable to Europeans.¹¹⁰ It was not surprising that Le Châtelier wrote an encouraging introduction to Hamet’s *The French Muslims of North Africa*, referring to North Africa as a “land of French Islam” where these modernizing impulses were bearing fruit.¹¹¹ As writers like Ismael Hamet and Benali Fékar gave credence to the existence of a French Muslim North Africa and colonial publicists revised appraisals of France’s Muslim subjects, the possibility that native elites could turn discussions on French North Africa to their own advantage appeared possible.

“Previously We Only Had to Fear Localized Movements”

The loyalist position was, however, always a fragile one. Although natives managed to bridge tensions between imperial loyalty and Muslim cultural identification through declarations of adhesion and partnership, they were not working in a vacuum. Outside events had a way of influencing views on Islam, and natives themselves were not insulated from the push and pull of broader regional dynamics. As the Moroccan war and Young Turk revolution renewed Pan-Islamic enthusiasm, North African Muslims found themselves caught between the demands of imperial loyalty on one side and Muslim unity on the other. These two poles were not oppositional in theory, but with the Islamic unity movement acquiring new momentum after 1908, French Muslims were increasingly pulled in divergent directions. As trans-imperial currents destabilized North Africa, the tensions inherent within French and Muslim identification became apparent.

The native question took a sharp turn in 1911 as the Libyan war erupted. Given the heightened fears of Pan-Islamic subversion, officials looked askance at any form of Muslim political activity in the colonies. Algerian and Tunisian Muslims came out in support of their Tripolitanian brothers fighting in Libya and officials responded, accusing organizers of being Pan-Islamic agents harboring dangerous “Turcophile” sympathies. Critics impugned Muslim loyalties, insisting North African natives were now showing their true stripes choosing Istanbul over Paris. “When the young Algerian Muslims imitate French youth and not the Young

¹⁰⁹ Marcel Saint-Germain, “L’Heure Unique,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, 1 October 1908.

¹¹⁰ Alfred Le Chatelier, “Le Pan-Islamisme et le progress,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 4:1 (February 1907), 467.

¹¹¹ Hamet, *Les Musulmans Français*, ii.

Turks,” remarked the Algerian representative Émile Broussais, “that is when the native question will finally be solved.”¹¹² In early 1912, Benali Fékar pleaded with authorities to recognize the “proven loyalty” of North African subjects. “We are working toward the moral and intellectual improvement of our compatriots and for the triumph of a sincerely liberal policy in Algeria as in Tunisia,” he swore, eschewing any notions that they were Pan-Islamic saboteurs.¹¹³ His appeals fell on deaf ears. Colonial officials took a hardline approach to the demonstrations in support of Ottoman forces. They cracked down on journalists who spoke out against the war and kept a watchful eye on Muslim activists involved in demonstrations.

Authorities showed their resolve that March as they set their sights on Young Tunisian activists participating in the anti-war protests. From the start of the conflict, the Young Tunisians had taken to the press, denouncing the Italian invasion and lending their support to Muslim protest movements across the Regency. Ali Bash-Hamba, one of the leading Young Tunisian spokesmen, started up the newspaper *L'Union Islamique* in late 1911 with the specific aim of lending his voice to the calls for Muslim unity and defense echoing across the globe. Authorities watched in dismay, insisting these polemical outbursts were fueling xenophobia and pro-Ottoman sympathies. Bash-Hamba was “burning his boat in favor of Turkey,” as one official claimed after reading excerpts from *L'Union Islamique*.¹¹⁴ More troubling still was the fact that Bash-Hamba and his cohorts were encouraging a mass boycott staged against the Tunis tram system operated by an Italian firm. As tensions between Muslims and Italians roiled the protectorate, French authorities feared the boycott might spiral out of control and acquire the momentum of an anti-French movement. They were not about to allow “a handful of ambitious youths” to issue “a declaration of war on the government.”¹¹⁵ On 13 March, police raided the homes of the ringleaders in the middle of the night. Searching Bash-Hamba’s residence, they found article drafts with flagrant Pan-Islamic overtones and letters written to Ottoman officials detailing his support for the resistance. Without hesitation, authorities charged seven members of the group with conspiracy and expelled them from the country.

Undaunted by official intimidation, Bash-Hamba took his complaints to Paris, and there published a strongly worded defense of the Young Tunisians in *Le Temps*. He reiterated that he and his companions had been loyal “*ralliés* to France” in the past. The accusations of Ottoman subversion levied against him were baseless, he contended. His Pan-Islamic sympathies were above reproach and

¹¹² Émile Broussais, “L’Esprit Algérien,” *L’Echo d’Alger*, 28 December 1912.

¹¹³ “Notre Loyalisme,” *L’Islam*, 25 February 1912.

¹¹⁴ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Procès-Verbal” (8 May 1912), 36–37.

¹¹⁵ ANOM, GGA/27H/20, Commission des affaires musulmanes, “Procès-Verbal” (8 May 1912), 38.

were merely an expression of support against Italy's illegal invasion of Libya. "True Pan-Islamism, as we have declared many times... is only a sentiment of broad solidarity uniting all the Muslims of the globe in reason of the form and the constitution even of Mohammedan society." Taking his argument further, Bash-Hamba associated his defense of the Young Tunisian cause with the larger aspirations of Muslims across French North Africa. "The Muslims of North Africa are evolving and progressing," he declared. "They demand their place in the sun. They demand the right to live with dignity on the earth of their ancestors. Can you refuse this to them for long without danger?"¹¹⁶

News of the arrest generated a stir in the metropole. Critics took sides in the debate, with a handful of liberal and radical journalists arguing that Bash-Hamba's arrest and deportation had been unjustified.¹¹⁷ One writer decried the trumped-up charges brought against the culprits and cast doubts on the legal basis for the arrest, comparing the incident to the coup d'état of *Deux Décembre* carried out by Napoleon III against republicans in 1851.¹¹⁸ Metropolitans could not simply close their eyes to the perceived injustices of a colonial system that flouted every notion of republican equality and legality. According to Georges Saint-Paul, a writer and former military doctor who wrote under the pseudonym G. Espé de Metz, Bash-Hamba's arrest was a clear indication of the need to mobilize support behind the cause of native civil rights and imperial legality. He openly compared the incident to the Dreyfus Affair, arguing that it left the French Republic "utterly discredited." The hypocrisy and contradictions of colonialism were an affront to republican values, and the Bash-Hamba Affair exposed this disconcerting truth perfectly. Bash-Hamba's arrest and subsequent public defense marked "the start of a new era" as it brought public attention to bear on the colonial question both at home and in the colonies. "The Bash-Hamba Affaire transcends the personality of Bash-Hamba," Espé de Metz declared.¹¹⁹ Realizing the public relations nightmare now on the government's hands, the former Resident General of Tunisia, René Millet, could only shake his head in disbelief and ponder how a minor affair in Tunisia had been allowed to become a national issue. Writing to his successor Gabriel Alapetite in Tunis, Millet counselled him one colonial official to another. "Your single mistake was sending Ali Bash-Hamba to France, within reach of editorial offices and the halls of parliament," he told him. "Do you know what I would have done in your place...? I would have sent Bash-Hamba to the Kerkennah Islands and ordered him to count the sterile palm trees and wait for me to request their exact number."¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ "Lettre de M. Bach Hamba," *Le Temps*, 9 April 1912.

¹¹⁷ Eugène Bonhoure, "L'Agitation Jeune-Tunisienne," *Le Radical*, 11 June 1912; "Un Homme en Prison!" *L'Intransigeant*, 20 March 1912; "Employerons-nous le Baillon?" *Le Temps*, 9 April 1912.

¹¹⁸ Charles Gide, "La Coopération des français et des indigènes dans l'Afrique du Nord," *L'Islam*, 25 April 1913; reprinted from *La Revue Bleue*.

¹¹⁹ Espé de Metz, *Vers l'Empire*, 205–06.

¹²⁰ Millet, *La Conquête du Maroc*, 229.

Yet Alapetite had not sent Bash-Hamba into exile, and the consequences were plain to see. Given a public forum in the metropole, Bash-Hamba had skillfully associated the suppression of the Young Tunisian leadership with the wider cause of North African Muslim elites. It was a dramatic appeal which North Africans could sympathize with and mobilize behind. The Young Algerian newspaper *L'Islam* responded energetically, commending Bash-Hamba's "fighting spirit . . . in defending our common cause."¹²¹ Sadek Denden, editor of *L'Islam*, was quick to point out that the Young Tunisians had been persistent supporters of France and could not simply be dismissed as radical Pan-Islamic saboteurs given their stance on the Libyan war. "The work of the Young Tunisians does not date from yesterday," he contended. "It dates back many years during which they gave proof of a sincere loyalty and tireless devotion to the Franco-Arab cause."¹²² To illustrate that moral and financial support for Muslims in Libya in no way compromised imperial loyalties, Young Algerians undertook a subscription campaign in the spring of 1912 to raise money for the purchase of a French military plane on behalf of the North African Muslim community. Headed by Belkacem Bentami, the campaign was to serve as an "imposing demonstration" of Muslim loyalty that would "unite in a common effort" Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans.¹²³ Committees were set up in Tunis, Constantine, Oran, and Algiers to simultaneously collect funds for the Libyan victims and the aircraft.¹²⁴ "The first airplane will not be offered by the department of Oran, Algiers, or Constantine, nor by Tunisia or Morocco," the organizers stated, "but by the Muslims of North Africa."¹²⁵

If Young Tunisians and Algerians had created a context for imagining a French Muslim community in North Africa, the impact of the Libyan war on the region brought this entity dramatically to life. Native elites wrote articles and gave speeches that mobilized Muslim subjects across borders and elicited the attention of metropolitans. They crafted arguments that transcended the particular circumstances of Algeria or Tunisia and couched demands in a universal rhetoric which cut right to the heart of the French imperial edifice. As colonial officials addressed the security concerns posed by the Libyan conflict, Muslim subjects came to see the commonalities of their respective movements. The cause of Muslim rights and inclusion had now been placed squarely on the table. By 1912, metropolitan observers could see how correct Ismael Hamet had been. Increased contact, a shared French culture, and now a common sense of mission was drawing North African Muslims together. "They correspond, they plan together, they undertake common campaigns," a writer for *Le Temps* reported in 1912. It was not difficult to see that natives enjoyed "a unity of sentiment which they had

¹²¹ "Agitation sterile," *L'Islam*, 14 January 1912.

¹²² Sadek Denden, "La Proscription des Jeunes-Tunisiens," *L'Islam*, 5 April 1912.

¹²³ "Pour l'aviation France: aux indigènes musulmans de l'Afrique du Nord," *L'Islam*, 24 March 1912.

¹²⁴ "Pour les blessés tripolitains! Pour l'aviation française!" *L'Islam*, 3 March 1912.

¹²⁵ "Pour l'aviation France: aux indigènes musulmans de l'Afrique du Nord," *L'Islam*, 24 March 1912.

never known in the past.”¹²⁶ Yet with this newfound unity also came a new danger. “Previously we only had to fear localized movements,” the author noted. “More and more, collective movements are going to become possible.”¹²⁷

Reform from Colony to Metropole

On a Saturday evening in late February 1912, guests arrived at the Brasserie de l'Étoile in Algiers for a banquet in honor of Dr. Belkacem Bentami. A respected medical professional and political organizer, Bentami was one of the leading voices in the Young Algerian movement. At the reception, guests praised his work in the Algerian community and recognized his efforts to bridge the racial and religious divisions that separated the French and Arab inhabitants of the colony. A letter written by Ali Bash-Hamba on behalf of Tunisians was read aloud to applause thanking the esteemed doctor for his service to their common goals. A second letter commending Bentami penned by the French deputy Albin Rozet was also read issuing words of encouragement to all natives engaged in the civil rights struggle. “We will neglect nothing in pursuing our common work of progress and liberties and of improving without cease the state of Muslims across all of French North Africa,” the missive promised.¹²⁸

Rozet was among a select group of French politicians who were active supporters of the native cause in the National Assembly in Paris. In conjunction with the leading Radical Adolphe Messimy and the Socialist Jean Jaurès, he used his position to draw attention to calls for equal rights and integration coming from the North African colonies. In 1913, he would lead the movement to repeal the detested *L'Indigénat* law code, arguing that native demands for its abolition were just and reasonable. “It is impossible not to consent to them,” he claimed.¹²⁹ His vocal support for North African Muslims naturally made him the *bête noir* of European colonists. They attacked him in the press, asking whether under his debonair appearance he was not really an anarchist seeking to destroy the country? “He approves the actions of all the young Muslims,” one Algerian paper remarked, adding sharply that it did not matter whether these actions were demands for change or violence perpetrated against French soldiers.¹³⁰

The fact that Rozet and his small circle of Parisian allies were taking an interest in the colonies was not only a testament to the work carried out by native elites. It was a sign that native patience was beginning to wear thin. “Bash-Hambism has

¹²⁶ “Comment organiser l’Afrique du Nord?” *Le Temps*, 2 May 1912.

¹²⁷ *Comment organiser l’Afrique du Nord?* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Revue Indigène, 1912), 3.

¹²⁸ “Un Banquet significative: L’Islam africain et la France,” *L’Islam*, 3 March 1912.

¹²⁹ “Une lettre de M. Alib Rozet,” *Le Temps*, 29 September 1912.

¹³⁰ “La Question indigène,” *L’Echo de Bougie*, 11 July 1912.

spread like an oil stain throughout our North Africa,” as one critic observed.¹³¹ The newspaper *L'Islam* expressed the mood succinctly in the spring of 1913, admitting frankly, “Algerian and Tunisian Muslims have lost all confidence in the future.” Not matter how vociferously natives expressed their desires for equality and political rights, the colonial regimes brushed them aside and thwarted their efforts at every turn.¹³² Men like Rozet, however, suggested that liberal opinion in the metropole was different. Leading papers like *Le Temps* and the *Journal des Débats* were weighing in on the “native question” and deputies were taking up colonial issues in the chambers. “It is from Paris, and Paris alone that we can await improvement in our plight,” Sadek Denden affirmed, taking note of the growing support in the capital.¹³³ Ali Bash-Hamba shared this assessment. “For us, the intentions of the metropole are no longer in doubt,” he stated. “The policy of association between the French and the Muslims of North Africa is gaining support among the populace. Public opinion is clearly becoming interested.”¹³⁴ Bash-Hamba’s message to his fellow North Africans was clear. “Have confidence!” he urged. The sympathies of the metropole were with them. It was time for North African Muslims to lay their case before the French public.

By 1912, the theater of political activities was beginning to shift. Bash-Hamba’s Parisian letter revealed the power that appeals to universal principles of rights and justice could have in eliciting metropolitan support. However, the “native question” was not only one of principles. For the government, it was becoming a pressing matter relevant to defense and national security concerns. As France confronted the specter of an aggressive German Empire on its eastern borders and international relations across the continent grew tense, the French government began taking stock of its resources in anticipation of a general European war. The forecast was not promising. Critics drew attention to the insufficient manpower in the armed forces. As early as 1905, politicians and military officials had begun to consider the colonies as a potential reserve that could furnish men and material in the event of war. “Algeria and Tunisia are the only places where we can find additional men,” Adolphe Messimy advised. “Therefore, that’s where it is necessary to go and seek them out.”¹³⁵ This appraisal was confirmed in 1910 when the French officer Charles Mangin published his book *La France Noire*, arguing that in a coming war France would be dependent upon colonial reserves.¹³⁶ These policy suggestions drew attention to another startling fact: colonial forces were also lacking. The Moroccan war and occupation had siphoned off some 40,000 troops,

¹³¹ G. Espé de Metz, *Par les Colons* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1914), 147.

¹³² “La France Islamique,” *L'Islam*, 4 March 1913.

¹³³ Sadek Denden, “Politique indigène,” *L'Islam*, 4 February 1912.

¹³⁴ “Agitation sterile,” *L'Islam*, 14 January 1912.

¹³⁵ Henry de Castries, “Le Service militaire des indigènes en Algérie,” in Depincé, *Congrès de L'Afrique du Nord*, 2: 122.

¹³⁶ Richard S. Fogarty, “The French Empire,” in Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War, 1911–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 100–11.

many from Algeria and Tunisia, depleting the colonial military. The bottom line was that France faced a dearth of manpower. "For the pacification of Morocco, for the development and defense of our great African empire, we need a lot more troops than we currently have," the journalist and military historian Raymond Recouly summarized.¹³⁷

Starting in 1910, the military commissioned a series of studies to investigate the possibilities of native conscription. In Tunisia where the Bey theoretically remained commander-in-chief, conscription would require a fair amount of negotiation and deliberation.¹³⁸ In Algeria, however, the situation was more straightforward. France was the sovereign authority and could implement conscription at will. A key hurdle, though, was the European settlers. The prospect of drafting colonial natives into the military was a bitter pill for many colonists to swallow. A Muslim draft threatened to reduce the supply of manual labor in the colony needed to sustain the farms and agricultural businesses run by colonists.¹³⁹ They were also cold to the idea of training and arming native recruits. Mendil Karsenty, a Jewish Freemason from Oran, blatantly rejected the idea. Not only was it imprudent to arm "the unfeeling barbarous hordes" in the colony, he argued. Natives would certainly expect full political rights in exchange for their military service. Since the French Revolution, national defense and citizenship had gone hand-in-hand, raising the question why the Algerian context would be any different. Drafting Muslims into the armed forces would open a Pandora's box colonists did not want to contemplate. "For natives," Karsenty cautioned, "the enjoyment of electoral rights would be revenge for the conquest," plunging Algeria into a veritable civil war.¹⁴⁰

For all his fearmongering, Karsenty did see the larger issues at stake. North African elites were taking an interest in the conscription discussions believing it would provide a path to full citizenship.¹⁴¹ "All the smart natives concerned with the improvement of their race's lot are resolute partisans of military conscription on the condition that they are compensated with political rights," *L'Islam* announced in February 1912.¹⁴² Rozet, Messimy, and others who had been pushing for colonial civil rights were of the same mindset and gave their support to the proposal. The issue even drew the former deputy and liberal stalwart Urbain Sénac out of the woodwork to support the cause. "To the south of the

¹³⁷ Raymond Recouly, "La Conscription des indigènes en Algérie," *Le Figaro*, 3 January 1912.

¹³⁸ Pierre Ancier, *La Conscription des indigènes en Algérie et l'organisation militaire de la France* (Paris: R. Chapelot, 1910), 7.

¹³⁹ A. Raspail, *Étude sur le service militaire obligatoire des Indigènes en Algérie* (Paris: R. Chapelot, 1910), 17.

¹⁴⁰ Mendil Karsenty, *Rapport sur la Conscription des Indigènes Musulmans d'Algérie* (Oran: Imprimerie du Fr. Agullo, 1908), 9–12.

¹⁴¹ Michelle Mann, "The Young Algerians and the Question of the Muslim Draft, 1900–14," in Aissaoui and Eldridge, *Algeria Revisited*, 39–42.

¹⁴² "La Conscription des indigènes algériens," *L'Islam*, 4 February 1912.

Mediterranean, there is a second France that we ask to receive with open arms to incorporate its children in our regiments of the metropole,” he claimed. “There is a sizeable Arab population of which the young and successive generations have constantly given proof of their courage, loyalty, and devotion.”¹⁴³ Sénac’s plea came directly from the native script, emphasizing loyalty and devotion to the empire as grounds for inclusion. The issue of military service was new wine for an old bottle.

Opponents remained cynical. The journalist Maurice Gilles complained of the “slacker politicians and conniving arrivistes” who were attempting to exploit a national security issue and sneak the issue of native enfranchisement in through the back door.¹⁴⁴ Yet the minister of war, Alexandre Millerand, could not afford to get bogged down in details. In February 1912, the government authorized a *conscription atténuée* for Algeria, requiring three years of mandatory military service from a select number of natives. The issue of rights was left ambiguous. Upon issue, the conscription order exposed the divide between the Young Algerians and the majority of Algerian Muslims. Natives protested against the decree and even accused the Young Algerians and their Parisian allies of deliberately misrepresenting the opinions of the Algerian population. Europeanized elites were not “the true representatives of the Muslim population of Algeria,” a strongly worded petition to the Governor General by Muslim community leaders stated that spring. They resented the fact that “a small group of ambitious men and arrivistes who do not have any legitimate right to speak for the five million Muslims living in Algeria” were able to steer policies that impacted the entire community.¹⁴⁵

In reality, anxieties over national defense rather than persuasive elites had compelled Millerand to act. However, it was clear that the issue of military service placed the native question in a new context. Dependent upon colonial reserves to fight a war, the government could not afford to alienate Muslims and dismiss their demands outright. The metropole was coming to take a greater interest in the native question and the empire as a whole as it converged with growing fears of national defense. As a writer for *Le Temps* remarked in the summer of 1912, colonial reform was now inescapable. “We are headed toward an inevitable crisis and catastrophe... The success of our African Empire depends upon civil equality.”¹⁴⁶ If the colonial administrations could not be depended upon to see through these reforms, metropolitan authorities had to intervene. To jumpstart the process, the author suggested creating a special North African Council in

¹⁴³ “La Rattachement de l’Algérie à la France,” *L’Islam*, 11 February 1912.

¹⁴⁴ Maurice Gilles, “La Conscription des indigènes,” *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 17:48 (30 March 1912), 3.

¹⁴⁵ “La Conscription des indigènes,” *L’Afrique Française: Bulletin Mensuel du Comité de l’Afrique Française et du Comité du Maroc*, 28:7 (1912), 275–76.

¹⁴⁶ *Comment organiser l’Afrique du Nord?*, 10, 15.

Paris elected by all colonial subjects. Natives could then bypass the colonies and make their case directly to the French people.

Concerns over the future of “French” North Africa prompted a small circle of Parisian intellectuals and publicists to begin thinking critically on the future of the empire. The explorer and journalist Paul Bourdarie who ran the *Revue Indigène* expressed his anxieties over the sustainability of an imperial system mired in inequality and exclusionary policies. Due to his association with the imperial government in Africa, Bourdarie took a special interest in publicizing colonial issues. Audiences usually found his opinion informed, but also too “expansive and complex” for general interest.¹⁴⁷ Yet when it came to expressing his alarm on the fate of the empire, Bourdarie was capable of boiling down his arguments in clear and concise prose. “How can we not see by such thoughtlessness and sovereign imprudence we risk the entire future of our African Empire?” he asked.¹⁴⁸ Such questions were equally on the minds of writers like Paul Degouy and the aspiring literary critic Edmond de Christmas who had recently founded the magazine *L’Astrée* as well as the economist Charles Gide, who denounced the horrors of colonialism and would later go on to promote colonial reform through the Human Rights League after the First World War.¹⁴⁹

They were joined by Numa-Léal, a lawyer in the Paris court of appeals active in the Young Algerian circle. Raised in Tunisia where his father had been head of security for the protectorate, Numa-Léal co-edited the Algerian newspaper *Le Rachidi* with Hamou Hadjammar and was “the uncontested leader of the great majority of [Algerian] Muslims” in the metropole, as one journalist noted.¹⁵⁰ His outspoken criticism of the colonial government frequently drew the ire of Algerian colonists who relentlessly painted him as an unformed interloper bent on stirring up trouble.¹⁵¹ Settlers were averse to Parisian critics telling them what was best for the colony, and Numa-Léal was an easy target for their indignation, as one *colon* journalist made evident in his sardonic depiction of the lawyer. “In Paris [he] mounts the Eiffel Tower and arriving at the top of this enormous monument turns toward Algeria and casts a piercing glance to the horizon of French Africa looking for some trumped up abuse or new horror he can condemn.”¹⁵² Unfazed by these attacks on his character, Numa-Léal continued to speak out on behalf of North African elites and was particularly vocal when it came to defending French Muslims against accusations of disloyalty and Pan-Islamic agitation. He reproached critics as “Islamophobes,” ridiculing the “shameful logic” that

¹⁴⁷ La Rauche, “Les Hommes, les Idées et les Faits,” *Lemouzi*, 22:199 (April 1914), 186.

¹⁴⁸ *Comment organiser l’Afrique du Nord?*, 4.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 223–24.

¹⁵⁰ Espé de Metz, *Par les Colons*, 46.

¹⁵¹ Paul Lafitte, “Politique Islamique,” *L’Echo d’Alger*, 4 October 1912.

¹⁵² René Nolé, “Les métèques,” *L’Impartial*, 13 April 1913.

interpreted “all manifestations in favor of poor Turkey and Muslims of all countries” as a threat. “There exists an *Islam française* that we have the duty to defend,” he contended.¹⁵³

These various activists, writers, and journalists were an eclectic group, ambitious and full of ideas but with little power aside from their pens. They were nonetheless bound by a shared conviction that empire need not compromise fundamental humanitarian values and that a moral brand of imperialism could be realized. Together, they found common ground as *Indigénophiles*, individuals who agreed with the just demands of natives and who were committed to reforming the empire in line with republican principles. Not content to simply serve as idle speculators, they saw themselves as activists fighting the good fight. “Speaking is fine but acting is better,” the writer and self-appointed colonial reformer Espé de Metz asserted. “The *Indigénophiles* need to make themselves the pious mendicants of a great national cause.”¹⁵⁴ Young Algerians eager to gain a voice in the metropole freely endorsed this activist policy. “*Acta et non verba*,” Numa-Léal declared, “such is now our motto.”¹⁵⁵

Putting this motto into practice, Espé de Metz called for the creation of an *Alliance Franco-Indigène* in early 1913 to coordinate activities and publicize the *Indigénophile* platform. With a committee in Paris, the group intended to lobby for native rights, acting much like the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* did for North African Jews.¹⁵⁶ The organization pledged itself to “destroying prejudice” and working toward “a gradual extension of rights and guarantees [for natives] while preserving the good order and development of French influence.”¹⁵⁷ The alliance was to be formed of separate autonomous sections corresponding to the different territories of the empire. The medical doctor and orientalist writer, Paul Bruzon was charged with heading the *cercle Franco-Islamique*, while plans were sketched to establish additional *Franco-Indo-Chinoise* and *Franco-Noire* sections in the near future. Run out of Bruzon’s office on the rue Claude-Bernard, the *cercle Franco-Islamique* was to serve as a “central nucleus” of the envisaged *Alliance* over the coming months.¹⁵⁸ The Algerian newspaper *L’Islam* praised the initiative, claiming it was creating a “house for the Muslim people of North Africa” in the imperial center where they could organize and mobilize support for their cause across the nation.¹⁵⁹ Numa-Léal was less optimistic. While he took an active role in the circle and would eventually come to run the section’s central organ *La France Islamique* with Bruzon, he was skeptical as to the real influence a handful

¹⁵³ Numa-Léal, “Panislamisme?” *L’Islam*, 4 April 1913.

¹⁵⁴ G. Espé de Metz, “Organisations l’Indigénophile,” *La Presse Coloniale*, 1 August 1912.

¹⁵⁵ Numa-Léal, “Une date historique,” *L’Islam*, 24 December 1912.

¹⁵⁶ Espé de Metz, *Vers l’Empire*, 43–46.

¹⁵⁷ “Alliance Franco-Indigène,” *L’Islam*, 18 February 1913.

¹⁵⁸ G. Espé de Metz, “Le Cercle Franco-Indigène,” *La Presse Coloniale*, 2 December 1912.

¹⁵⁹ “La France Islamique,” *L’Islam*, 4 March 1913.

of motivated intellectuals could wield.¹⁶⁰ He desired to build a genuine pro-native movement in the country that could enlist the various political factions and force the colonial issue on the floor of the National Assembly. "Native policy must not be defended by a single political group," he insisted. "It must create a union among all French, whatever party to which they belong. The defenders of the natives are French and patriots before being socialist, radicals, [or] conservatives."¹⁶¹

It was an ambitious plan, but one that had little chance of success in reality. Rozet and the other *Indigénophiles* in the National Assembly remained a small faction that struggled to build a coalition around the native issue. Colonists abjured any change to the system coming directly from Paris and proposals for reform met stiff opposition from officials. In an op-ed piece written for *Le Temps* in mid-1912, René Millet warned against allowing natives representation before the metropole. With the example of Ali Bash-Hamba fresh in his mind, he rebuked North African elites who tried "to escape the control of our administrators by going to Paris and spilling their crocodile tears to publicists." Giving them a forum in the capital would only encourage exaggerated complaints and endless squabbling as they attempted to circumvent colonial authorities. A proponent of native modernization who had offered support to the nascent Young Tunisian movement in the past, Millet was nonetheless a colonialist, one whose service in Tunisia had inured him to liberalization. "Whatever my personal sympathies for the most intelligent among them," he claimed, "if one wants to make a native 14 July, I will always be on the French side of the barricade."¹⁶²

In the end, the *Indigénophile* movement remained confined to small groups of Parisian activists and writers. Its limited success was not, however, indicative of failure. On the eve of the First World War, native elites had managed to secure a presence in the imperial capital through informal channels and relationships. Parisians spoke out on their behalf, publicized their adversity in newspapers, and pressed their cause on the assembly floor. In the span of a decade, the concerns relevant to Muslim elites in North Africa had acquired a national resonance. It certainly appeared "the hour of a new dawn," as one Young Algerian declared.¹⁶³

French officials had intended to give shape to "French North Africa" in an effort to integrate the bloc of colonies and protectorates along the Mediterranean coast. Although this objective failed, talk of a "French" North Africa did contribute to a new sense of solidarity among North African Muslims, begging the question of how and in what measure they fit into this new imperial imaginary. Assimilated elites in Algeria and Tunisia were coming to see themselves as brothers engaged in a common struggle for emancipation and equality within a

¹⁶⁰ Peter Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing in Transition: Algeria 1900–1945* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 61.

¹⁶¹ Numa-Léal, "Un Cercle Franco-Indigène," *L'Islam*, 3 December 1912.

¹⁶² Millet, *La Conquête du Maroc*, 274–75.

¹⁶³ "La France Islamique," *L'Islam*, 4 March 1913.

common empire, questioning the base of the French colonial system. This sense of purpose and solidarity was, moreover, not only relegated to North Africa, as events were beginning to indicate. In March 1913, Algerian and Tunisian students studying at the Université de Paris came out to participate in a national day of mourning to commemorate the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. Assembling near the Tuileries garden, Muslim students affirmed “their patriotism and unalterable attachment” to France during the commemoration. Earlier that day, Paul Bruzon, Numa-Léal, and Ismael Hamet had given talks at various locations on the Left Bank covering subjects related to Pan-Islamism and the North African colonial administration. Taking in the ambience on the Place de la Concorde, Bedjaoui, a student at the Université, was finally able to appreciate the gains made by his fellow French North Africans. “I can affirm that the native question preoccupies all the best political men, sociologists and parliamentarians here,” he wrote optimistically. “It is at present tied to the question of national defense and everyone here is inclined to promptly give satisfaction to the demands formulated by our Algerian and Tunisian compatriots.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ “Lettre de Paris,” *L’Islam*, 18 March 1913.

Trans-Imperial Islam in the Crucible of War

By 1914, metropolitan and imperial officials in France had reason for concern. Algerian and Tunisian political activism was becoming a volatile force in the colonies, creating pressure for reforms that neither colonial authorities nor European colonists were willing to endorse. That debates over colonial citizenship and defense were coming to interject themselves into national politics only complicated matters, adding strength to the reform movement. On top of these internal political quandaries, North Africa itself remained unsettled. Although officially brought to an end in 1912, the Libyan conflict was by no means concluded. Italian forces continued to struggle against Arab fighters bolstered by covert aid from Istanbul.¹ To the west, French forces under Lyautey had yet to suppress the resistance movements destabilizing Morocco. Tribal and religious leaders in the Bled al-Siba challenged the legitimacy of the French-backed government, and it was not unthinkable that this unrest might spill over into western Algeria.² French authorities were no less mindful of the growing threat an ascendant German Empire in the center of Europe posed as talk of a general European war began to echo through government and diplomatic circles across the continent. In the summer of 1913, a report drafted by the Algerian government spelled out the dangers the situation presented. “In an unfavorable war, France would certainly face an uprising by its Arab subjects. It does not need to be emphasized the advantage this would present for Germany, as France would find itself weakened, its armies having to reconquer its African domain.”³ For all intended purposes, Germany was anticipating just such a scenario. More to the point, it was willing to commit vast amounts of money and resources to ensuring its success.

With the outbreak of the First World War in the summer of 1914, the political and military struggles that had been roiling North Africa for nearly a decade would enter a new phase. “Even though the oppressed peoples of the East have not fallen directly into the thundering waves of war, they share with the Europeans the excitement, the nerve-wracking tension that war produces,” the Egyptian

¹ Rachel Simon, *Libya Between Ottomanism and Nationalism* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1987), 105, 120–21.

² Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco*, 100–05.

³ ANOM, GGA/27H/8, “Revue de la Presse et des Questions musulmans,” 1 July 1913.

activist Abd al-Malik Hamza explained.⁴ This sense of a shared experience came about as ongoing imperial rivalries and desires for emancipation progressively drew the Muslim world into the conflict. Yet it was also telling that Hamza was in the pay of the German Foreign Office during the war. The rise of Muslim anti-colonialism was coterminous with the ascendancy of Germany as a colonial power, and as the First World War would demonstrate, these two phenomena were intertwined. Diplomats across Europe were under no illusions that the creation of a strong, unified German state in 1871 had profoundly altered the traditional power balance on the continent. Yet Kaiser Wilhelm II's desire to pursue an aggressive *Weltpolitik* signaled that Germany was also bent on participating in the global competition for empire, setting the stage for future conflicts with established powers like France and Britain.

As a latecomer to the new imperial contests of the nineteenth century, the Kaiserreich aspired to carve out a colonial empire of its own and obtain its "place in the sun," as Kaiser Wilhelm II announced. Over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Germany snatched up land in East and West Africa and acquired a series of islands in the Pacific. At the same time, Germany sought to project its power into the Mediterranean and Middle East. Beginning in 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm signaled to Abdülhamid and the Ottoman people that Germany could be counted on as a potential "friend" and protector of the "300 million Muslim subjects scattered across the earth."⁵ For its part, the Ottoman government, anxious over its floundering relations with France and Britain, was only too happy to learn that it might have a new ally in Europe. Over the next decade, Deutsche Bank provided capital for Abdülhamid's modernization projects while the *Orientbahngesellschaft* negotiated a series of rail contracts in the region, laying the groundwork for the ambitious Berlin–Baghdad rail project that would commence in 1903.⁶ As the prominent orientalist Martin Hartmann contended in 1910, the new *Ostpolitik* was driven by "the pursuit of German economic life through industrial investments."⁷ Teams of German technicians, financiers, workers, and project managers were sent to develop Ottoman infrastructure and cement economic and commercial ties between the two empires. These "industrial colonies" (*Handelskolonien*) were to serve as the long arm of German influence throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, outlining a form of colonialism that

⁴ Ibn Marawan, "Die Friedenbewegung und die Unterdrückten Völker des Orients," *Die Islamische Welt*, 9 (August 1917), 513.

⁵ McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 14–15. Also see: Anderson, "Down in Turkey, Far Away," 97–104.

⁶ Malte Fuhrmann, *Der Traum vom deutschen Orient: Zwei deutsche Kolonien im Osmanischen Reich, 1851–1918* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2006), 56–57; McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 35–38.

⁷ Martin Hartmann, "Deutschland und der Islam," *Das Islam: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orient* (1 January 1910), 75, 78–79.

eschewed conquest and formal occupation.⁸ Naturally, powers with established interests in the region rightly perceived Germany's "friendship" with the Muslim world as a direct challenge. In 1905, tensions mounted when Wilhelm tested the resolve of his European imperial rivals. Coming out publicly in support of the Moroccan sultan's resistance to the French, the Kaiser intended to make a strong display of German firmness and keep French encroachment at bay. The ploy backfired, however, generating a diplomatic crisis that encouraged France to intervene militarily and broker a deal with Spain in Morocco aimed at keeping Germany out of North Africa.⁹

Old imperial rivals proved willing to put aside their differences as they confronted the new threat coming from Berlin. In 1904, Britain and France entered into the Entente Cordiale, providing a framework for mutual cooperation on colonial and international questions that would be extended to include Russia in the coming years. This realignment pitting the Entente allies against a German-Habsburg Central bloc shaped the wartime alliance system in Europe. Yet it also reconfigured the contests that had accompanied the new imperialism since the 1880s. By 1914, Britain had some 96 million Muslims under its rule, while the French and Russian empires counted 19 and 18 million Muslim subjects respectively.¹⁰ In spite of past rivalries in North Africa and Asia, Europe's predominant "Muslim powers" were now committed to preserving the imperial status quo, indicating that aggressive German expansion would not be tolerated on an already crowded world stage.

Unchastened, Germany intended to pursue an empire-building program, and it saw the First World War as an opportunity to do so. During the war years, German strategists and colonial publicists would recast the Kaiserreich as a "Muslim power" of a different type. Policymakers attempted to harness Muslim networks for their own ends, fomenting Pan-Islamic and nationalist movements designed to destabilize their Entente enemies. This ambitious program would reorient and reconfigure the trans-imperial politics of the region, creating new circuits of movement connecting Europe and the Mediterranean. While this radical activism would prefigure the anti-colonial nationalist movements of the postwar period, the wartime activities of Muslim radicals and journalists revealed that these movements were never conceptualized within strictly national contexts. Over the course of the war, emerging ideas regarding self-governance and international solidarity would weave themselves into established reform platforms as anti-colonial activists moved about and congregated.¹¹ German war strategists

⁸ Fuhrmann, *Der Traum vom deutschen Orient*, 270–76; Woodruff D. Smith, "The Ideology of German Colonialism, 1840–1906," *The Journal of Modern History*, 46:4 (December 1974): 641–62.

⁹ Frémeaux, *La France et l'Islam*, 115–17.

¹⁰ Donald M. McKale, "Germany and the Arab Question before World War I," *The Historian*, 59:2 (Winter 1996): 312.

¹¹ Heather Streets-Slater, *World War One in Southeast Asia: Colonialism and Anticolonialism in an Era of Global Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian*

had a role to play in these developments. From the start of the conflict, policymakers in Berlin and Istanbul drew together existing anti-colonial and Pan-Islamic networks, creating new spaces in which they could operate and socialize.¹² Colonial subjects exploited political alliances and imperial rivalries, discovering a greater sense of agency that would become evident in the anti-colonial movements that took shape in the crucible of war. As Germany's empire-building and war strategies converged, the First World War not only become a war fought between imperial states. It was one fought through the trans-political networks threading themselves throughout the Muslim world. Outside the pitched battles and carnage that occurred on the frontlines, another war was taking place, one which would have an immense impact on European imperialism and in certain instances question the very premise of the imperial state.

“The Rebirth of Europe and the Renaissance of Islam”

In the months prior to the outbreak of war in 1914, the Algerian writer Abdou al-Haq al-Mouncif was inclined to ask what the growing tensions between the European powers might hold for the Muslim world. Mindful of the imperial orientation of the Entente powers and the Ottoman Empire's recent accord with Germany, he felt obliged to issue a warning to all those who would heed it. That March, al-Mouncif published an open letter to the Ottoman people in the pages of *La France Islamique* urging them to rethink their close ties with Berlin. France had been a friend and supporter of the Ottoman Empire in the past, he reminded. By siding with Germany, the Ottoman government was pursuing a reckless course of action that would “sacrifice the interests of Muslims everywhere,” he claimed. “You do not have the right of drifting from the orbit of the Triple Entente which rules over the majority of Muslims on the globe because we [Muslims] will suffer the consequences of such an error if Turkey persists to see in the German Empire the true supporter of its independence.”¹³ Global Muslim interests dictated an Ottoman alliance with the Entente, in al-Mouncif's opinion. To proceed otherwise would sow needless divisions within the *ummah*, jeopardizing the aspirations of Muslim reformers and modernists everywhere.

His appeal fell on deaf ears. The CUP leadership had little faith in declarations of historic friendship when it came to the European powers. In light of past

Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹² Jennifer Jenkins, Heike Liebau, and Larissa Schmid, “Transnationalism and Insurrection: Independence Committees, Anti-Colonial Networks, and Germany's Global War,” *Journal of Global History*, 15:1 (2020): 61–79.

¹³ Abdou-El-Hack El Mouncif, “Lettre ouverte d'un musulman algérien au peuple ottoman,” *La France Islamique*, 1 (May 1914): 49.

precedent, such avowals appeared worthless. The Ottomans needed firm guarantees, and Germany was willing to provide them. In secret negotiations conducted that August, Germany pledged to uphold Ottoman territorial integrity “by force of arms” and hinted at the possibility of reversing the territorial losses incurred by the empire since 1908.¹⁴ Publicists in Germany and Austria underscored the sincerity of these commitments, blandishing the Young Turks in the press and emphasizing the common objectives binding the Ottoman Empire to the Central Powers. Writing in early October, the Austrian journalist Karl Kaldorff praised the Young Turk revolution as an “Islamic renaissance” and remarked that the CUP’s desire for liberation was shared among its new allies. “This struggle is a religious and a national *Freiheitskrieg*,” Kaldorff declared. “European and Mohammedan civilization are allied against barbarism... The rebirth of Europe and the renaissance of Islam have the same conditions and share the same goals: the victory and salvation of culture.”¹⁵ As Kaldorff pitched it, saving European civility and reviving Islamic civilization were now one and the same cause. Both stood opposed to the yoke of Entente imperialism, demanding a collective defense.

Saccharine adulation aside, Kaldorff’s insistence that the war was both religious and national had some merit. In late October, the Ottoman Empire formally entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, and two weeks later the CUP enlisted the Ottoman religious establishment in drafting a series of *fatwas* that declared the conflict a holy war. Defining the war as a jihad made it “compulsory for all Muslims” to take up arms in defense of the Caliphate.¹⁶ Ottoman officials blatantly pressed religion into the service of the state, commanding an imperial population composed of Turks, Arabs, and Kurds to mobilize behind a common war effort sanctioned by Islamic authority.¹⁷ The people were expected to “defend the fatherland” against its enemies, Sultan Mehmed V affirmed. “In order to save the Muslim nation which has been under threat for some time, it is necessary that you show firmness and perseverance!”¹⁸ Invocations to defend the Ottoman fatherland were seamlessly blended with the defense of the Caliphate and broader Muslim community. Appeals to Islamic solidarity had a domestic application, but Ottoman authorities also directed their message toward Muslims beyond the borders of the empire in the hopes of rallying them to a platform of mutual defense

¹⁴ McMeekin, *Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 123–24; Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Karl Kaldorff, “Die Renaissance des Islam,” *Der Montag*, 5 October 1914.

¹⁶ “Der Heilige Krieg,” *Sonder-Ausgabe: Freie Stimmen, Deutsche Rärntner Landes-Zeitung*, 16 November 1914.

¹⁷ Mustafa Aksakal, “Holy War Made in German? Ottoman Origins of the 1914 Jihad,” *War in History*, 18:2 (2011): 191–96; Mehmet Beşikçi, “Domestic Aspects of Ottoman Jihad: The Role of Religious Motifs and Religious Agents in the Mobilization of the Ottoman Army,” in Eric Jan Zürcher, ed., *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje’s “Holy War Made in Germany”* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), 95–116.

¹⁸ “Der Heilige Krieg,” *Sonder-Ausgabe: Freie Stimmen, Deutsche Rärntner Landes-Zeitung*, 16 November 1914.

against Entente aggression. Patriotic and Pan-Islamic rhetoric had served the CUP leadership during the Libyan conflict. Imperial officials had few reservations about deploying this strategy once again, transforming the war into a national-religious struggle. Despite their hostility to Abdülhamid, the Young Turks perpetuated and even enhanced aspects of Hamidian trans-imperial Islamic politics as they attempted to unify the empire and prevent its disintegration. The one decisive difference in 1914, however, was that these goals now aligned with the objectives of a dominant European power.

By the start of the war, German strategists had in hand an outline for a far-reaching plan of subversion aimed at destabilizing its Entente enemies.¹⁹ On the continent, German agents liaised with nationalist elites, bolstering resistance movements in Eastern Europe designed to dismember the Russian Empire. Elsewhere, the Foreign Office worked with non-European partners to disrupt Entente colonies and divert resources away from the European front.²⁰ Germany intended to foment Pan-Islamic resistance movements and “inflame the whole Mohammedan world to wild revolt,” as Kaiser Wilhelm famously declared, and the Ottoman alliance was part and parcel of this strategy.²¹ Entente officials were not blind to these machinations. Writing from Istanbul in early October, the French ambassador Maurice Bompard alerted Paris that German agents had begun carrying out recruitment campaigns in Syria. “They are speaking with a great number of officers and agents of all types seeking to excite the fanaticism of the Arabs and Bedouins,” he claimed.²² Consular officials distributed tracts reiterating Germany’s good will toward Muslims and assuring that “hadji” Wilhelm remained committed to the protection of Islam from its enemies.²³ Germany also took a hand in the drafting and distribution of the jihad *fatwa* pronounced by the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam.²⁴ By late 1914, colonial authorities reported that copies of the *fatwa* were circulating through French North Africa.²⁵ Foreign agents

¹⁹ For debates on the centrality and preparation of these wartime policies, see: Fritz Fischer, *Germany’s Aims in the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1967), 115–20; Ulrich Trupener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt, 1989); Jennifer Jenkins, “Fritz Fischer’s ‘Programme for Revolution’: Implications for a Global History of Germany in the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48:2 (2013): 397–417.

²⁰ Donald M. McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1998).

²¹ John Horne, “Patriotism and the Enemy: Political Identity as a Weapon,” in Nico Wouters and Laurence van Ypersele, eds., *Nations, Identities, and the First World War: Shifting Loyalties to the Fatherland* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 27.

²² AMAE, Guerre, 1662, Maurice Bompard to Delcassé, MAE, 21 October 1914.

²³ IOR/L/PS/11/99/P4180/1915, A. H. McMahon to Edward Grey, 24 October 1915.

²⁴ McMeekin, *Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 89–124; Gottfried Hagen, “German Herald of Holy War: Orientalists and Applied Oriental Studies,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24:2 (2004): 145–62.

²⁵ ANT, Series E, Carton 550, dossier 30/4, Resident General to the Contôleurs civils and Affaires indigènes, 11 December 1914.

coming from Egypt and Istanbul were found carrying proclamations appealing to Pan-Islamic unity and urging colonial subjects to rise up in defense of the Caliphate.²⁶ “Provoke a revolt in the country, incite the people, amass in groups and gangs in public, cut the telegraph lines and rails that assist communication with the battle fields and deprive the army of its communications,” one declaration commanded. As these declarations promised, the war would “gather together all the dispersed peoples of Islam and deliver them from the yoke of foreign powers.”²⁷ The French administration had little doubt that these missions were being organized by German diplomats with the assistance of the Ottoman Minister of War, Enver Pasha.²⁸ With the Ottoman Empire firmly in the Central camp, Berlin aimed to harness the emotional and religious appeal of Caliphal authority and bring the war to the colonies.

European critics, among them leading German orientalist scholars of the day, scoffed at this “Holy War *à la frangia*.”²⁹ More cynical observers, like the Dutch scholar and colonial advisor Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, simply wrote it off as a “Holy War made in Germany,” arguing it had little sympathy among real Muslims.³⁰ According to one French commentator in 1915, the jihad was nothing short of a farce. “The Young Turks, as ignorant as the Germans when it comes to the traditions of Islam, have made a mockery of jihad and other Muslim institutions.”³¹ These criticisms were overly simplistic, and certain colonial authorities and diplomats admitted as much. The French consular agent in Rabat, Henri Gaillard, had few doubts as to the insincerity of Ottoman religious motivations, but he was, nevertheless, mindful of the hold that Pan-Islamic ideology had over Muslim elites. “Young Muslims reared on modern ideas and in contact with Europeans are easily seduced by the idea of gathering the diverse elements of Islam in order to resist Europe and take back their independence,” he counselled the government in Paris. “The Pan-Islamic idea has been badly perverted by the Young Turks. Nonetheless, it still responds to a certain ideal possessed by Muslims.”³²

French colonial authorities were quick to react. “Germany has placed its hopes on difficulties stemming from our Muslim subjects slowing us down,” advised Charles Lutaud. “They are counting on an uprising, and therefore it is of capital importance for us to place an obstacle in the way of these intrigues and

²⁶ A list of known agents was compiled by French agents and distributed to the colonial authorities. See: ANT, Series E, Carton 550, dossier 30/4, “Agitateurs Turcs” (December 1914).

²⁷ AMAE, Guerre, 1651, DeFrance to Delcassé, MAE, 6 December 1914.

²⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1662, Minister of France in Albania to Delcassé, MAE, 20 October 1914.

²⁹ Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, “Djihad ‘Made in Germany’: Der Streit um den Heiligen Krieg, 1914–1915,” *Soziale Geschichte*, 18:2 (2003): 7–34.

³⁰ Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *The Holy War “Made in Germany”* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1915).

³¹ Édmond Joucla, “L’Allemagne et L’Islam,” *L’Afrique Française: Bulletin Mensuel du Comité de l’Afrique Française et du Comité du Maroc* (Paris: Comité de l’Afrique Française, 1915), 18.

³² AN 475 AP 155, “Note de M. Gaillard: Les Événements de l’Orient et le Khalifat,” 7 March 1915.

energetically counter its campaign of lies.”³³ Lutaud was convinced that Muslims would obey religious authorities over colonial officials, and to this end the Algerian administration combed the ranks of the muftis and imams in its pay and encouraged them to give public professions of their loyalty to France.³⁴ That November, religious officials and shaykhs provided written declarations of support for the empire and war effort, prompting Lutaud to assure that “France can count on the fidelity of its Muslim subjects.”³⁵ Similar tactics were employed in Tunisia and French West Africa.³⁶ Alapetite even enlisted the Tunisian Bey in the campaign. Publishing a statement in the *Journal Officiel Tunisien*, the Bey appealed to the “unshakable loyalties” of his subjects, citing France’s magnanimous reforms and “respect for Muslim beliefs and traditions.”³⁷ Officials also used the press to broadcast their message. *Mobacher*, the Algerian government’s official Arabic newspaper, blamed the war on German aggression and highlighted the enthusiastic support exhibited by native Algerians. “In Algeria as in France, the populations have everywhere cheered the French flag and shown the most patriotic enthusiasm,” it claimed. “At this grave hour, the natives are united with their French brothers.”³⁸ The Young Algerians also played their part. In the group’s principal newspaper *Rachidi*, articles encouraged Muslims to resist German intrigues and enroll in the war effort. France was, after all, “the fatherland of African Muslims.”³⁹

Despite this outpouring of support, officials remained guarded. While native elites proved willing to rally behind the imperial government, Alexandre Millerand was incredulous whether these “official personalities” were reflective of actual opinion in the colonies. More specifically, the brochures streaming into the colonies from Istanbul with their incitements to revolt were drafted by religious authorities. French declarations of loyalty coming from the official Islamic establishment could hardly claim such authority, and Millerand knew it. “It appears impossible under the current circumstances to demonstrate to our Muslim subjects that their duty is to fight Turkey and its allies,” he complained in December.⁴⁰ These concerns were all the more pressing as France began conscripting select natives into the army and deploying *troupes indigènes* to fight on the Western Front. To meet the manpower demands of total war, France was forced to rely on the

³³ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Lutaud to Delcassé, MAE, April 1915.

³⁴ AMAE, Guerre, 1650, Charles Lutaud, Governor General of Algeria to Théophile Delcassé, 5 November 1914.

³⁵ AMAE, Guerre, 1650, Lutaud to Delcassé, 7 November 1914.

³⁶ AMAE, Guerre, 1650, William Ponty to Minister of the Colonies, 22 November 1914; AMAE, Guerre, 1650, Mohammad el Halfaoui to Alapetite, 17 November 1914; Mohammed Essadek al Bahi to Alapetite, 18 November 1914; Chadli el Bakri to Alapetite, 18 November 1914.

³⁷ AMAE, Guerre, 1650, “Copie de la proclamation par S.A. le Bay de Tunis,” 10 November 1914.

³⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, “Bulletin Annexe au Mobacher,” 15 August 1914.

³⁹ “Ce que pensent de la France les Musulmans étrangers,” *La Rachidi*, 30 October 1914.

⁴⁰ AMAE, Guerre, 1651, Alexandre Millerand to Delcassé, 3 December 1914.

colonies as it never had before. Over the course of the war, some 500,000 colonial subjects would serve in the French armed forces, with another 200,000 arriving in France to supplement the metropolitan labor force and work in the war industries. In certain instances, conscription provoked violent outbursts, as in Oran where native Algerians attacked officials attempting to register locals for the draft.⁴¹ Once in Europe, troops faced discriminatory treatment and were subject to police oversight, illuminating many of the racist attitudes lying just below the surface of the French Republic's egalitarian principles.⁴² Commanding the loyalty of colonial natives and insulating them from enemy propaganda was not merely a concern for the colonies. It was a matter of national defense as large numbers of Muslims were dispatched to the metropole and commanded to fight for country and empire.

German officials suspected that Muslim soldiers could be turned against their colonial masters and directed Pan-Islamic propaganda specifically at colonial troops. The Foreign Office commissioned tracts written by Muslims, instructing soldiers that to kill fellow Muslims was a sin and ordering them to resist conscription.⁴³ More provocative, German authorities set up special POW camps in Wünsdorf and Zossen just outside Berlin to house captured Indians, North Africans, and Central Asians fighting for the Entente. In these camps, POWs were subject to German propaganda and lectured to by Muslim authorities in the pay of the German and Ottoman governments. Approximately 2,000 were passed on to Istanbul, where they were either used in propaganda campaigns or co-opted into the service of the Ottoman military.⁴⁴ These facilities were designed to create a positive image of Germany among Muslims.⁴⁵ Prisoners were instructed to see themselves as "guests" in the camps, and German officials went to some length to accommodate their Muslim captives, even constructing a makeshift mosque in Zossen.⁴⁶ When the Ottoman politician Mustafa Nedim Bey toured the Zossen camp on an official visit to Germany in 1916, he spoke at length to the prisoners and commended the "respect" Germany showed to Islam. "We hope that you show yourselves grateful, and that you will spread further among your brothers at

⁴¹ Richard S. Fogarty, "The French Empire," in Gerwarth and Manela, *Empires at War*, 109–29; Jacques Frémeaux, *Les Colonies dans la Grande Guerre: Combats et épreuves des peuples d'Outre-Mer* (Paris: Soteca, 14–18 Editions, 2006). For a general perspective on the use of indigenous forces across the European powers, see: Christian Koller, "The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia and their Deployment in Europe during the First World War," *Immigrants and Minorities*, 26:1/2 (March/July 2008): 111–33.

⁴² Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

⁴³ AMAE, Guerre, 1657, "Affaires Musulmanes: Indes Hollandaise, Telegraph," 1 August 1916;

⁴⁴ Gerhard Höpp, *Muslims in der Mark: Als Kriegsgefangene und Internierte in Wünsdorf und Zossen* (Berlin: Verlag Das Arabische Buch, 1997); Kenneth Steurer, "German Propaganda and Prisoners-of-War during World War I," in Troy R. E. Paddock, ed., *World War I and Propaganda* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 155–80.

⁴⁵ Jenkins, Liebau, and Schmid, "Transnationalism and Insurrection," 73.

⁴⁶ IOR/L/PS/11/88/P404/1915, Extract from "The World of Islam," November 1916.

home what you have learnt here,” he enjoined them.⁴⁷ That same year, French authorities intercepted a packet of Pan-Islamic propaganda at a postal control set up at the Bordeaux rail station. Among the anti-French pamphlets, they discovered a postcard with a photograph of French POWs assembled in a small musical orchestra on the campgrounds. Beneath the photograph appeared the caption: “All our thoughts go to our France, but it is better here than in the trenches.”⁴⁸

French officials fretted over German tactics to erode colonial loyalties, but it was also alarming that some of this propaganda was entering France via the Spanish border. Although Spain had declared itself neutral in the war, the fact that the German war policy complemented Spanish colonial interests in Africa was not difficult to see. In 1912, French and Spanish diplomats had hammered out a power-sharing deal over Morocco, recognizing a small Spanish zone of influence along the Moroccan littoral. Officials on both sides made token speeches extolling the accord that would result from the agreement, but these declarations of friendship were purely rhetorical. The treaty had been strategic. Offering Spain a piece of the Moroccan pie would keep Britain and Germany out, or at least French strategists assumed.⁴⁹ Spanish colonial lobbyists persisted to cling to dreams of an African empire and made little effort to conceal these desires.⁵⁰ As the politician Gumersindo Azcárate stated, the time had come for Spain to “return to being a colonizer.”⁵¹ Moreover, Spanish publicists were quite aware there was no amity between France and Spain when it came to Morocco. “France does not want us in Morocco,” wrote the political journalist Salvador Canals y Vilaró. “It tolerates us.”⁵² From the start of the occupation, the Spanish military had been hard pressed to exert control over the tribal confederations inhabiting the Riff, raising fears of French intervention if Spain could not contain the situation. Wracked by internal warfare and foreign occupation, Morocco was teetering on the brink of anarchy by 1914, and German authorities immediately recognized the potential to exploit the unrest.

From the beginning of the occupation, Germany had been keen to frustrate the French takeover of Morocco in any way it could. It gave support to Pan-Islamic paramilitarists working with the CUP in North Africa and met secretly with members of the Maghreb Unity Society stoking resistance from Egypt.⁵³ The Moroccan Resident General, Hubert Lyautey was certain that Germany was still

⁴⁷ IOR/L/PS/11/88, Enclosure no. 1: “Extract from Nord und Süd,” July 1916.

⁴⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, “Intelligence memo: Bordeaux,” 29 February 1916.

⁴⁹ Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5–6.

⁵⁰ Gonzalp de Reparaz, *Política de España en Africa* (Madrid: Calpe, 1907); Francisco de A. Cabrera, *Nuestra Destino* (Melilla: Imprenta de Enc. La Africana, 1914).

⁵¹ Gumersindo Azcárate, *Discurso* (Barcelona: Imprenta de la Revista España en Africa, 1910), 6.

⁵² Salvador Canals y Vilaró, *España y la Cuestión de Marruecos: Análisis de un Debate Parlamentario* (Madrid: Imprenta de Alrededor del Mundo, 1915), 3.

⁵³ Moreau, “Aref Aher Bey,” in Moreau and Schaar, *Subversives and Mavericks*, 63.

active in Morocco, and he had little doubt as to where the German assistance was coming from. "Despite all our vigilance, native agents, who continue to operate in secrecy with the help of Germany, are propagating [false news] carried by emissaries living in the Spanish zone."⁵⁴ Fliers printed in Larache and Tétouan by the German consulate circulated through the kingdom, advertising Germany's alliance with the Ottomans and its treatment of Muslim POWs in the camps.⁵⁵ Print was not the only thing moving across the border. Arms and munitions supplied by Germany were also discovered to be entering Morocco through the Spanish zone, primarily with the assistance of German merchant firms and commercial agents based in Tétouan.⁵⁶ These commercial houses had clear ties to the German consulate, barely concealing Berlin's involvement.⁵⁷ "In the Spanish zone where all the entrepreneurs are German, sympathy is clearly going to Germany," as one French port authority explained.⁵⁸ These suspicions were all but confirmed in late 1915 when a German going by the name of Don Alvarez accidentally tipped off a former French Foreign legionnaire of German extraction working out of Asilah. Accompanied by a German dressed in native garb calling himself Moktar, Alvarez had approach the ex-legionnaire, inquiring whether he was interested in making money helping transport unspecified merchandise out of the port. The ex-legionnaire immediately reported the encounter to the French authorities, who soon concluded that Alvarez was in the pay of the German consulate.⁵⁹ Lyautey surmised these operations were not official policy since the Spanish consuls in Rabat and Casablanca appeared cooperative. Rather, he blamed it on the "individual dispositions" of military commanders and men in the Spanish colonial administration, an assumption that the French embassy in Madrid shared.⁶⁰

The uptick in German activity was not a figment of Lyautey's imagination. In 1915, German diplomatic officials in Madrid and members of the Ottoman military had drawn up *Morokko Aktion*, a war plan designed to carry out clandestine operations under a Pan-Islamic banner. 'Aarif Tahir, who had previously helped set up the Maghreb Unity Society, was brought in as an Ottoman advisor to assist the German ambassador, Prince Viktor von Ratibor, organize the North African resistance.⁶¹ Using the Spanish zone as a base of operations, German authorities encouraged tribal leaders in the Jebel to carry out attacks on French military outposts and lent support to Mulai Abd al-Hafid, the disgruntled former sultan of

⁵⁴ AN 475 AP 176, Lyautey to Delcassé, 13 September 1914.

⁵⁵ AMAE, Guerre, 1650, Lyautey to Delcassé, 15 October 1914.

⁵⁶ AN 475 AP 147, Lyautey to Geoffray, French ambassador in Madrid, 13 September 1914.

⁵⁷ AN 475 AP 147, Consul honoraire de France in Tétouan to Lyautey, 15 March 1915.

⁵⁸ AN 475 AP 147, Commandants des ports Arbaoua to Lyautey, 10 August 1915.

⁵⁹ AN 475 AP 147, Langlais, Consul de France in Larache to Lyautey, 21 December 1915.

⁶⁰ AN 475 AP 147, Lyautey to Geoffray, French ambassador in Madrid, 16 August 1914; AN 475 AP 147, Lyautey to Geoffray, 1 June 1915.

⁶¹ Moreau, "Aref Taher Bey," in Moreau and Schaar, *Subversives and Mavericks*, 67–68.

Morocco who had been forced to abdicate his throne under French pressure.⁶² The German consulate equally supplied aid to the emir Abd al-Malik, grandson of the late Algerian resistance leader Abd al-Qādir, who was smuggled into Morocco and urged to stir up Pan-Islamic resistance. Given his family's pedigree and renown in the region, al-Malik aspired to head a future Moroccan state, and Germany provided him with funds to assist in this endeavor.⁶³ The *Morokko Aktion* plan was far more than a wartime expedient. It was part of a broader strategic objective designed to disassemble the French North African empire and expel France from the region. Under the plan, French Algeria would be broken up. Tunisia and Libya would be placed within a reconstituted Ottoman North African empire while the western Maghreb integrated into a Moroccan kingdom allied to Istanbul.⁶⁴ As they subdued the tribes in the north and west of the kingdom, French authorities quickly realized they were fighting a proxy war in Morocco. "I don't want to cry wolf, but I am convinced that there is a serious danger in all this which will only become more severe," Lyautey stated bluntly. "In such a struggle, where one can say the theater of operations tends to become the entire world, we cannot afford to be negligent."⁶⁵

Even if Spanish attempts to frustrate French rule in Morocco came to naught, Lyautey was not about to allow the Spanish zone to become a hotbed of anti-French activity. Writing to José Marina Vega, the High Commissioner of Spain in Morocco, in 1915, Lyautey flexed his muscles and let it be understood France would not tolerate foreign interference in its affairs. "Near the French zone, Germany still seeks a diversion that, invested with the confidence and support of my government, I strongly intend to prevent by all means authorized by the state of war," he told Marina.⁶⁶ Stated otherwise, if Spain did not clamp down on German activities in its zone, France would. Spanish military authorities heeded the veiled threat, abandoning any overt efforts that might provoke French aggression.

While Lyautey was up to the challenge of securing Morocco, it was evident that German strategists were intent on instrumentalizing cross-imperial ties as they attempted to open an African front in the war. Working through Spain, consular and military authorities pressed merchants, tribal leaders, and agents on the ground into service, demonstrating the fluid nature of the Iberian-African frontier and, with it, the vulnerability of France's North African empire. As the war spread across imperial borders and merged with ongoing regional conflicts in

⁶² AN 475 AP 155, "Note pour le président du conseil: renseignements" (11–14 March 1916); AN 475 AP 147, Lucciardi, Consul honoraire de France in Tétouan to Lyautey, 12 June 1916; AN 475 AP 147, Agence de France in Tangier to Commissaire Résident Général in Rabat, 11 March 1915.

⁶³ Francesco Correale, "Le Panislamisme d'Abd al-Malik ben 'Abd al-Qadir Muhyi al-Din (1914-1924): Une alternative au Maroc alaouite ?" in Paola Gandolfi, ed., *Le Maroc aujourd'hui* (Bologna: Casa Merifor, 2008), 75–98.

⁶⁴ Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders*, 88.

⁶⁵ AMAE, Guerre, 1650, Lyautey to Alexandre Millerand, Minister of War, 21 October 1914.

⁶⁶ AN 475 AP 147, Lyautey to José Marina, 15 May 1915.

Morocco, Libya, and elsewhere, Lyautey worried that the war ministry, preoccupied with the Western Front in Europe, might lose sight of the colonies. “The fate of Morocco will be determined in Lorraine,” the ministry asserted as it recalled troops from the African Army and directed resources toward the continent, leaving France’s North African flank dangerously exposed.⁶⁷ For a veteran colonial official like Lyautey, this was a fatal mistake. In a war waged between global empires, focusing exclusively on the metropole not only left France open to surprise attacks from its enemies elsewhere. It could potentially sacrifice France’s leading position in the Mediterranean.

Liberating Islam

In the end, the mass jihad anticipated by the Germans failed to materialize. “The Holy War has not had much impact on the opinion of our Muslims,” observed Émile Piat, a consul general assigned to work with the French Press Bureau in 1915. “In Algeria, in Egypt, in India, and even in Persia, leading religious and political figures have not hesitated to make proclamations condemning the *fatwas* of the Shaykh-al-Islam and urge their coreligionists to remain faithful to the authorities that govern them.”⁶⁸ Boasting a specialized knowledge of Islam acquired during his years of foreign service, Piat believed it was evident to Muslims throughout the world that, rather than fighting for Islam, the Ottomans were being manipulated by delusional German strategists. Such appraisals failed to understand that the German–Ottoman alliance was never one sided, nor were CUP authorities the hapless pawns they were made out to be. The Ottoman leadership adroitly used the partnership with Berlin to pursue its own security and foreign policy objectives. Although senior officials in the German military command often compared the Ottoman Empire to a “hopeless invalid” on its deathbed, the CUP remained vital to the German strategy, a fact that many in Istanbul exploited to wrest concessions and financial support from Berlin.⁶⁹

The Ottoman government had experience in organizing the type of clandestine operations envisioned by the Foreign Office. Since 1911, the CUP had been mobilizing Pan-Islamic movements throughout the southern and eastern Mediterranean. It had recruited international volunteers and worked through Sufi orders to mount defense campaigns in both Libya and the Balkans. Ottoman officials also enjoyed ties to charitable and religious networks operating in the region. In 1913, the CUP had encouraged the creation of an Islamic Benevolence Society (*Cemiyet-i Hayriye-yi Islamiye*) composed of Turks, Egyptians, North

⁶⁷ Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco*, 100–02.

⁶⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1655, “Note par M. Piat à M. Hubert” (8 December 1915), 2.

⁶⁹ Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 680.

Africans, Arabs, and Indians based in Istanbul. The fact that political activists like the Syrian Shakib Arslan and Egyptian nationalist ‘Abd al-Aziz Jawish were among its chief organizers hinted at the true intentions behind this humanitarian initiative. The Benevolence Society provided a convenient cover for political Pan-Islamism, raising funds and organizing covert military operations in Tripoli, Tunisia, and Morocco.⁷⁰ Enver Pasha, who had been sent to Libya in 1911 to command Ottoman forces and recruit fighters, used his time in North Africa to contract informal alliances with local leaders and paramilitarists operating in the region.⁷¹ Assuming the post as Ottoman Minister of War in 1913, Enver organized these various networks into a “Special Services” unit—the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa*. The organization was kept distinct from the Ottoman general staff, outfitting Enver with his own personal paramilitary shock forces to deploy in guerrilla and sabotage activities abroad.⁷² As one of the principal supporters of the Ottoman–German alliance, Enver was key to actualizing the German strategy. Yet these paramilitary and political networks were, first and foremost, designed to service Ottoman security and foreign policy needs. That they aligned with German strategic objectives was incidental.

While Caliphal proclamations and *fatwas* dictated from Istanbul invested German incitements to revolt with an air of Islamic religious authority, the Ottoman alliance had a more direct value for German officials. The CUP offered Germany access to established networks of radicals and paramilitarists with ties to Entente colonial territories. German agents dispatched to Africa and the Middle East were first sent to Istanbul where they received instructions and advice from the Ottoman military command.⁷³ To develop these ties, the German government established a propaganda bureau in Berlin—the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* (NFO)—headed by Max von Oppenheim, one of the chief tacticians behind Germany’s Muslim war policy. The scion of a rich banking family, Oppenheim had traveled through North Africa and the Middle East in the years prior to the war, undertaking archaeological excavations and making contacts in the region that drew the suspicion of the French and British intelligence services.⁷⁴ In planning and organizing the “jihad made in Germany,” Oppenheim spent the war years working with insurgents and Ottoman officials with the intention of “revolutionizing” Islam and using it as an instrument of war. The German Foreign Office and NFO bankrolled newspapers in Arabic, Urdu, and Farsi, building upon

⁷⁰ Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islamism*, 90–98; Cleveland, *Islam Against the West*, 23; Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism*, 108–09.

⁷¹ McCollum, “Reimagining Mediterranean Spaces,” 12–14.

⁷² Moreau, “Aref Taher Bey,” in Moreau and Schaar, *Subversives and Mavericks*, 66–67; Polat Safi, “History in the Trench: The Ottoman Special Organization – *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* Literature,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 48:1 (2012): 89–106; Yücel Yiğit, “The *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* and World War I,” *Middle East Critique*, 23:2 (2014): 157–74.

⁷³ BNA, FO/248/1134, “Replies of Winckelman to Questions of the C.G.S.,” 5 February 1916.

⁷⁴ For example, see: CADN, ITU/1/V/990, “Voyage en Orient de Baron Oppenheim” (1911–1912).

the Muslim press networks that had grown up since the 1880s. These efforts aimed to foster radical political networks and catalyze anti-colonial movements.

In Berlin, Oppenheim drew together North Africans, Egyptian nationalists, Turks, Persians, and Indian militants associated with the revolutionary Ghadr Party. Many of these activists had been circulating through Europe and the Ottoman Empire prior to the war, but after 1914 Berlin and Istanbul became havens for them to organize.⁷⁵ In conjunction with the military intelligence division, the NFO organized national committees to coordinate anti-colonial resistance movements and give militants a forum for their views, underscoring the central message that Germany supported the cause of international Muslim liberation.⁷⁶ Committee members were expected to assist with propaganda and establish ties to their home communities in Entente territories. Some were given military training and arms and sent out to build radical movements in Afghanistan, North Africa, Mesopotamia, and Persia.⁷⁷ These political organizations were accompanied by nominally cultural associations that drew together Muslim activists. In September 1916, a meeting billed under the German Society of Islamic Culture was held in Berlin hosted by German orientalists and Enver Pasha. Members of the CUP, North African radicals, and even two delegates sent by the Senusi were in attendance. At the meeting, attendees praised Germany's support for Muslim emancipation before discussing future plans relevant to recruitment and propaganda activities. One member even proposed a plan to assassinate Muslim heads of state who collaborated with Entente governments.⁷⁸ The German Society of Islamic Culture placed five million marks at the disposal of Enver Pasha for these activities, rendering the "cultural" aspect of the gathering dubious.⁷⁹

Outside of Berlin, German and Ottoman authorities reached out to pre-established émigré circles where they could. Prior to the war, various political exiles had migrated to Switzerland, turning cities such like Geneva and Berne into centers of anti-colonial nationalist activity. Indians and Egyptians were among the leading campaigners, although a small number of Tunisians had begun arriving after the French crackdown in 1912.⁸⁰ In addition to the national-

⁷⁵ Jennifer Jenkins, "Jihad or Nationalist Uprising? Germany's 'Programme for Revolution' in the Middle East," in Andreas Gestrich and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, eds., *Bid for World Power? New Research on the Outbreak of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 365–66; Jenkins, Liebau, and Schmid, "Transnationalism and Insurrection," 65–72.

⁷⁶ IOR/L/PS/11/88, "Summary of Intelligence," 16 August 1916.

⁷⁷ Humayun Ansari, "Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali's Transnationalism: Pan-Islamism, Colonialism, and Radical Politics," in Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad, eds., *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe: Muslim Activists and Thinkers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 191–93; Herbert Landolin Müller, *Islam, Gihād (Heiliger Krieg) und deutsches Reich: Ein Nachspiel zur wilhelminischen Weltpolitik im Maghreb 1914–1918* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 240–43.

⁷⁸ BNA, FO/141/817/2, "Proceedings of the German Society of Islamic Kultur, Berlin," 10 September 1916.

⁷⁹ AMAE, Guerre, 1657, "Renseignements fournis par l'amirante italienne," 16 October 1916.

⁸⁰ Harald Fischer-Tiné, "The Other Side of Internationalism: Switzerland as a Hub of Militant Anti-colonialism, c. 1910–1920," in Patricia Purtschert and Harald Fischer-Tiné, eds., *Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 221–26.

ist committees, by 1913 a Society for Progress in Islam (*Encümen-i Terekki-yi Islam*) was set up in Geneva with the support of Germany and the CUP. It drew together Pan-Islamic activists, anti-colonialists, and Ottoman émigrés to promote resistance movements abroad.⁸¹ French officials noted that many of the Egyptians and North Africans coming to Geneva, Berne, and Lausanne were classified as “students,” allowing them to move freely between Switzerland and Germany upon arrival.⁸² A French intelligence report to the Foreign Ministry in 1917 spelled out what this increase in travel and political activity suggested. “It is evident, as the ceaseless propaganda undertaken in Switzerland reveals, that our enemies hope to foment an insurrectional movement in our Mediterranean possessions and provoke defections in our African regiments.”⁸³

While French and British officials believed these groups to be German agents, in reality many organizers operated independently of Berlin. The Egyptian nationalist party set up in Geneva pushed a reform policy that eschewed political violence. Its organ, *Le Sphinx*, had a wide circulation, and while its leaders identified it as a “revolutionary” party, their speeches did not reflect it. As one spokesman remarked in July 1914, “We wish that [the Egyptian people], demonstrating our healthy and modern civilization, renounce all violent programs of revolution and . . . little by little, affirm new political ideas reflecting the most simple and tranquil notion of evolution.”⁸⁴ Although calls for Egyptian independence did not sit well with British officials, such declarations were a far cry from the revolutionary anti-colonialism promoted by the Central Powers.

In addition to organizing and sponsoring political activities, the NFO and Ottoman government were engaged in propaganda campaigns that likewise drew together government officials and anti-colonial activists. As early as October 1914, a German news bureau was set up in Istanbul under the diplomatic envoy Baron Richard von Kuhlmann to ensure that accounts of German victories in Europe were publicized among Ottoman subjects. In one of its more distasteful decisions, the bureau released pictures of churches destroyed by German forces in Louvain to animate anti-Christian sentiment and enhance Germany’s alleged “Muslim” credentials. The photos were printed on postcards and sold by Turkish and Jewish booksellers in the Ottoman capital.⁸⁵ Ottoman journalists were also encouraged to visit Berlin to promote collaboration between the Ottoman and German press. Hekmit Bey, the director of the Ottoman Press Bureau, undertook a much publicized trip to Germany in 1917, meeting with members of the Berlin

⁸¹ BNA, FO/371/1973 (no. 81561), Milne Cheetham to Edward Grey, 30 November 1914.

⁸² AMAE, Guerre, 1657, “Extrait de renseignements communiqués par l’amirauté italienne,” 24 October 1916.

⁸³ AMAE, Guerre, 1658, President of the Sous-Commission des Pays Islamique to Aristide Briand, MAE, 13 January 1917.

⁸⁴ BNA, FO/371/1973, extract from *Il Mattino*, 2 November 1914.

⁸⁵ IOR/L/PS/11/99/P4180/1915, Enclosure 2, Note on Propaganda (1915).

Press Association (*Verein der Berliner Presse*) and the German Press Reich Association (*Reichsverband der Deutschen Presse*) in order to discuss ideas for remodeling the Ottoman newspaper industry. A magazine issued through the NFO presented the trip as further proof of the evolving German–Ottoman partnership. “What this visit demonstrates is that to the military, political, economic, and financial ties that unite Turkey with the German Empire, the spiritual bond should also be added,” it boasted.⁸⁶

As the war progressed, however, policymakers on both sides found it increasingly difficult to maintain public support for the alliance. German critics grew skeptical regarding the benefits of the alliance once it became evident that the sultan’s jihad had failed to provoke mass uprisings. Observing that colonial subjects had largely remained faithful to their imperial masters, the secretary of the German Mission in the Orient, Richard Schoefer, could only conclude that Muslims felt little inclination to obey Young Turks heralding a secular and modernizing program. “The Turkey of today, our ally, is no longer Islam,” he remarked during a speech given in Leipzig. “The avant-garde of Islam is England.”⁸⁷ Territorial losses in Africa also impacted the public mood. German Togo had capitulated to Britain in 1914, followed by the surrender of German South-West Africa, Cameroon, and German East Africa by 1916. Within a matter of sixteen months, Germany had lost the majority of its colonial empire in Africa, raising questions as to whether Germany even had need of a Muslim policy any longer.⁸⁸ Enthusiasm in the Ottoman Empire was similarly waning. A French intelligence report drafted in the spring of 1916 painted a disparaging picture of the situation in Istanbul, noting empty stores and shortages as resources were directed to the war effort at the behest of Germany. In certain areas outside the capital, people faced near-famine conditions, provoking a backlash against the CUP and especially Germany. “The Germans are generally detested in Turkey,” the report concluded.⁸⁹ Renewing public support for the alliance was imperative as German propagandists scrambled to explain why the Reich should continue to pursue its Eastern imperial policy.

As part of this initiative, the NFO earmarked funds for a more concerted propaganda campaign in conjunction with a small group of Muslim activists recently dispatched to Berlin from Istanbul. Prominent among them was the Egyptian ‘Abd al-Aziz Jawish. A former editor of *Al-Liwā*, the leading organ of the Egyptian nationalist party started by Mustafa Kamil, Jawish had gained notoriety prior to the war for his attacks against the British administration, comparing it to a “festering putrefaction” infecting the Egyptian body politic.⁹⁰ In 1912, he

⁸⁶ “Die Türkische Presse,” *Der Islamische Welt*, 8 (July 1917), 454.

⁸⁷ AMAE, Guerre, 1658, “L’Islam et la Guerre Mondiale” (1915).

⁸⁸ Heather Jones, “The German Empire,” in Gerwarth and Manela, *Empires at War*, 63–64.

⁸⁹ AN 475 AP 155, Telegram no. 346: Affaires Étrangères à Résident Général, Rabat, 19 May 1916.

⁹⁰ Shaykh Abdul Aziz Shawish, “Ägyptens Sehnsucht,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 9 (August 1917), 502.

became acquainted with the Ottoman recruiter Shakib Arslan, who subsequently introduced him to CUP luminaries like Enver Pasha while running the Islamic Benevolence Society.⁹¹ Well-connected within Cairene intellectual circles, Jawish played an important role in extending Enver's political network in Egypt, drawing a number of nationalists and Muslim intellectuals closer to the CUP. As a skilled religious orator fluent in Arabic, he was also an asset to the NFO as it ratcheted up its propaganda campaign.⁹² Initially put to work as a translator in the POW camps housed in Zossen and Wünsdorf, Jawish helped run the newspaper *El Dschihad* distributed to Muslim soldiers.⁹³ By the start of 1916, he was considering starting up his own newspaper focused on Muslim political issues with his cohort and fellow Egyptian Abd al-Malik Hamza. The NFO was happy to assist, believing it could put Jawish's connections and fierce rhetoric to good use.⁹⁴ The result was a new monthly magazine, *Die Islamische Welt*, with a Turkish equivalent *Al-Alam al-Islami* run out of Istanbul which began publication that November.

The NFO expected *Die Islamische Welt* to bolster support for the disappointing Ottoman alliance and assure the public that German imperial aspirations were by no means defeated. To this end, the NFO staged a gala premier at the Hotel Esplanade in Berlin to announce the new journal, with Jawish and Hamza joining a select team of Ottoman diplomats and German financiers to deliver encouraging speeches reaffirming the ties uniting the two empires. "It is the wish and aspiration of the entire Islamic world that the German-Islamic military alliance will offer a model for all Mohammedans and destroy the vestiges of French and English rapacity evident within Muslim territories," *Die Islamische Welt* boldly declared.⁹⁵ Over the next year, contributors to the magazine broached a variety of topics related to German-Muslim relations, effectively recasting the goals of the war.⁹⁶ Articles written by leading colonial publicists and military experts gave implausible forecasts of what a German victory would entail for the Muslim world. In one such article, the pro-colonial spokesman Emil Zimmermann painted a rosy picture of a reinvigorated German African empire spurring economic development throughout a liberated postwar North Africa.⁹⁷ "The only salvation for Africa is

⁹¹ Cleveland, *Islam Against the West*, 2; Zachary Lockman, "Exploring the Field: Lost Voice and Emerging Practices in Egypt, 1882–1914," in Israel Gershoni, Hakan Erdem, and Ursula Woköck, eds., *Histories of the Modern Middle East: New Directions* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 142–43.

⁹² Gerhard Höpp, "Zwischen Entente und Mittelmächten: Arabische Nationalisten unter Panislamisten in Deutschland (1914 bis 1918)," *Asien, Afrika, Lateinamerika*, 19:5 (1991): 830–33.

⁹³ IOR/L/PS/11/88/P404/1915, Extract from "The World of Islam," November 1916.

⁹⁴ Maja Sojref, "German-Ottoman Relations during the First World War: A Study of *Die Islamische Welt*, 1916–1918" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Oxford University, 2016), 12–14.

⁹⁵ "Fuenfuhrtee," *Die Islamische Welt*, 2 (January 1917), 63.

⁹⁶ Sojref, "German-Ottoman Relations during the First World War," 2–13.

⁹⁷ See: Emil Zimmermann, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich Mittelfrika als Grundlage für eniner neuen deutschen Weltpolitik* (Berlin: Verlag das Europäisichen- und Wirtschafts-Zeitung, 1917).

in joining with Germany,” as Zimmermann avowed.⁹⁸ Others like the writer Alfred Nossig and military journalist Erich von Salzmänn commended the “spirit of patriotism” and newfound sense of “national” association that the Young Turks were cultivating among the Ottoman people as they finalized their monumental revolution.⁹⁹ These achievements needed to be safeguarded, they argued, entailing that the Central Powers were obliged to continue the fight for culture and civilization first announced in 1914. The colonial explorer and former *Reichskommissar* of Kilimanjaro, Carl Peters, was content to uphold the fiction that the jihad had been a resounding success. “Everywhere the Mohammedan population has been fighting and standing by our side,” he remarked, suggesting there was no reason to assume that this German–Muslim fraternity would not extend into the postwar period and provide the template for a new world order.¹⁰⁰

These optimistic outlooks were nothing short of delusional as Germany lost its African empire and the Ottoman war effort persisted to yield minimal results. Yet while European contributors used *Die Islamische Welt* to peddle their imperial fantasies, Muslim activists had a more practical agenda. Jawish and Hamza were not blind to the fact that the war aims of the Central Powers could be aligned with aspirations for Pan-Islamic solidarity and liberation. That said, they hardly intended to be obedient lackeys content to follow a script.¹⁰¹ As Hamza implored, “together with the politicians of the Central Powers, the leading men of Islamic nations should prepare the program [for a Pan-Islamic resistance] and work towards its effective realization.”¹⁰² Although he lent his voice to the war campaign, Jawish was first and foremost a dedicated Egyptian nationalist. “I have committed myself in all fashions, orally or by writing, to ensuring that the heroes of the nationalist party are respected and obeyed by everyone,” he asserted.¹⁰³ He was also a committed Islamic modernist in the mold of thinkers like Kamil and Afghāni. In agreeing to work with the NFO, Jawish sought to organize the various North African émigrés moving between Berlin, Geneva, and Istanbul, providing a voice for Muslim anti-colonial interests in the German capital.¹⁰⁴ Taking up his editorial duties at *Die Islamische Welt*, he now had at his disposal an organ that could reach a wider audience, and Jawish did not hesitate to act.

⁹⁸ Emil Zimmermann, “Die Wirtschaftliche Bedeutung des Islam für Deutschland,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 8 (July 1917), 462.

⁹⁹ Alfred Nossig, “Die Wiedergeburt der Türkei,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 2 (January 1917), 56–57; Erich von Salzmänn, “Unsere Tuerkischen Kameraden,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 2 (January 1917), 25–26.

¹⁰⁰ Carl Peters, “Deutsche Kolonialpolitik in Verbingung mit dem Islam,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 9 (August 1917), 507.

¹⁰¹ Gerhard Höpp, *Arabische und islamische Periodika in Berlin und Brandenburg, 1915–1945: Geschichtlicher Abriss und Bibliographie* (Berlin: Verlag das Arabische Buch, 1994), 10–14.

¹⁰² Abdul Malik Hamsa Bey, “Der Panislamismus: Seine Praktischen Ziele,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 7 (June 1917), 385.

¹⁰³ AMAE, Guerre, 1655, Shaykh Abdel Aziz Shauish to Hassan, 26 December 1915.

¹⁰⁴ AMAE, Guerre, 1657, “MAE: Minutes au sujet de la revue de propadande en pays islamique,” 23 November 1916.

In addition to serving as an outlet for German war propaganda, *Die Islamische Welt* would challenge prevailing misconceptions of Muslims and show Islam “as it truly was,” Jawish claimed.¹⁰⁵ Drafting a number of articles over the course of 1916 and 1917, Jawish promoted the cause of Islamic renewal. He praised Salafist reformers who sought “to rid Islam of the rubbish accumulated over time,” calling for a return to fundamental Islamic principles of tolerance and justice. “The tarnished but ineradicable glory of Islam is rooted in the reform-minded and cultural aspirations and achievements of its communities,” he contended. “The constitution, legality, the administration of Islamic lands are the best proof of the progressive spirit that inspires it.”¹⁰⁶ As Hamza succinctly put it: “The teachings of Islam are in no way contradictory to European civilization. On the contrary, they work to promote progress.”¹⁰⁷ They also believed that progressive Islam could provide a new framework for social relations contrary to the racism and subjugation perpetrated under European colonial regimes. Jawish’s Pan-Islamic outlook rested upon a firm conviction in Islamic universalism. “Regardless of race or color,” religion alone was what bound the Islamic community, fostering “mutual support and cooperation.”¹⁰⁸ Pan-Islamism, vested in notions of Islamic fraternity and equality, presented an antidote to the European colonial order. It offered a base for a truly emancipatory movement that would encourage Muslims everywhere to cast off the shackles of European domination and pave the way for a new Islamic commonwealth, one culturally tied to the Ottoman Empire but resting upon irenic values of peaceful co-existence and a “sincere understanding between peoples.”¹⁰⁹

Muslim organizers were willing to enter into a marriage of convenience with German and Ottoman officialdom, convinced that it would ultimately promote “the liberation of Islamic peoples.”¹¹⁰ Under Jawish’s direction, *Die Islamische Welt* became an organ for Pan-Islamic and anti-colonial political activists, giving them a voice and new sense of agency. They equally sought to use the publication as a channel for communicating their aspirations to the German public, endeavoring to hold their ally accountable. In flattering prose, Hamza reminded that Muslims across the world had placed their faith in the liberation cause championed by Berlin at the start of the war. “[I] hope that the German people will recognize the true significance [of our aspirations for liberty],” he wrote, “and if the opportunity presents itself and the right moment arises, they will raise their

¹⁰⁵ “Fuenfuhrtee,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 2 (January 1917), 63.

¹⁰⁶ Shaykh Abdul Aziz Shawish, “Islam und Reform,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 11 (October 1917), 632–33.

¹⁰⁷ Abdul Malik Hamsa Bey, “Die Islamischen Voelker und die Friedensnote,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 3 (February 1917), 10.

¹⁰⁸ Shaykh Abdel Aziz Shawish, “Islam und Kultur,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 2 (January 1917), 4.

¹⁰⁹ Gasoli, “Islam und Andere Konfessionen,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 2 (January 1917), 49.

¹¹⁰ Abdul Malik Hamsa Bey, “Der Panislamismus: Seine Praktischen Ziele,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 7 (June 1917), 386.

voice in favor of these long-oppressed nations.”¹¹¹ Fears that Germany might abandon the Ottoman alliance prompted energetic responses from Muslim contributors, who urged resilience and underscored the moral base of their cause. In August 1917, Hamza made known Muslims’ “disappointment” at Germany’s reluctance to insist upon colonial self-determination in prospective peace negotiations. The “liberation of Oriental states” could be supported more forcefully, he admonished, especially since their cause was “based on the ideal of freedom, sympathy, and mutual interest” and not upon “hypocritical pretext.”¹¹² The point was clear. Egyptian nationalists expected the Central Powers to honor their commitments and champion the cause of Muslim national independence.

While contributors like Jawish and Hamza publicized the plight of the Egyptian people suffering under British rule, Muslims coming from French territories similarly used the magazine to vent their own grievances. Articles focused on Algeria and Morocco drew attention to France’s rapacious brand of colonialism, suggesting that German protection was far preferable to the abusive and racist policies of the French.¹¹³ Many of these articles were written by the Algerian Boukaboya Rabah Ben Belkassam, a virulent critic of French rule in the Maghreb who went by the *nom de guerre* Hadji Abdulla.¹¹⁴ Boukaboya had come to Europe as a lieutenant in the Seventh Regiment of the Tirailleurs Algériens but quickly became disillusioned by the horrendous treatment of the *troupes indigènes*. Deserting to the Germans, he was put to work in the POW camps where he was instructed to earn the trust of captured Muslim soldiers and convince them to take up arms against their colonial masters.¹¹⁵ Over the course of the war, Boukaboya turned out a number of pamphlets for the Central Powers, starkly contradicting the claims put forward in French wartime propaganda. “France is not the fatherland of Muslims, who have no ideals worth defending in the French ranks,” he pointedly argued, before concluding with a rousing call to revolt. “Today, at the moment when France has declared war on Islam, to arms...! North Africa arise for Muslim independence!”¹¹⁶ The French government summarily wrote off Boukaboya’s writings as “a poisonous source of lies,” but it took them seriously enough to issue their own pamphlets printed in French and Arabic presenting an “accurate” picture of the morale and conditions of colonial forces.¹¹⁷ Boukaboya likely first met Jawish while in Wünsdorf, and by 1917 Jawish was happy to provide an outlet for Boukaboya’s virulent diatribes. In the pages of

¹¹¹ Abdul Malik Hamsa Bey, “Die Muselmanischen Völker im Kampf,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 10 (September 1917), 567.

¹¹² Ibn Marawan, “Die Friedenbewegung und die Unterdrückten Völker des Orients,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 9 (August 1917), 514.

¹¹³ “Marokkos Zukunft,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 8 (July 1917), 476–79.

¹¹⁴ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, Charles Lutaud to Aristide Briand, MAE, 7 March 1916.

¹¹⁵ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 96–97.

¹¹⁶ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, “Les Turcos à la...Turquie!” (1916).

¹¹⁷ AMAE, Guerre, 1657, “Affaires Musulmanes: Indes Hollandaise, Telegraph,” 1 August 1916.

Die Islamische Welt, he continued his attacks, condemning the massacres and despoliations perpetrated by the French in North Africa and likening colonial administrators to vulgar marauders “pocketing their profits while all the while crying *civilization!*”¹¹⁸ The idea of Franco-Muslim fraternity was pure fiction, he railed. “Between the French and Algerian Muslims there is a deep-rooted and latent enmity.”¹¹⁹

Boukaboya was one among a number of Maghrebi activists inclined to work with the Central Powers. A small but not insignificant community of Algerians and Tunisians resided in the Ottoman Empire, providing a base from which to form an émigré movement. In 1912, they were joined by Young Tunisian activists who had had been expelled from the protectorate or fled to avoid arrest.¹²⁰ By late 1914, North African émigrés residing in Istanbul had organized an Association for Algerian-Tunisian Brotherhood with the support of the CUP, while in Cairo Algerians and Tunisians had formed a *Comité de l'Union Maghrébine* to press for colonial reform, if not outright independence.¹²¹ Working alongside the various Egyptian activists recruited by the Ottomans, Maghrebi organizers modeled these associations on the Egyptian National Committee. Participants coming from the French colonies were a mixed lot, ranging from Muslim elites disillusioned with promises of colonial reform to members of the Algerian and Tunisian religious establishment who never accepted French colonial rule, including the political firebrand and former mufti Sālah al-Sharīf al-Tunisi.

Coming from an Algerian émigré family, al-Tunisi had grown up in the Tunisian Regency, receiving a solid religious education at al-Zaytuna and joining the ranks of the Tunisian ‘ulamā. Like many of his cohorts, he was disposed to Ottoman Pan-Islamism and resented French efforts to break the ‘ulamā’s traditional monopoly on education and justice. Yet unlike many of his cohorts, al-Tunisi eschewed quiet opposition in favor of direct confrontation.¹²² By the early twentieth century, al-Tunisi stood out as a particularly vehement critic of the French government and its consistent interference in Islamic religious affairs, pegging him as a “fanatic” in the eyes of French authorities.¹²³ Convinced that European colonialism was a plague on the Muslim world, al-Tunisi urged Muslims to look to the Caliphate as their guardian and protector. Repeatedly frustrated by the French government, he left the Regency in 1906 to join the Maghrebin émigré community in Syria.¹²⁴ Emigration did nothing to moderate his fiery temperament. In Damascus, he spoke out openly against the French and British in mosques,

¹¹⁸ El Hadji Abdullah, “Das Protektorat ueber Marokko,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 3 (February 1917), 58.

¹¹⁹ El Hadi Abdallah, “Der Zuknftige Friede und die algerischen Muslims,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 9 (August 1917), 557.

¹²⁰ Bardin, *Algériens et Tunisiens dans l'Empire Ottoman*, 190; Müller, *Islam*, 243.

¹²¹ Green, *The Tunisian Ulama*, 233–34.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 147–58.

¹²³ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, “Annex à la dépêche politique du Caire,” 6 March 1916.

¹²⁴ Christelow, *Algerians Without Borders*, 89.

delivering blistering anti-colonial tirades to all who would listen. He became embroiled in arguments with leading Muslim modernists like Rashid Rida, accusing them of irreverence and defiling traditional Islamic values. He even issued *fatwas* calling for the death of Muslims who collaborated with the French regime, none of which were acted upon in the end. His powerful religious oratory and energetic speeches earned al-Tunisi a reputation in the city as a strong proponent of Pan-Islamic unity and Islamism, and French intelligence officials slowly began to take an interest.¹²⁵ “Shaykh Sālah is celebrated for the hate he professes against France and against Europeans in general,” one report confirmed, sealing his identity as a Muslim intransigent.¹²⁶

The French were not the only ones watching. Ottoman authorities had been impressed by the fervor of his Pan-Islamic message, and they believed the forceful Tunisian could be of service. In the coming years, al-Tunisi was given a small state pension and encouraged to organize the Algerian and Tunisian émigrés resident in Syria. Officials were not hesitant to send him abroad either, believing he could assist in cultivating Ottomanist sympathies among Arab speakers. In Tangiers, he met with Moroccan tribal leaders and members of Abd al-Qādir’s family, making them aware they could depend on Istanbul for support.¹²⁷ In 1911, al-Tunisi’s talents were put to good use in Tripolitania as the CUP exhorted Arabs to take up the call to jihad against the invading Italian forces. Working out of Libya, al-Tunisi made the acquaintance of Enver Pasha, who recognized al-Tunisi’s knack for organization and speechmaking. Upon returning to Istanbul, Enver made him a chief aide for African affairs, giving him a nominal position in the Arab Section of the Ottoman military.¹²⁸ By this point, access to the CUP senior leadership also meant access to German money as Berlin began funneling significant amounts of gold and supplies to Istanbul in preparation for war. A religious polemicist accustomed to animating crowds from the minbars of mosques or through tracts circulated among local print networks, al-Tunisi now had at his disposal a government printing press and bureaucratic apparatus to deploy his anti-colonial, Pan-Islamic message.¹²⁹

Al-Tunisi obliged his Ottoman backers, using his status as an *‘ālim* to give German-Ottoman policies an air of religious legitimacy. In 1915, he published the pamphlet *Haqiqat al-Jihad (The Truth About Jihad)*, in which he judged the current call to jihad to be in line with the traditions and spirit of Islam. According to his interpretation of Quranic text and Islamic precedent, jihad was both a patriotic and religious struggle. The current war would, in his opinion, achieve

¹²⁵ AMAE, Guerre, 1654, Henry to Delcassé, MAE, 28 July 1915.

¹²⁶ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, “Annex à la dépêche politique du Caire,” 6 March 1916.

¹²⁷ AMAE, Guerre, 1654, “Saint-Aulaire, telegramme,” 26 July 1915.

¹²⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, “Annex à la dépêche politique du Caire,” 6 March 1916.

¹²⁹ Peter Heine, “Sālih ash-Sharīf al-Tunīsī, a North African Nationalist in Berlin during the First World War,” *Revue de l’Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 33 (1982): 89–95.

nothing less than “the liberation of the entire Islamic world.” Yet al-Tunisi was also careful to distinguish between enemies of the Islamic faith and those who showed themselves to be “true and sincere allies” of Muslims. “The enemies of Islam do not necessarily mean non-Muslims, but rather only those who take up arms against us because of our religion, who seek to drive us from our territory, who occupy our homelands or who might give aid to our enemies.”¹³⁰ In short, Germany and Austria, although Christian powers, were exempt from the current religious struggle, revealing once again how war and contingent interests served to re-conceptualize the very idea of Islamic holy war. Passing over the textual arguments and justifications marshalled by al-Tunisi in his pamphlet, German critics were happy to seize upon the core message it contained. As a review printed in the *Gazette de Cologne* made clear, the book affirmed that the present conflict was a jihad and that the Central Powers were working to protect Islam from its enemies. “The Holy War is not, as our enemies contend, made in Germany,” the reviewer argued. “On the contrary, it stems from the true spirit of Islam.”¹³¹

While willing to satisfy the needs of his patrons, al-Tunisi was hardly a passive voice-piece for Istanbul and Berlin. The message broadcast by the Central Powers was consistent with his own outlooks when it came to colonialism and its impact on the Muslim world. From his experience in Tunisia, he was convinced that European domination sought to “annihilate Islam and wipe it from the face of the earth.” This view fit with many of the anxieties expressed by Muslim traditionalists and modernists worried over the fate of *dar al-Islam*. Having watched the French regime undermine the Tunisian ‘ulamā and inflict a “corrupting” influence on Islamic education and values, al-Tunisi was willing to place his faith in the promises of Ottoman and German officials who pledged to liberate “the Muslim world in its entirety,” as he claimed. In this struggle, unmitigated violence against the enemies of Islam was essential. “Pursue your enemies without cease or respite,” he commanded. “Kill them everywhere you encounter them and chase them from the places where they have expelled you.”¹³² Al-Tunisi’s Islamic politics were never divorced from the anti-colonial struggle in French North Africa, and in the context of the ongoing war the two came together. In 1916, he played a formative role in organizing a Committee for Algerian and Tunisian Independence which held its first meeting at the Hotel Esplanade that January.¹³³ As al-Tunisi instructed his audience, “the Tunisians and Algerians have never renounced their independence nor their connection with the Caliphate, and patriots have not

¹³⁰ Chaïch Salih Aschseharif Attunisi [Salah Sharif al-Tunisi], *Die Wahrheit über den Glaubenskrieg* (Berlin: Verlag Dietrich Reimer, 1915), 12, 5.

¹³¹ AMAE, Guerre, 1655, “Jihad (analyses), *Gazette de Cologne*,” 6 January 1916.

¹³² AMAE, Guerre, 1654, “Appel à tous les musulmans servant malgré eux dans les rangs étrangère et habitant des colonies” (1915).

¹³³ AN 475 AP 155, “Bulletin de Renseignements (Questions Musulmanes),” 24 April 1916; AMAE, Guerre, 1655, “*Gazette de Voss*,” 7 January 1916.

ceased to direct their efforts toward saving their country.”¹³⁴ As a proponent of Pan-Islamic unity, al-Tunisi was prone to universalize the struggle for North African independence, making it one and same with the cause of the Muslim world. “To obstruct the criminal designs of the enemy, the best thing is to assist oppressed people recover their freedom,” he argued.¹³⁵ Maghrebin liberation could only come about through a collective effort rooted in Islamic solidarity and common struggle, in his view. The cause of the Muslim world was the cause of a liberated North Africa, and the war was proving it.

It was clear that in the crucible of the First World War, conceptions of Maghrebin Islam were evolving. Moreover, the fact that al-Tunisi was the scion of an Algerian emigrant family was not insignificant. The growing collaboration between Tunisian and Algerian activists during the early twentieth century had established a context for imagining a collective identity as Maghrebi Muslims. While North African elites prior to the war had formulated demands for colonial inclusion as French Muslims, radical opponents were just as capable of envisioning this collectivity in terms favoring national independence. For a Tunisian-Algerian like al-Tunisi, the affinity between the two people was both national and religious. In organizing a committee for independence, North African Muslims were coming to adopt a position similar to Egyptian nationalists, blending patriotism and Islamic solidarity in equal measure. Al-Tunisi and his collaborators rejected the reformist camp, placing the issue of Algerian-Tunisian independence on the table. More to the point, the committee intended to lobby the Central Powers to obtain it, wedding the cause of Muslim liberation to their own nationalist platform.¹³⁶

Thinkers such as Jawish and al-Tunisi were representative of the anti-colonial and Pan-Islamic sentiments shared by many Muslim intellectuals of the period. They drew upon prevailing ideas of Islamic reformism, promoting conceptions of Islam that accorded with earlier programs elaborated by modernists and Salafists. Yet it was also evident that the war years were coming to enhance the radicalism implicit in these positions, as Ottoman and German spokesmen depicted the struggle as a war of liberation and activists infused reformist platform with calls for national independence that transcended purely religious concerns. With German funding and support, activists were given new opportunities to promote their respective projects, entailing that the war effort could serve as a vehicle for their envisaged anti-colonial struggles. These new alignments also testified to the fact that the war years were encouraging a transformation within Muslim social and political networks, as cities like Berlin and Geneva became nodal points in the trans-political currents connecting Europe to the Muslim Mediterranean.

¹³⁴ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, “La situation à Tunis” (February 1916).

¹³⁵ AMAE, Guerre, 1658, “Tunisie et Algérie: Protestation Contre les Violences Françaises” (1916).

¹³⁶ AMAE, Guerre, 1655, French Ambassador in Berne to Aristide Briand, MAE, 18 January 1916.

For German strategists, the anti-colonial committees were intended to establish contacts between activists and draw them closer to Germany, with an eye on fostering ties to the Muslim world that would benefit German imperial goals in the postwar period.¹³⁷ While radicals like Jawish and al-Tunisi saw a clear value in this alliance, they never imagined themselves as handmaidens of German imperialism. Their willingness to assist the war effort was based upon calculated objectives that aimed to further respective nationalist aspirations and sketch a framework for a post-colonial Muslim world.

“Our Demands Are Clear”

Al-Tunisi was the face of the North African community in Germany, but French authorities were well aware that the independence committee he presided over was only one facet of a broader network. While the French had cracked down on the Young Tunisian opposition in the years prior to the war, the movement was by no means dead and persisted to command native loyalties in the Tunisian protectorate. Suppression had only served to drive activists underground, channeling aspiration for colonial equality and reform into more radical platforms. Following the expulsion order in 1912, Ali Bash-Hamba relocated to Istanbul where he crafted an image for himself as a “sincere and devout champion of Islam having struggled against French influence,” according to one report.¹³⁸ By 1916, he was running operations for the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* and coordinating with paramilitarists from Morocco to the greater Middle East.¹³⁹ More alarming was the fact that men like Bash-Hamba retained connections to the Muslim community in Tunisia, potentially providing an outlet for German secret operations in the protectorate.¹⁴⁰ Young Tunisian agitators were stirring anti-colonial sentiments among their compatriots, and there was little doubt that Ali Bash-Hamba was the chief ringleader for the movement.¹⁴¹ “We cannot ignore the fact that this man is the most prominent agitator sowing the hatred which exists between the natives and the government,” an intelligence memo warned in 1917.¹⁴²

Young Tunisian exiles were drawn to al-Tunisi and the independence movement taking shape in Berlin, but they nonetheless retained their own networks beyond German circles. Activists such as Ali Bash-Hamba had, like many

¹³⁷ IOR/L/PS/11/88, “Summary of Intelligence,” 16 August 1916.

¹³⁸ ANT, Series MN, Carton 16, dossier 5, “Traduction: Ali Bach-Hamba” (1917).

¹³⁹ Safi, “History in the Trench,” 98; Moreau, “Aref Taher Bey,” in Moreau and Schaar, *Subversives and Mavericks*, 66–67.

¹⁴⁰ ANT, Series MN, Carton 16, dossier 5, “La vérité sur la parti de Jeunes Tunisiens, sa genèse et sa situation actuelle” (1917).

¹⁴¹ ANT, Series MN, Carton 16, dossier 5, “Traduction,” no. 12 (1917); ANT, Series MN, Carton 16, dossier 5, “Traduction,” no. 36 (1917).

¹⁴² ANT, Series MN, Carton 16, dossier 5, “Traduction: Ali Bach-Hamba” (1917).

activists in Egypt and India prior to the war, placed their hopes in the prospect of colonial reform. They had preferred to seek accommodation within the existing colonial system rather than confront it outright.¹⁴³ These aspirations had been dashed, compelling nationalists and reform-minded leaders to consider other alternatives. Yet nationalist elites remained distinct from the class of *‘ulamā* to which men like al-Tunisi belonged. While they subscribed to ideas of Pan-Islamic cultural unity, their political programs remained vested in secular and modernizing ideas that distinguished them from Islamic religious authorities and radical clerics. This is not to imply that their ideological outlooks remained static. Working abroad in cities such as Berlin, Istanbul, and Geneva, Muslim activists came together from different parts of the world. Contact reinforced ideas of Islamic unity, but it also exposed North Africans to the organizational strategies and ideologies of groups like the Egyptian and Indian nationalists who had experience running parties in exile and benefited from well-established press networks. Maghrebini émigrés could and did learn from these experiences as they re-evaluated earlier expectations of colonial reform and espoused new ideas of national self-governance circulating among wartime émigré communities.

As the social circles surrounding them changed, so too did the intellectual environment in which they operated. In Switzerland, exiles consorted with a variety of international organizers, many of whom supported democratic and emancipatory movements on principle. These contacts, much like those fostered through German–Ottoman collaboration, were also formative and served to both broaden the scope of anti-colonial networks and infuse their demands with a new urgency. In the summer of 1916, Algerian and Tunisian exiles joined some 400 delegates representing twenty-three nations to participate in the Third Congress of Nationalities hosted in Lausanne. The gathering was convoked by the Union of Nationalities, a pro-Entente international organization headed by a mix of French and Belgian pacifists and presided over by the Lithuanian activist Juozas Gabrys. With branches in France, Belgium, and the United States, the Union was committed to promoting peaceful relations between nations and encouraging dialogue on a range of international questions.¹⁴⁴ In calling the congress, the Union intended to address the issue of minority national rights and self-determination directly. “In this time of European commotion, all people suffer intensely, they shudder with indignation, with fear, and with hope,” claimed the congress program. “Will they continue to be the bloody victims of an execrable national policy or will they finally be assured of freedom, personal security, and goodwill... [as they work toward] universal civilization no less than their own personal development?”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 9.

¹⁴⁴ See: Alfred Erich Senn, “Garlawa: A Study in Émigré Intrigue, 1915–1917,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, 105:24 (1967): 411–24; Matthew James Frank, *Making Minorities History: Population Transfer in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 27–28.

¹⁴⁵ “Le Peuples opprimés,” *Revue du Maghreb*, 30 June 1916.

The gathering drew together a mix of colonial subjects and national minorities consisting of Egyptians, Catalans, Albanians, Poles, Kyrgyz, and Tatars, all of whom wished to air their respective grievances. Delegates went as far as to approve a declaration of the Rights of Nationalities asserting that nationalities were “founded on a community of common roots, language, and tradition which derived from a free and consensual association of different ethnic groups,” and as such ought to be recognized by “international right.”¹⁴⁶ These assertions impressed Muhammed Bash-Hamba, the Tunisian delegate attending the conference. Taking the floor, he apprised the gathering of his own people’s struggle against the French, arguing that Algerians and Tunisians constituted a single nationality as defined by the resolution. “These two fraternal peoples, intelligent and industrious, who have their own civilization, who have always clung fast to their rights and freedoms, must not be treated as inferior people nor deprived of justice,” he proclaimed.¹⁴⁷

Muhammed Bash-Hamba had arrived in Geneva in 1913. The brother of Ali Bash-Hamba, he had taken part in the Young Tunisian demonstrations, placing his faith in the cause of colonial reform and the evolving relationship between Young Tunisian and Young Algerian activists driving the movement. Like his brother, he ran afoul of the French administration for his Pan-Islamic stance, prompting his swift departure from Tunisia. Relocating to Switzerland, he intended to serve the Young Tunisian cause abroad, functioning as the movement’s chief liaison in the country.¹⁴⁸ Capitalizing on his brother’s political connections, he received funding from the CUP, and in 1916 launched his own newspaper the *Revue du Maghreb*, through which he began publicizing North African issues. The French government was largely unimpressed by Muhammed, who appeared to lack the charisma and dynamism of his elder brother. “Muhammed Bash-Hamba lives very modestly in Geneva,” an intelligence agent reported. “He frequents Turkish circles, but he is regarded as an insignificant person without importance.” Despite his insignificance, he was still considered “a dangerous agitator.”¹⁴⁹ Armed with his newspaper, he continued to press for legal and political reforms in the French colonies, execrating the systematic violence and exploitation that North Africans endured on a daily basis. He was equally critical of French interference in Islamic affairs, seeing it as a grave offense to both Islam and Arab national identity. “The Muslim religion is not respected,” he railed. “It is administered by French bureaucrats and the language used is French.”¹⁵⁰ These and other

¹⁴⁶ “La IIIeme Conférence des Nationalités,” *Revue du Maghreb* (30 July 1916), 3: 90.

¹⁴⁷ “Nos Revendications,” *Revue du Maghreb* (30 July 1916), 3: 63.

¹⁴⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1657, “Note: La Revue du Maghreb,” 10 September 1916.

¹⁴⁹ AMAE, Guerre, 1657, Consul Général de France (Geneva) to Aristide Briand, MAE, 2 September 1916.

¹⁵⁰ “Le Sabotage de la langue arabe,” *Revue du Maghreb* (30 August 1916), 4: 109.

reproaches made up a familiar litany of grievances meted out by French colonial subjects against the regime.

Yet if Muhammed's criticism of the French colonial system appeared somewhat routine by 1916, it was evident that his views were also maturing as he acclimated to life in Switzerland and reformulated his political views. He was taken by the lively atmosphere of wartime Geneva where anti-colonial internationalists and nationalist organizers met, debated, and socialized under the watchful eyes of police spies. He was also receptive to new ideas that had begun circulating within these communities as the war ground on. Demands for national self-determination were attaining greater saliency among political elites, and over the course of 1917 external events served to bolster these convictions. In October 1917, radical Bolshevik revolutionaries seized control of the Russian government, providing a catalyst for anti-colonial movements as communist revolutionaries allied their emancipatory ideology with the struggles for freedom occurring across the globe. Fearful that Bolshevism could acquire an international momentum, political leaders reacted. The US President Woodrow Wilson had already announced his support for a democratic postwar order upon entering the war on the side of the Entente. Yet in early 1918, he formalized his commitment to self-determination, hoping to dampen support for international communism. That January, Wilson laid out his Fourteen Points before the US Congress, proclaiming that "a free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims" must serve as a basis for future peace negotiations. While Wilson's chief advisor Edward House assured France and Britain that this point was not intended to mean the "reopening of all colonial questions" and would be applied exclusively to the Central Powers, the Entente allies were noticeably troubled by the wording of the declaration, and for good reason.¹⁵¹ As anticipated, anti-colonial leaders immediately expressed their expectations that the principles would be applied to Entente territories, employing the Wilsonian language of rights and sovereignty as a battering ram against the colonial order.¹⁵²

Observing France's cagey attitude as this swell of anti-colonial nationalism mounted, Muhammed Bash-Hamba was convinced that colonial subjects could no longer depend upon the good will of the metropole, nor need they. A new tenor of anti-colonial nationalism began to creep into the more formulaic complaints against French colonialism in the pages of the *Revue du Maghreb*, blending aspects of Pan-Islamism, Wilsonianism, and international rights. "Our demands are clear," he insisted. "We demand the right accorded to all to be recognized for us."¹⁵³ The "us" to which he referred were native Algerians and

¹⁵¹ Special Representative Edward House to the Secretary of State, file no. 763.72119/8979, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1918, Supplement I, The World War* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 1: 405.

¹⁵² Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 39–53.

¹⁵³ "Conseillers légistes musulmans," *Revue du Maghreb* (30 June 1916), 2: 1.

Tunisians. Both were subject to the same oppressive legal regimes and forms of exploitation in his opinion, and this common oppression in tandem with a shared history and Islamic culture had come to constitute Algerians and Tunisians as a single people.¹⁵⁴ As the war years aroused aspirations for national self-determination and international solidarity, Muhammed blended many of these themes into his critiques of colonialism, re-imagining the cause of colonial reform as one of Maghrebini national independence. “One truth, which was considered only yesterday a utopia is becoming a reality,” he claimed. “It is the right of people to dispose of their own destiny.”¹⁵⁵ As Muhammed explained in the summer of 1917, France now faced a choice. “The French people must state clearly the policy it intends to pursue with peoples conquered by force!”¹⁵⁶

Yet as international support for oppressed nationalities grew, it was becoming evident that this choice might not be one of French making. By 1918, journalists were conscious of the need to appeal to a broader public consisting of foreign diplomats, political organizers, and even the president of the United States. They sought to mobilize international support and force the hand of colonial governments, and this entailed framing their cause in the rhetoric of Wilsonian self-determination. “The Algero-Tunisian people demand their complete independence,” as Muhammed explained in 1918. “It calls upon universal conscience in recognizing its rights to freely dispose of its destiny and expects to have its legitimate demands considered at the Peace Conference which will one day meet in order to redraw the map of the world and formulate new principles that will guarantee the rights of man and peoples.”¹⁵⁷ In a series of articles published in the *Revue du Maghreb* that January and February, he pressed the cause of national sovereignty, arguing that to ignore the rights of the Algerians and Tunisians would be “a disgrace to humanity and justice... These people demand a regime that reflects their voices. *A referendum by the populations will determine their future destiny.*”¹⁵⁸ No longer content to settle for a modified brand of colonialism, activists like Muhammed Bash-Hamba now intended to make the case for a sovereign Arab-Muslim North African community distinct from France.¹⁵⁹ Should France be unwilling to acknowledge their claims, they were willing to appeal to public opinion and even directly to Woodrow Wilson himself, beseeching the statesman to honor his pledge.

Writing from Lucerne on 30 January, the Tunisian émigré Muhammed Rachis Sirrouk pleaded with Wilson not to forget the many Muslims under French rule. “Our brothers in Algeria and Morocco await the day of deliverance from us and

¹⁵⁴ Mohammed Bach-Hamba, *Le Peuple Algero-Tunisien et la France*, ed. Mahmoud Abdelmoula (Carthage: Bèit Al-Hikma, 1991), 3.

¹⁵⁵ Mohammed Bach-Hamba, *Le Peuple Algero-Tunisien et la France*, 159.

¹⁵⁶ “Le Droit des peuples,” *Revue du Maghreb* (May–June 1917), 5–6: 66.

¹⁵⁷ Mohammed Bach-Hamba, *Le Peuple Algero-Tunisien et la France*, 160.

¹⁵⁸ “Le Droit des peuples et les coloniaux,” *Revue du Maghreb* (January–February 1918), 1–2: 17.

¹⁵⁹ “Notre Droit,” *Revue du Maghreb* (March–April 1918), 3–4: 37.

we count upon the firm assistance of the president of great America who has raised his voice in support of the just cause of small nations," he informed.¹⁶⁰ Boukaboya Rabah Ben Belkassam proved no less reluctant to lend his voice to the cause of Algerian independence. Sending a letter to Wilson from Switzerland on behalf the Comité des Patriotes Algériens in early 1917, he commended Wilson's "noble and magnanimous ideas" and informed him that the French government in no way represented the views of Algerian Muslims. "We sincerely hope that America will not forget us when we demand the independence of Algeria and its liberation from the foreign yoke that France has imposed on us," he asserted.¹⁶¹ African Islam had made significant sacrifices over the course of the war, he believed, and it was only just that the Muslims of North Africa could expect to see their "cherished hopes" realized at its conclusion. "Every nation, big or small, is entitled to their place in the sun. If so, then Muslims subject to a foreign yoke can hope for a far-reaching improvement in their situation after the peace agreement."¹⁶²

The French embassy in Berne wrote off these letters as German propaganda and nothing more, chalking them up to a handful of fugitives and refugees in the pay of Berlin.¹⁶³ German propagandists were certainly all too happy to publicize Wilson's Fourteen Points and hold them up as proof of imperialist hypocrisy.¹⁶⁴ "False apologies and insincere declarations" were all the Entente powers had to offer, in Hamza's opinion. "While the Entente wave the banner of justice, what type of justice [can be expected] when their rule is synonymous with injustice and oppression?" he asked.¹⁶⁵ German sponsorship aside, it was clear that North Africans were adapting the wartime rhetoric of universal rights and national emancipation to their platforms in an effort to sway public opinion. As the Moroccan shaykh Muhammed al-Atabi unequivocally stated in his 1917 pamphlet *Voice of Morocco*: "We demand that universal democracy come to the assistance of the Moroccan nation in order to deliver it from the slavery where it moans under the yoke of France. We are convinced that democrats will only concern themselves with the small European nations. Their humanitarian principles must extend to all subjugated nations without distinction for race, religion, color, or continent."¹⁶⁶

By 1917, it was clear that activists were appropriating the doctrine of national self-determination as a new mantra of the oppressed and disenfranchised. Although spurred by the dramatic events shaking the international order in the final year of the war, this "Wilsonian moment" marked, in many ways, the

¹⁶⁰ AMAE, Guerre, "Affaires Musulmanes," 22 February 1917.

¹⁶¹ AMAE, Guerre, "Affaires Musulmanes," 22 February 1917.

¹⁶² El Hadj Abdullah, "Der Zukünftige Friede und die algerischen Muslims," *Die Islamische Welt*, 9 (August 1917), 557.

¹⁶³ AMAE, Guerre, 1658, "Minute: Telegram from Berne to Foreign Ministry," 16 April 1917.

¹⁶⁴ Baidaba, "Die Schimpfenden Engländer," *Die Islamische Welt*, 3 (February 1917), 35.

¹⁶⁵ Abdul Malik Hamsa Bey, "Die Islamischen Voelker und die Friedensnote," *Die Islamische Welt*, 3 (February 1917), 9.

¹⁶⁶ AMAE, Guerre, 1658, "Une Voix du Maroc" (1917).

culmination of processes that had been germinating since the start of the conflict, if not earlier. Muslim activism evolved within the complex networks of radical trans-politics and Pan-Islamism that had been growing up since the turn of the century. Germany and the Ottoman Empire certainly played a key role in reorienting these movements as they attempted to harness trans-imperial networks for their own ends. Agencies like the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* and NFO furnished a novel framework within which organizers and anti-colonial radicals could mingle and operate, and this support was not without its effect. Nonetheless, these movements reflected the aspirations and goals of anti-colonial agitators themselves, and as people migrated across frontier so too did ideas. As places such as Istanbul, Berlin, and Switzerland reconfigured trans-imperial politics and created new centers of engagement, Muslim journalists and activists found themselves pulled into multiple orbits. Contact with nationalist and internationalist groups generated new reflections on the colonial question, prompting activists to modify their respective programs in accordance with changing intellectual currents. In this environment, trans-imperial activism became invested with a notable international dimension. From Morocco to India, Muslims appeared to be speaking a common language, drawing upon ideas of Pan-Islamic solidarity as well as new discourses of liberation and national self-determination elaborated during the war years.

European powers entrenched in the Mediterranean had routinely contended with the destabilizing influences of cross-border politics as they built their empires. Yet the events of the First World War were different. It suddenly appeared that the entire imperial edifice was about to come tumbling down around them. The question was how would they respond to these rapid changes taking place?

Imperial Entanglements and the Making of the Post-Ottoman Mediterranean

Just over a year into the war, Émile Piat found himself assigned to work in the French Press Bureau, the chief office responsible for managing the government's wartime propaganda operations. Having served in various consular posts in the Middle East, Piat considered himself an expert on Eastern affairs with a specialized knowledge of Islam. His superiors were inclined to agree, believing his talents could serve the French war effort by coordinating the state's propaganda campaign from Paris. Piat's approach was clear and simple. "If our local policies in the colonies and in our protectorates give to our Muslim subjects the clear impression that we respect their beliefs, that we are concerned with their material interests, but that we will tolerate neither rebellion nor even the least disloyalty," he assured, "we can anticipate the moment where the combined action of the Allies will stop the current attempt by the Germans to carry the war into the eastern Mediterranean basin."¹ Yet communicating this message required a medium, and for Piat and his cohorts in the Press Bureau the medium was the printed word.

Colonial authorities had long favored print as an instrument of choice in France's empire-building project. While in reality newspapers typically failed to exercise a significant influence on indigenous populations, officials nonetheless persisted to invest the printed word with a certain power, turning out texts and periodicals for an imagined Muslim audience. During the First World War, this tendency increased as a flood of German-backed propaganda inundated the colonies. Like the colonial rivalries of old, the First World War was a "war of words" just as much as a military conflict.² Yet compared with former rivalries, the stakes were inestimably higher. Colonial regimes clamped down on foreign and clandestine print. Stricter border controls and surveillance were imposed across North Africa as Entente Allies worked to constrain the channels and networks connecting cities like Tunis and Cairo to Istanbul. Britain made known its security concerns early in the war when in December 1914 it deposed the reigning Egyptian khedive invested by the Ottoman government and appointed Prince Hussein Kamel head

¹ AMAE, Guerre, 1655, "Note par M. Piat à M. Hubert" (8 December 1915), 8–9.

² Paddock, *World War I and Propaganda*; David Welsh, *Germany and Propaganda in World War I: Pacifism, Mobilization, and Total War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

of a new “Egyptian sultanate” under British protection.³ This change from Ottoman province to British protectorate was designed to protect Suez and the Sinai Peninsula, both essential to British transport operations in the region. France may not have been thrilled to see Britain’s longstanding influence in Egypt solidified, but at the moment it was willing to look the other way. “The proclamation of the Egyptian sultanate signals without question the complete ruin of the [Ottoman] Empire,” declared *Le Temps*. Egyptian “independence” would, it was hoped, provide an impetus for others within the empire to question their loyalty to Istanbul, delivering a death blow to the Ottoman Empire.⁴

In the first months of the war, old rivals appeared to be putting aside their differences in the face of a common enemy. Needless to say, this state of affairs would not last as the war continued. Wrenching Egypt from Ottoman control set a precedent, opening up the possibility of dismembering the Ottoman Empire altogether as the Allies pursued their war aims. Yet it also revealed that defending imperial interests could and did encourage acts of imperial expansion, setting the stage for a new contest over the coveted Ottoman spoils as the war progressed. Efforts to restrain trans-imperial flows abetted empire-building projects, a point that would become evident in later years as French diplomatic officials and colonialists set their sights on Ottoman Syria. Colonial authorities may have winced at the many imperial entanglements that persistently threatened control on the ground, but strategists were never averse to working across empires to achieve their goals, in many cases instrumentalizing networks that stretched from European capitals to the Ottoman periphery. While officials collaborated with émigré circles and local powerbrokers in pursuing expansionist goals, these interlocutors were not beholden to European imperial designs. They adroitly wed their own plans for a post-Ottoman Middle East with the expectations of imperialists, fostering synergistic relationships that would influence the future of the Arab world as well as the paths of European empire.

The Power of the Printed Word

Allied governments were determined to meet the barrage of German-Ottoman periodicals and religious proclamations with a concerted propaganda campaign of their own. The established Ottoman press networks that had grown up in London and Paris over the course of the nineteenth century became a potential fifth column overnight, prompting state censors to take action. That September, Ottoman periodicals publishing “tendentious information and deceitful news” were

³ BNA, FO 371/1973 (no. 81561), “Cheetham Telegram,” 20 December 1914.

⁴ “Le Protectorat anglaise en Egypte,” *Le Temps* (18 December 1914), 1.

banned in Algeria and Tunisia.⁵ Arabic language media was carefully monitored, with officials pressing native editors across North Africa into the service of the war effort. “[We need] to generate in [the colonies] a swell of information—of course pitched to our advantage—that can, if not destroy completely then at least largely reduce the hostile information that is constantly put into circulation,” the Algerian Governor General Charles Lutaud exhorted the foreign ministry.⁶ It was imperative that Muslim subjects “only receive information concerning the war from intermediaries of the administration and in a form that is judged satisfactory.”⁷ To ensure this eventuality, governments and colonial administrations faced the double task of stanching the flow of German-Ottoman propaganda and producing their own sources of news attractive to Muslim audiences.

Enemy publications were not the only issue at hand. The Mediterranean was a shared imperial space, one subject to varied and multiple flows of information. In 1913, the deputy Georges Leygues had drawn attention to this fact, comparing the Mediterranean basin to an “echo chamber” in which news from Europe and the broader Middle East constantly circulated. “[If] the Mediterranean basin is a sort of immense echo chamber that gathers, amplifies, and reverberates the most trivial incidences, it would be opportune to ensure that French noises fill this chamber,” he proclaimed.⁸ French imperialists and colonial officials may have endorsed this sentiment, but Leygues was clearly demanding the impossible. A flood of Spanish, English, Italian, and Arabic news circulated through the region on a weekly basis, none of which France could effectively control. In late 1915, the Moroccan administration made plans to launch its own illustrated Spanish newspaper, *L'Information Grafica*, aimed at Spanish residents in the French zone. It was believed the publication would also publicize French views in the Spanish zone to the north, combating Spanish and German news channels believed hostile to France.⁹ French officials similarly looked askance at the Italian papers available in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria. Jules-Albert Defrance, ambassador in Egypt, reported in 1916 that Italian journals routinely published German and Austrian communiqués. Italy even appeared to encourage the “disagreeable practice” of printing stories intended to blemish France’s reputation among Muslim audiences.¹⁰ British authorities in Egypt were only too aware of the dangers posed by Italian newspapers, noting they printed declarations by the sultan and Enver Pasha that the administration preferred to keep from native inhabitants. “There is no use censoring the local European and native press if large numbers of Italian newspapers are

⁵ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Lutaud to Delcassé, MAE, 22 September 1914; AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Alapetite to Delcassé, MAE, 11 December 1914.

⁶ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Lutaud to René Viviani, MAE, 21 October 1915.

⁷ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Charles Lutaud, Governor General of Algeria, to Gaston Doumergue, MAE, 17 August 1914.

⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, Charles Lutaud to Aristide Briand, MAE, 7 March 1916.

⁹ AN 475 AP 147, Lyautey to Geoffroy, 22 November 1915.

¹⁰ AMAE, Guerre, 1657, A. Defrance to Aristide Briand, MAE, 5 August 1916.

allowed to come into the country, many of which contain matters that would be distinctly harmful," the Egyptian High Commissioner Milne Cheetham protested.¹¹

Wartime alliances aside, rivalries and power struggles persisted to exist below the rhetoric of common cause, sowing mutual distrust on all sides. Although the German threat was the most immediate, European officials understood that they were participating in a common imperial ecosystem. Moreover, if imperial and regional powers moved in different orbits, imperial governments themselves were characterized by internal divisions that often complicated policymaking. As the war continued, fissures between metropolitan and colonial administrations just as much as between colonial regimes exposed the power dynamics and divergent interests that undercut hopes of outlining a common war effort.

The question of how to treat the Ottoman Empire in the press was a sticking point. Leading metropolitan newspapers printed anti-Ottoman content on a regular basis. While these declarations struck a chord with readers in Europe, colonial authorities feared such stories could alienate Muslim subjects who, as Ferdinand Couget explained, still considered the Turks fellow Muslims and who they "were naturally given to defend against the sarcasm of Christians." It was preferable to depict the Ottomans as "victims" of German machinations and maintain "a prudent silence" on issues of Ottoman aggression and Caliphal authority that might offend Muslim opinion, he advised.¹² The Algerian administration balked at such suggestions, believing that treating the Ottomans with kid gloves would only embolden Pan-Islamists and allow enemy propaganda to dominate the discourse.¹³ Such arguments were hardly confined to the French. In 1916, the veteran colonial official Sir Frank Swettenham felt obliged to alert the British government that anti-Ottoman rhetoric was doing more harm than good. "I am afraid our press has forgotten how seriously our Muhammadan fellow subjects may be affected by the fact that we are at war with the sultan of Turkey."¹⁴ The British Press Bureau concurred, advising that references to Muslim holy places such as Mecca or Karbala should be made with care, while photographs or images that might offend Muslim sensibilities omitted. Any allusion to the conflict being a crusade or holy war was to be strictly forbidden. "It is necessary to recognise the great harm which may, and probably would, result from the publication of pictures or a paragraph which to English eyes might appear to be perfectly innocuous."¹⁵

Given the impact anti-Ottoman sentiments could have on Muslim opinion, the India Office conveyed skepticism over the effectiveness of propaganda directed toward colonial subjects, insisting—erroneously as it turned out—that German

¹¹ BNA, FO/371/1973, no. 81561, Milne Cheetham to Edward Grey, 30 November 1914.

¹² AMAE, Guerre, 1672, F. Couget to Briand, MAE, 4 April 1916.

¹³ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Lutaud to René Viviani, MAE, 21 October 1915.

¹⁴ IOR/L/PS/11/102/P615/1916, F. Swettenham to Thomas Holderness, 18 February 1916.

¹⁵ IOR/L/PS/11/102/P615/1916, Press Bureau, "Notice to the press," 21 February 1916.

propaganda had “no Indian aspect of any importance” to consider.¹⁶ “We are not at all enamoured of propaganda here and find that bald facts and successful action are infinitely more effective,” remarked one official. “To influence the oriental mind you have first to understand it. And who does?”¹⁷ While the Foreign Office commissioned works to counter German propaganda, officials routinely expressed their disapproval of these efforts. When the government contracted the travel writer and novelist Flora Annie Steel to write a series of articles over the course of 1916 emphasizing Germany’s disrespectful treatment toward Muslims, the career diplomat and Ottoman expert Robert Windham Graves curtly dismissed them as “very unconvincing” pieces of work. “It appears to me that time, labour, and money are being wasted on this kind of literary propaganda intended for Moslem countries... [especially since] the source from which they are inspired is apparent.”¹⁸ Force rather than oblique persuasion was the “ultima ratio” when it came to dealing with Muslims, Graves contended, evincing a general cynicism among Indian administrators when it came to the value of the printed word.

By contrast, the Arab Bureau in Egypt was more pro-active in its approach. It worked closely with Muslim and Arab publicists in the protectorate, placing various local newspapers such as the popular *Al-Muqattam* at its disposal. While these connections provided the administration with a “native” voice, officials recognized that allegedly “independent” papers were not always reliable. Editors had few qualms over taking money from other sources. In March 1916, a British lieutenant on mission in Egypt concluded that the Central Powers were providing financial assistance to papers published in French and Arabic, “attempting to turn our principal instruments of influence against us.”¹⁹ Hoping to exert direct control over print in the protectorate, the Arab Bureau pushed ahead with plans to run its own operations. That year, the government printing press in Cairo began running a weekly Arabic review, *Al-Kawkab (The Star)*, with an initial print run of 1,000 copies per week. Edited under the supervision of the Egyptian ministry of public instruction, the paper brought together a number of Arab journalists in Egypt willing to turn out anti-Ottoman copy for the administration. Because the paper paid well—£1 per 500 Arabic words—it attracted well-known writers like the liberal Syrian reformer Rafiq Bey al-’Azm and the Lebanese historian Na’um Shuqayr. As the Arab Bureau in Cairo boasted: “There has been no difficulty in obtaining sufficient copy.”²⁰

¹⁶ IOR/L/PS/11/88, Government of India, Home Department to Austin Chamberlain, 8 December 1916.

¹⁷ IOR/L/PS/11/107/P2711/1915, A. H. Grant to Arthur Hirtzel, 31 August 1916.

¹⁸ IOR/L/PS/11/107, P2711/L/PS/11/107, R. W. Graves, “Note on Germany as a Friend of Islam,” 2 August 1916.

¹⁹ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, Doynel de Saint-Quentin to Pierre Roques, MG, 10 March 1916.

²⁰ BNA, FO/141/817/17, “Report on Moslem Propaganda,” 11 February 1917.

Al-Kawkab reached Ottoman Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf, while articles written by Syrian contributors were reprinted in Moroccan and Tunisian newspapers.²¹ Given the paper's ability to command an audience in the Maghreb and Middle East, the British government was willing to overlook the high costs associated with running the paper, some £46,000 per month.²² In fact the Arab Bureau followed its success with a second periodical, a flashy illustrated magazine entitled *Haqiqat (Truth)*. Printed in Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, and "Hindustani," *Haqiqat* was similarly intended for a broad readership beyond British India and the Egyptian protectorate, with the Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour deeming both papers essential.²³ One of the reasons for this success, authorities argued, was the fact that the paper was sold to readers at a moderate price rather than distributed freely. "In a country such as Egypt," one report noted, "people pay more attention to what they buy than to what they are given."²⁴

British officials pitched *Haqiqat* as a work of general propaganda that could collectively serve the interests of the Entente Allies on issues relevant to Islam and the Muslim world. The Governor General of Algeria, Charles Lutaud was nonetheless suspicious. He acknowledged that the publication "indirectly served the cause of all the allied nations with Muslims subjects," but he was under no illusions that it advanced "British interests first and foremost."²⁵ As tensions mounted within the Ottoman Empire, France might find itself unable to capitalize on the situation if it permitted Britain to extend its reach into the eastern Mediterranean unconditionally. There was, moreover, the situation in the colonies to consider. Always guarded when it came to information entering Algeria, Lutaud was wary of allowing British propaganda to penetrate the colony. Ceding the ground to Britain would place France at a disadvantage vis-à-vis its own Muslim subjects and possibly compromise its long-term goals further afield. Under the circumstances, he had to wonder whether reliance on Britain was wise.

Lutaud had been quick to appreciate the importance of print in fighting the war, advising that any coverage of the event in Algeria must be "carefully adapted to circumstances."²⁶ To this end, he encouraged the creation of a new weekly paper, *Akhbar el-Harb*, directed primarily at Algerian recruits and Muslim soldiers fighting in France. Although published by the Algerian administration, the paper constituted "a valuable work of national propaganda," in Lutaud's opinion, prompting the Governor General to suggest it be distributed freely in hospitals

²¹ BNA, FO/141/817/17, Arthur Balfour to Foreign Office, 22 February 1917.

²² BNA, FO/141/817/17, "Report on Moslem Propaganda," 11 February 1917.

²³ IOR/L/PS/11/88, "Memorandum respecting propaganda and counter-propaganda conducted by the Foreign Office among Moslem peoples" (1916); BNA, FO/141/817/17, Arthur Balfour to Foreign Office, 22 February 1917.

²⁴ BNA, FO/141/817/17, "Report on Moslem Propaganda," 11 February 1917.

²⁵ AMAE, Guerre, 1673, Lutaud to Briand, MAE, 7 June 1916.

²⁶ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Charles Lutaud, Governor General of Algeria, to Gaston Doumergue, MAE, 17 August 1914; AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Lutaud to Delcassé, MAE, April 1915.

and barracks in the metropole.²⁷ Not all agreed with Lutaud's estimation, believing the Algerian administration was once again attempting to hijack France's *politique musulmane*. Ferdinand Couget strictly advised against making *Akhbar el-Harb* the exclusive French organ of Muslim propaganda, insisting that the paper had little relevance for Morocco and Tunisia. "Beneficial in certain countries," he stated, "it can be ineffective or even harmful in others."²⁸ The French Press Service concurred, claiming that *Akhbar el-Harb* did not have a "great impact" outside Algeria. In fact, the government repeatedly declined Lutaud's request for additional funds, ordering that the paper be financed through the local colonial budget "since it essentially has an Algerian character."²⁹

Metropolitan and colonial officials shared Lutaud's fears over reliance on the British, but they had no intention of allowing the Algerian administration to run the show. Borrowing from the British playbook, in mid-1916 the *Commission Interministérielle des Affaires Musulmanes* (CIAM) recommended running its own general magazine aimed at Muslim audiences. Georges Samné, by now well-established among leading French colonial and foreign policy circles as an expert on Eastern affairs, was invited to draw up a proposal. Taking inspiration from German magazines like *Welt am Bild* and the British-run *Haqiqat*, he suggested an illustrated publication with a print run of 50,000.³⁰ Much like *Haqiqat*, the publication was to be sold through local channels, endorsing the model of "propaganda for sale," as the committee member Pierre-Étienne Flandin put it.³¹ Much like its British counterpart, the publication was to be printed in numerous languages, with French, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, and English all recommended by colonial authorities. Appearing that June, *El Tacaouïr* (*Panorama*, in French translation), was designed to provide a counterbalance to *Haqiqat* and extend French propaganda beyond its own North African territories.³² "The new journal is attractive and likely to please [readers]," DeFrance assured from Cairo upon receiving the inaugural issue.³³ The French consul in Tripoli also complimented the quality of the journal, but his plaudits came with some reservations. "Muslims are showing themselves more and more suspicious regarding journals edited exclusively by Europeans in the first instance," he stated, and he feared *El Tacaouïr* did not go to the necessary lengths in concealing its French provenance.³⁴ The magazine was made available in Cairo, Alexandria, and Beirut through Parisian

²⁷ ANOM, GGA/15H/7, Charles Lutaud to Directeur de l'office de l'Algérie, 26 May 1915.

²⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, F. Couget to Briand, MAE, 14 April 1916.

²⁹ ANOM, GGA/15H/25, Ministry des Affaires Étrangères to Charles Lutaud, 5 July 1917.

³⁰ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, "Notes sur la creation d'un journal illustré bi-mensuel et projet financier," 26 April 1916.

³¹ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Flandin, President de la sous-commission des pays islamique, to Briand, 11 May 1916.

³² AMAE, Guerre, 1673, Lutaud to Briand, MAE, 7 June 1916.

³³ AMAE, Guerre, 1673, DeFrance to Briand, MAE, 19 June 1916.

³⁴ AMAE, Guerre, 1673, Consul de France in Tripoli to Briand, MAE, 25 June 1916.

booksellers such as Lafitte and Hachette, rather than local vendors. This not only gave away its Parisian origins. It also drove up the price since French editions were more expensive. Taking note of this fact in Egypt, Defrance believed that the magazine was far too costly, making it prohibitive. The French government had hoped that profits from sales would be used to finance the magazine's production, at least partially, but according to Defrance, these dual commercial and propagandistic expectations did not align. *El Tacaouir* had to be made available through local distributors at a reasonable price if it were to be effective.³⁵

It was evident that the government had a few kinks to work out in order to make the "propaganda for sale" model workable. In the meantime, the foreign ministry continued to employ more traditional methods of working through "independent" newspapers where it could. As early as 1914, the Foreign Minister Gaston Doumergue had written to the Egyptian consulate, urging cooperation with the local press. "We should insert in the Arab papers of Egypt which are sympathetic to us articles drafted by Muslims to emphasize the fidelity and eagerness with which the Muslims of Algeria and Tunisia have responded to our call."³⁶ France not only persisted to entertain dreams of rehabilitating its former *présence* in Egypt, now officially a British protectorate. It sought to exploit the broad distribution networks enjoyed by Egyptian journals, which garnered subscribers from Morocco to Syria. As in the past, officials planned to use the Egyptian press as a vehicle for promoting France's image as a Muslim power and communicating with proximate audiences outside its empire.³⁷ And as in the past, the press bureau relied upon Syrian writers in order to conceal the hand of French officialdom. Working out of Cairo, Defrance coordinated with Syrian émigrés in Egypt, recruiting a handful of publicists willing to serve as French spokesmen in Syria and Lebanon or furnish articles for publication in North African colonial journals.³⁸ Articles penned by Syrian writers were periodically featured in *Akhbar el-Harb* and the Arabic journal *El-Hadira* published in Tunisia by the government.³⁹ French officials tapped into these established print networks, working with regional partners to either consolidate or expand French influence in other imperial domains.

The foreign ministry also took advantage of the émigré communities residing in Paris during the war. Given the close ties that leading Syrian publicists enjoyed with official circles and the *parti colonial*, the government had at its disposal a number of individuals that could speak for French interests abroad. In the capital, Shukri Ghanem and Georges Samné were given financial assistance in running the paper *Al-Mustaqbal (The Future)*, an organ with a markedly pro-French

³⁵ AMAE, Guerre, 1673, Defrance to Briand, MAE, 29 July 1916.

³⁶ AMAE, Guerre, 1650, Minister of Foreign Affairs to Defrance, 20 August 1914.

³⁷ AN 475 AP 155, Telegram no. 272: Affaires Étrangères à Résident Général, Rabat, 22 April 1916.

³⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Defrance to Delcassé, MAE, 4 February 1915.

³⁹ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Lutaud to Sous-Secrétaire d'État aux Affaires Étrangères, 3 March 1915.

orientation that purported to represent Muslim interests. While the paper combated the “fake news” disseminated by German-Ottoman sources, many officials remained uncertain of the benefits it offered. Egyptian shaykhs and notables were able to discern that its content was written by Christians with little if any input from the ‘ulamā, and they did not hesitate to alert French authorities in Cairo to the potential liabilities *Al-Mustaqbal* could incur.⁴⁰ These fears appeared to be justified in 1916 when Muhammed Bash-Hamba’s *Revue du Maghreb* took aim at the paper, informing readers that it was edited by “Orientals living in Paris” with no authority to speak for Muslims. “Some Syrians from Paris claim to sympathize with Muslim Arabs while all the while causing injury to them with each issue,” Bash-Hamba inveighed.⁴¹ Writers “pandering” to Muslims through sympathetic appeals and Quranic quotes could not fool true Muslims, critics charged. *Al-Mustaqbal* was a thinly veiled colonialist organ “drafted exclusively in Paris by Maronite Jesuits whose sentiments toward believers are easy to grasp.”⁴² As such, it had little to offer Muslims.

French authorities were sensitive to these criticisms, warning that Levantine Christians commenting upon Islamic affairs could be counter-productive to French goals. According to Edmond Douffé, the issue warranted serious consideration. If France persisted to rely upon Christian publicists, “we can expect to see our Muslim clients quietly abandoning our cause,” he warned Étienne Flandin in 1916. Muslims took their religion seriously, interpreting any remarks by infidels as a grave offense. “If we want to retain the sympathies of Islam, we should forbid Arabic journals produced in France by Arab Christians to speak of the Holy Places of Islam, to criticize the descendants of the Prophet and comment upon the Caliphate or holy war—in a word, everything, near or far, that touches on the beliefs of Mohammedans and even on their religious prejudices.”⁴³ Flandin was already well-aware of the problem. Officials within the foreign ministry had flagged *Al-Mustaqbal* on numerous occasions, citing the paper’s appeals to Levantine Christians and support for a French protectorate in Lebanon. As one internal memo stated, *Al-Mustaqbal* might assist in securing French influence among Syrian Christians and establishing a future base of support for a French regime there, “but we are not in Syria at the moment.”⁴⁴ The issue at hand was winning over Muslim public opinion and defending the empire. These broad objects could not be sacrificed for potential future gains in the eastern Mediterranean.

As *Al-Mustaqbal* made evident, French authorities were being pulled in opposite direction as they attempted to juggle concerns over colonial security and

⁴⁰ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1471, “Direction des affaires politiques et commerciales,” 26 June 1916.

⁴¹ “Un Journal arabe à Paris,” *Revue du Maghreb* (30 June 1916), 2: 26.

⁴² “Nouvelles Arabes,” *Revue du Maghreb* (January–February 1917), 1–2: 12.

⁴³ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Douffé to Flandin, 6 August 1916.

⁴⁴ CADN, 1TU/1/V/1471, “Direction politique et commerciale to Sénateur Flandin, President of the Sous-Commission islamique du groupe parlementaire d’action à l’étranger,” 4 August 1916.

consolidating French influence in the wider Mediterranean world. Fears that Britain might eclipse the *présence française* in the Near East necessitated a broader policy beyond the North African territories. Yet whether foreign policy objectives could be harmonized with colonial needs remained questionable. “It is extremely difficult, if not to say impossible . . . to assure the publication of an Arab periodical which is adapted at once to our North African possessions and various other Islamic countries,” Lutaud argued in 1916. “It is true that the populations of these different countries profess the same religion, but it is no less true that they completely diverge in all other points of view and that the movements of opinion that appear opportune for one could not, without danger, be encouraged in others.”⁴⁵

For Lutaud as for others, working through trans-imperial networks to gain access to British Egypt or Ottoman Syria made for sound foreign policy, but it could have disastrous consequences when it came to France’s established colonial possessions. Being a “Muslim power” always possessed a double context, implying at once governing an empire populated by Muslim subjects just as much as a state that could command authority across the Muslim world. While these dual elements had hinted at potential tensions evident at the heart of France’s *politique musulmane*, the war was now bringing these stresses into sharp relief, especially as France began to reflect on its future role in the Levant.

The Road to Damascus

Despite reservations expressed by colonial officials like Lutaud, policymakers in the war and foreign ministries persisted to set their sights on Syria, and for good reason. Members of the *parti colonial* had long harbored ambitions of consolidating the *présence française* in the Levant, if not transforming Syria into a French colony. The war now offered an opportunity to actualize these latent desires. Exploratory expeditions funded through the Lyonnaise and Marseillaise Chambers of Commerce during the war concluded optimistically that Syria was ripe for French colonization. Officials had even begun entertaining the idea of incorporating Palestine into a Greater Syrian protectorate, fulfilling the dream of transforming the Mediterranean into a “French lake.”⁴⁶ It was little secret that the Ottoman Empire was suffering under the toll of the naval blockades imposed by the Entente as chronic food shortages and inflation destabilized Ottoman society. The situation in Syria was particularly acute. The provincial civilian bureaucracy had come under military control, with the CUP partisan Cemal Pasha governing the province from Damascus. Having little tolerance for outspoken Arab political representatives and European protégés, Cemal exacted a violent retribution on all

⁴⁵ AMAE, Guerre, 1672, Lutaud to Briand, MAE, 17 April 1916.

⁴⁶ Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 75–76.

suspected enemies of the state. Liberal Arab autonomists had always been critical of the CUP's centralizing impulses as it attempted to reform the empire. Cemal's ruthless purges coupled with hunger and the state's indiscriminate requisitioning policies marked a breaking point. Elites opted for open resistance to Istanbul, shattering the delicate sectarian and ethnic balance that had held the peace in Lebanon and Syria since 1860.⁴⁷ "All the Mussulmans and Arabs are against the Turks," as one British report bluntly observed in mid-1916.⁴⁸

Given these circumstances, it was not unthinkable that Arab autonomists and the Christian community in Mount Lebanon might turn to France as an alternative to Ottoman rule. Yet if French officials believed they could profit from Arab discontent in the region, so too did the British. Prior to the outbreak of the war, British agents on the ground in Mesopotamia had encouraged courting support among regional tribal elites. They were especially keen on contracting an alliance with Hussein bin Ali, a scion of the prestigious Hashemite dynasty and the reigning Sharif of Mecca in the Ottoman Hijaz.⁴⁹ Believing that Hussein possessed the political capital and spiritual authority to command Arab loyalties in the region, experts in the Arab Bureau insisted the Sharif was the perfect candidate to head a British-backed Arab kingdom that could secure British influence across the Middle East. Following a series of negotiations with British authorities over the first half of 1916, Sharif Hussein openly challenged Ottoman rule and called for an Arab revolt in a bid to secure his own family's power in the Hijaz and extend its reach across Syria, Jordan, and the Persian Gulf. The plan was preposterous. The revolt only managed to muster a small number of adherents, primarily within the Hijaz and along the coastal regions of the Red Sea area.⁵⁰ While it was hardly the widespread Arab uprising imagined by Sharif Hussein and the British, the revolt did underscore the fact that the Ottoman Middle East was on the verge of change. European powers with vested interests in the region were ill-advised to take a back seat as this process unfolded.

French officials rightly feared that Britain was seeking to draw the Arab provinces into its orbit, foreshadowing a British dominated Middle East extending from Egypt to Persia. In the days following the Arab revolt, diplomats attempted to assuage mutual suspicions by finalizing a secret agreement to parcel out the spoils of the Ottoman Middle East. Under the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement signed that June, Syria, Lebanon, and certain surrounding areas were recognized as a French sphere of influence, with Britain claiming Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine.

⁴⁷ Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 82–96.

⁴⁸ BNA, FO 371/2778 (no. 121309), "Internal Conditions: Enemy Countries," 16 June 1916.

⁴⁹ IOR/L/PS/11/48/P1062/1913, Sir G. Lowther to Edward Grey, 14 March 1913; IOR/L/PS/11/62/P3852/1913, Acting Political Regent at Aden to the Secretary of the Government of Bombay, special department, 2 August 1913.

⁵⁰ Edward Erickson, *The History of World War I: Gallipoli and the Middle East, 1914–1918* (London: Amber Books, 2008), 193; Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916–1920* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 4–5.

This carving up of the Ottoman Empire offered a framework for a *modus vivendi* between the Entente Allies, but as to whether either side would honor their pledges after the war remained to be seen.⁵¹ Unwilling to rely exclusively on the good faith of its former imperial rival, France took a pro-active stance. It contributed money and aid to Hashemite forces active in Syria, matching British support. French officials also encouraged recruiting and arming an auxiliary *Légion d'Orient* composed of Lebanese fighters to establish a more pronounced French presence on the ground.⁵² France had no intention of abandoning Syria to Hussein bin Ali or the British. According to DeFrance, the Syrian people would consider it a “catastrophe” should they be placed under the rule of the Hijazis. Popular sentiments favored an autonomous Syria protected by the European powers, and it was essential to convince Syrians that France could deliver this protection.⁵³ DeFrance’s insights were informed by the small group of Syrian émigrés with which he communicated in Egypt. Yet they also reiterated the claims of leading Lebanese and Arab spokesmen active in France, many of whom were collaborating with officials and assisting the propaganda war in Africa and the Middle East.

The Comité Oriental formed in Paris by Shukri Ghanem and Georges Samné had served as a conduit to the Ottoman Empire and Levant since its founding in 1908. Composed primarily of Syro-Lebanese Christians, members had endorsed the Young Turks’ Ottomanist platform, although this position always overlapped with other political agendas. Ghanem and Samné saw little opposition between their Ottomanist sympathies and support for Syrian decentralization and self-governance. Even as they participated in the Comité Oriental they were busy setting up a separate Comité Central Syrien with fellow autonomists and, by 1912, a Comité Libanais advocating for greater liberties for Mount Lebanon and its Christian Arab majority.⁵⁴ Lebanese, Syrian, Arab, and Ottoman identities could be fluid, and as long as this remained the case the various movements taking shape among Syrian émigré communities abroad resisted stark political affiliations. Yet as the CUP appeared to abandon the Ottomanist program over the coming years and cracked down on Arab political organizations, émigrés adopted a sharper line.⁵⁵ Once inclined to associate Ottomanism with greater Arab and Christian imperial integration, they were now coming to question the many

⁵¹ Michael D. Berdine, *Redrawing the Middle East: Sir Mark Sykes, Imperialism, and the Sykes-Picot Agreement* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The First World War in the Middle East* (London: Hurst and Company, 2014), 155–56.

⁵² Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 196–97; Tauber, *The Arab Movements*, 11–13.

⁵³ CADN, 1TU/1/V/991, DeFrance to Louis Barthou, 25 October 1917.

⁵⁴ Comité Libanais de Paris, *Mémoire sur la question du Liban* (Paris: C. Pariset, 1912). In general, see: Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 68–69.

⁵⁵ Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 152–53; Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 173.

“divided loyalties” that traditionally governed the Ottoman Empire and identify with a new brand of nationalism centered on the Arab Levant (*bilād ash-shām*).⁵⁶ As the war shifted in favor of the Entente Powers and the situation in the Ottoman Middle East evolved, the possibility of Syrian independence became conceivable.⁵⁷ “Now that the eviction of the Turks from Syria can be reasonably imagined as an eventuality, the moment has come for the allied governments to fix the future of this country,” explained Samné in late 1917.⁵⁸

While earlier cultural movements like the *Nahda* had cultivated a sense of Arab identity and distinction, the “Syrianism” articulated by activists like Samné was relatively novel. Although it complemented demands for national rights and self-determination gaining acceptance during the war years, the circumstances surrounding the development of a Syrian national discourse were nonetheless unique. Those in the diasporic communities settled in Europe, Africa, and the Americas were among its most vocal supporters. Organizers from Brazil to Egypt set up clubs and committees, cementing political and cultural ties among émigré circles that gave the autonomy movement a semblance of unity. Syrian identity was, in many respects, a product of the transnational connections and interactions that bound the émigré communities together.⁵⁹ “Our 700,000 exiles scattered across the two worlds, whatever their new attachments, all turn their thoughts toward the mother country,” as one émigré newspaper published in Paris affirmed in 1917.⁶⁰ The experience of Nadra Moutran, the son of a prosperous landowning family from Beqaa who found himself in Paris at the start of the war, was a telling indication of the changes that were taking place in expatriate communities by the early twentieth century. As Arab Christians, his family had been strongly invested in the Ottoman system and benefited from imperial patronage. Yet with the downfall of Abdülhamid, the Moutrans found their traditional access to power curtailed and their loyalties suspect. Arriving in France and participating in the Syrian émigré community, Nadra abandoned his former Ottomanist sympathies and committed himself to a project of Arab nationhood. “Everywhere they go, wherever they create a colony or a business, [Syrians] protect the movement supporting Arab demands,” he claimed. “Muslims and Christians collaborate with ardor in this patriotic work that seeks to realize the ideal they passionately desire to achieve.”⁶¹ For Nadra Moutran, as for others, the diaspora was proof that a common Syrian nationality existed and could make demands couched in the

⁵⁶ See: Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*.

⁵⁷ Carol Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 214–15.

⁵⁸ Georges Samné, “Vers La Syrie,” *Correspondance d’Orient* (25 November 1917), 292.

⁵⁹ Stacy Fahrenthold, “Transnational Modes and Media: The Syrian Press in the Mahjar and Emigrant Activism during World War I,” *Mashriq and Mahjar: Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1:1 (2013): 30–54.

⁶⁰ Eugène Jung, “Le Coeur de la France et ses Alliés,” *L’Orient Arabe*, 1 (20 January 1917), 1.

⁶¹ Nadra Moutran, *Le Syrie de demain* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1916), 31.

language of national self-determination promoted by leaders like Wilson. The suffering endured by the Syrian people under Cemal Pasha added moral urgency to these demands, underscoring the conviction that Syria was the “secular Christ of nations,” according to Ghanem.⁶² As Moutran insisted, “[the Syrians] have the right of demanding, in accordance with human justice, a complete and definitive liberation.”⁶³

Moutran, Ghanem, and Samné made up the core of the small yet well-connected Syrian émigré community in France. They had access to the levers of power and could gain audiences with influential political elites and ministers in Paris. They ran their own newspapers and comprised the chief editorial staff of the government-sponsored *Al-Mustaqbal*, giving them multiple forums through which to influence official and public opinion. In addition to Parisian circles, the group was active in the diasporic Syrian networks, allying their cause with political organizers in São Paulo, London, Cairo, and New York to mobilize support internationally.⁶⁴ This activism was important. While Wilsonian ideals may have been attaining popularity across the globe and Arab elites were coming to imagine a post-Ottoman future for the region, there was hardly a consensus on what a postwar “Syrian” nation might resemble. The Levant was a constellation of Ottoman provinces populated with various ethnic and religious groups. Questions regarding Christian–Muslim relations, transnational religious ties, local authority, and cultural and ideological affiliations problematized the concept of Syrian nationhood.⁶⁵ According to the writer Ferdinand Tyan, the very idea of a Syrian national identity was absurd. “There has never been a question of Syria because there has never been a Syrian nationality,” he charged in 1917.⁶⁶

A Lebanese notable opposed to Ottoman rule, Tyan was committed to winning European support for the region’s Maronite Christians, going as far as to declare the Maronite community a distinct nationality in its own right.⁶⁷ In his view, Lebanon constituted a Christian nation, one that had historically flourished under French protection. This Christian “nationality” conditioned by language, faith, and tradition could once again be revived under French aegis, Tyan asserted. It was time to “cut the gordian knot of Islam” and establish a Christian outpost on the shores of the Levant in the mold of France’s Algerian colony.⁶⁸ During the war, Tyan moved between London and Paris attempting to garner Catholic support for his program and convince the Entente governments to honor the “sacred debt” owed

⁶² Shukri Ghanem, “La Syrie martyre,” *Correspondance d’Orient* (25 January 1918), 38.

⁶³ Moutran, *Le Syrie de demain*, 11.

⁶⁴ See: “Chronique Syrienne,” *Correspondance d’Orient* (25 April 1918), 251; Eugène Jung, “La Mort lente,” *L’Orient Arabe*, 3 (20 February 1917), 1.

⁶⁵ Watenpugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, 138–39.

⁶⁶ Ferdinand Tyan, *France et Liban: Défense des intérêts français en Syrie* (Paris: Perrin, 1917), 61.

⁶⁷ Ferdinand Tyan, *Sous les cédres du Liban: La Nationalité maronite* (Orne: La Chapelle-Montligeon, 1905).

⁶⁸ Tyan, *France et Liban*, 69.

to Levantine Christians.⁶⁹ Couched in the language of national self-determination, Tyan's Lebanist program was a sharp affront to proponents of Syrian self-governance. Were Lebanon to be recognized as an independent "Christian refuge," it would certainly include Beirut, thereby cutting off any future Syrian nation-state from the wealthy port city and Mediterranean trade.⁷⁰ Although many within the Parisian émigré community were Lebanese Christians, they rejected the idea of an "amputated" Syria.⁷¹ In Ghanem's view, the goal was to obtain a Greater Syria comprising not only Damascus and Beirut, but Palestine as well. He was not averse to working out a decentralized administrative arrangement that could accommodate desires for Christian autonomy, but he had no intention of recognizing an independent Lebanese state.⁷² "Justice" and "nationality" supported this position, Samné argued. The Greater Syrian model was the only feasible option, as it accorded with the country's historic development and national realities.⁷³ In short, Syria was equated with the expanse of *bilād ash-shām* and its mix of Muslim and Christian sects. "Lebanon is an integral part of Syria," Moutran declared adamantly. "From a historical, ethnographic, and economic point of view, it cannot be distinguished from it."⁷⁴

While the Lebanist camp was in the minority, the Greater Syria proposal was not without its difficulties. Ghanem and his associates faced opposition from political elites in Syria loath to take directives from Parisian émigrés. They also contended with émigré leaders disposed toward Pan-Arab unity and activists favorable to Hashemite rule. Supporters of the Arab revolt backed Sharif Hussein's claims to Palestine, mobilizing support for the creation of a united Arab Kingdom incorporating sections of southern Ottoman Syria. While the French government was cold to the idea and stood by the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement, the Hashemite plan was not without its partisans in France. By early 1917, a pro-Hashemite faction had appeared in Paris headed by the former colonial administrator Eugène Jung and the Lebanese journalist Ibrahim Salim al-Najjar. Jung had served in French Indochina, although over the years had become fascinated with the struggles roiling the Middle East. When the Arab revolt erupted, he believed the moment of Arab national liberation was at hand. To help promote the cause, he collaborated with al-Najjar, a reputable journalist active in the Arab political circles growing up in Istanbul and Cairo. During the war, he contributed to *al-Mustaqbal* on various occasions, working closely with Ghanem and Samné. By 1916, however, al-Najjar had fallen out with the pro-French Comité Oriental, believing that its activities were distorting the picture of events taking place in

⁶⁹ Ferdinand Tyan, *The Entente Cordiale in Lebanon* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1916).

⁷⁰ Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 82–86.

⁷¹ Camille Fidel, "L'Orient Méditerranéen," *Correspondance d'Orient* (25 July 1917), 39.

⁷² Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 214–15.

⁷³ Georges Samné, "Vers La Syrie," *Correspondance d'Orient* (25 November 1917), 293.

⁷⁴ Moutran, *Le Syrie de demain*, 97.

Syria and compromising any prospect for a truly independent state. As al-Najjar saw it, Sharif Hussein offered the best guarantee of Arab liberation, an opinion he shared with Jung.⁷⁵ Banding together, the two opened a newspaper in Paris entitled *L'Orient Arabe* with the goal of familiarizing the French public with the "true aspirations" of the Syrian people.⁷⁶

The paper supported the cause of Greater Syria, yet its pro-Hashemite orientation set it apart from the Comité Oriental. According to al-Najjar, Sharif Hussein was engaged in the task of securing an "Arab nation," and therefore his envisioned Arab Kingdom extending from Iraq to the shores of the Mediterranean constituted a "project of emancipation."⁷⁷ *L'Orient Arabe* tied its message to the national liberation struggles of the war period, depicting the Arabs as an "oppressed people" whose emancipation would mark a definitive victory on the path toward "the age of gold dreamed of by President Wilson."⁷⁸ Hussein was characterized as a competent ruler and true Arab patriot whose state-building efforts would result in "the unity of the Arab race."⁷⁹ Challenging the view that Hussein was nothing more than a British puppet, Jung cast the Sharif as the embodiment of the Arab liberation struggle. His efforts met resistance at every turn. *L'Orient Arabe* was routinely redacted by the wartime censors and accused of taking money from British sources.⁸⁰ Al-Najjar, himself an Ottoman national, was hauled before the courts in the summer of 1917 on charges of spreading false news, and within a year the paper was suppressed altogether.⁸¹ Despite their ultimate failure, Jung and al-Najjar did pose an obstacle for the Comité Oriental. To ensure that neither the Lebanists nor pro-Hashemite factions prevailed, Ghanem and his cohorts were determined to win the support of the French government for their program, and this unquestionably meant an alliance with the colonial lobby. Necessity entailed framing a vision of Greater Syria that was consistent with the geopolitical aspirations of French imperialists. On the other hand, they could not be seen as servants of French imperial designs if they expected to win over Syrian elites at home.

Striking the correct balance was imperative, and activists like Ghanem and Samné had the necessary background and experience to guide this delicate *pas de deux*. Educated in the missionary schools of Lebanon and committed to the French "civilizing mission," they had consistently supported the *présence française*

⁷⁵ Martin Kramer, "The Sharifian Propaganda of Eugène Jung" in Asher Susser and Aryeh Shmuelevitz, eds., *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World* (New York: Frank Cass, 1995), 34–41.

⁷⁶ "Notre Programme," *L'Orient Arabe*, 1 (20 January 1917), 1.

⁷⁷ I. S. Naggiar, "Le Rôle des officiers arabes en Orient," *L'Orient Arabe*, 2 (5 February 1917), 1.

⁷⁸ G. Holmar, "Les Nations opprimées et leur revendications," *L'Orient Arabe*, 3 (20 February 1917), 1.

⁷⁹ "La Fête de l'indépendance arabe," *L'Orient Arabe*, 10–11 (8–12 June 1917); I. S. Naggiar, "S. M. Hussein," *L'Orient Arabe*, 9 (20 May 1917), 1.

⁸⁰ *L'Orient Arabe*, 15 (5 September 1917).

⁸¹ Kramer, "The Sharifian Propaganda of Eugène Jung" in Susser and Shmuelevitz, *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World*, 39–41.

in the Orient. Working as journalists and interlocutors, they assisted the French colonial enterprise where they could, forging connections with leading individuals of the *parti colonial* in the process. Although by no means uncontested, their status as spokesmen for the Ottoman Syrian community in Paris was recognized and testified to the vigor of their activism within the committees and networks they organized. As the war progressed and the situation in the Ottoman Empire deteriorated, Ghanem, Samné, and those associated with the Comité Oriental realized they were confronted with a historical moment they could not let slip through their fingers. After a decade of building up political alliances in France, the time for decisive action had come.

Ghanem and Samné reached out to influential contacts such as Étienne Flandin and Stephen Pichon, who by late 1917 was once again heading the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Working through the Syrian Central Committee, they cobbled together a coalition of journalists, political representatives, and colonial lobbyists, presenting themselves as de facto representatives of the Syrian people. Whether Ghanem and Samné had any authority to claim this status was debatable. Yet their willingness to formulate a Greater Syrian policy in terms appealing to French colonialists rendered the question of legitimacy a secondary concern. By 1917, the group's central organ, the *Correspondance d'Orient*, was rebranded "a journal of French expansion and foreign policy," signaling its new political alignment.⁸² At the same time, however, writers upheld their adherence to Syrian independence and the principle of self-determination. "An independent Syria under French aegis is in no way in disagreement with the principles recommended by President Wilson," the paper remarked. "It is evident that the liberation of Syria from the Turkish yoke and its attachment to France responds to the wishes of the Syrian people."⁸³ This line of argument struck the necessary balance, at once defending Wilsonian self-governance yet endorsing a form of French stewardship that could appease the Quai d'Orsay and *parti colonial*.

European intervention was mandatory, Moutran explained. Without it, Syria faced the prospect of a violent civil conflict as Christians, Muslims, and Jews vied for control and influence. France, a democratic and historically Catholic nation that nonetheless governed over a sizable Muslim population, was the perfect candidate to manage Syria's fragile ethno-religious equilibrium. "The Syrians are well aware that . . . France respects the Islamic religion in its Muslim colonies," he stated.⁸⁴ Syria not only offered France strategic advantages in the region; it would also preserve the "tranquility of [France's] Muslim possessions in Africa." Syria was the "intellectual center of the Arab world." Hajjis annually passed through Damascus on their way to Mecca while the country possessed many of the

⁸² See for example: *Correspondance d'Orient* (25 November 1917), 290.

⁸³ Camille Fidel, "L'Orient Méditerranéen," *Correspondance d'Orient* (25 July 1917), 39.

⁸⁴ Moutran, *Le Syrie de demain*, 35.

leading centers of Islamic learning and theology within its borders. Whomever influenced Syria would hold sway over the Muslim world *tout court*, and if France did not assume this role Britain surely would. “France, a Muslim power, cannot lose interest in Syria, which is completely indispensable to its African empire,” Moutran insisted. “For it, Damascus, the holy city, the door to the Kabba, the conserver of the traditions of the Arabs and Islam, is the crown of the edifice, of which the pillars are Algiers, Tunis, and Fez.” Moutran was also emphatic to note that the Syrians, with their extensive commercial networks and regional influence, were the “ideal collaborators” for the French and would faithfully serve as unofficial agents of French civilization across the globe.⁸⁵

Moutran was clearly appealing to France’s broader regional aspirations and self-image as a “Muslim power,” making a case for an informal Syrian protectorate tied to a vision of French empire. Members of the *parti colonial* took the bait, marshalling arguments in favor of French intervention and a more robust foreign policy driven by colonial objectives. “Our Muslim foreign policy should be an active policy because it is . . . closely correlated with our colonial policy,” the senator Lucien Hubert argued hoping to convince his cohorts and the public at large.⁸⁶ Opponents nonetheless remained unconvinced. As it appeared French officials were coming around to the idea of a potential occupation of Syria, Eugène Jung warned against creating a “new Tunisia” on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. “The majority of the population is Muslim, and if they are inclined to love France it is as a propagator of liberty and not as a master.”⁸⁷ Mindful of these warnings, the Comité Oriental struck back. During a session of the Syrian Central Committee, Samné assured that the body had “patriotically placed itself in the service of Syria” and rebuffed any charges that it served “imperialist tendencies.”⁸⁸ Ghanem put it frankly: “Our committee can in no way be considered a so-called colonial party.”⁸⁹ Taking aim at his detractors, Ghanem stuck to his vision of a free and pluralist Syria secured through French patronage. France was the guarantor of “liberty and material prosperity,” he maintained. Under its protection Syria would be transformed from an Ottoman dependency into a model for the Arab world. “In the moral order, our country would be for the Arab world what France is for Europe and the world: an antique Athens, a life-giving force of the spirit . . . *Vive la France*, and through France long live Syria.”⁹⁰

Although by 1918 French rule over Syria was hardly a foregone conclusion, it was difficult to deny that the tactics employed by Ghanem and his allies were effective. The war years invited a rethinking of émigré political agendas. If in the past Syrian émigrés had operated across empires and worked through

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 45–48. ⁸⁶ Hubert, *L’Islam et la Guerre*, 45.

⁸⁷ “Concorde,” *L’Orient Arabe*, 10–11 (5 and 20 June, 1917), 1.

⁸⁸ “Rapport du Dr. Georges Samné,” *Correspondance d’Orient* (25 March 1918), 176.

⁸⁹ “Chronique Syrienne,” *Correspondance d’Orient* (25 April 1918), 251.

⁹⁰ “Discours de M. Chekri Ganem,” *Correspondance d’Orient* (25 March 1918), 173–74.

trans-imperial networks to influence Ottoman reform, by 1918 the Parisian circle was committed to securing “independence” in the guise of a reworked French colonial empire. When it came to Syria, émigré activism had always shared commonalities with French colonial ambitions, fostering synergies that drew together a constellation of a different actors. Yet as the First World War came to a close, mutual interests and objectives now warranted a closer alliance. In pursuing their vision of a post-Ottoman Syria, émigrés were compelled to elicit the support of French political and financial elites against potential rivals and shape policy discussions on the Syrian question. As this relationship evolved, Syrian activism was setting the stage for the next phase of French empire-building in the eastern Mediterranean. While officials at the Quai d’Orsay and the *parti colonial* aspired to consolidate the *présence française* in the Levant, it was émigrés in Paris like Ghanem and Samné who actively established the framework and ideological rationale that would provide the scaffolding for the French mandate states authorized by the League of Nation after the war. In the crucible of war and Ottoman decolonization, the interwoven trajectories of Syrian trans-politics and French imperialism were laid bare.

Speaking before a delegation of the Entente governments on behalf of the Syrian Central Committee in late 1917, Ghanem was prepared to relish the fruits of his victory. Amidst the clamor of machinegun flack, the booming cannons, and the cacophony of protest echoing across the globe, the cry for Syrian independence was now being heard, he maintained. “Despite all odds, may the very slight and modest voice of Syria, of which mine is merely an echo, reach the ears of the great powers of the earth, penetrating their minds and heart!”⁹¹ Needless to say that with Ghanem as its self-appointed spokesman, the “voice of Syria” was neither slight nor modest.

Taming Transnational Islam

The Syrian question was never divorced from larger issues related to the Muslim world, and émigré activists in Paris knew it. As wartime allies made plans to carve up the Ottoman Empire and nationalists argued over the borders defining post-Ottoman states, the Levant and Middle East were effectively being re-spatialized in accordance with a new national-colonial order. This re-spatialization inevitably raised questions relevant to the forms of sovereignty and religious authority that governed Ottoman society. While many leading Syrian activists abroad were Christian, their vision of Greater Syria was premised on a multi-confessional state bound together by an imagined Syrian nationality. Yet “Syrianism” was by no

⁹¹ “L’Avenir Syrienne,” *Correspondance d’Orient* (10 January 1918), 55.

means accepted by all.⁹² Would Syrian Muslims inclined toward Islamic solidarity and Caliphal authority accept such a vision? Could the nationalism promoted largely by middle class elites supplant the many loyalties and identities that ran through Ottoman society? Ottoman Pan-Islamism, and more precisely the idea of the Caliphate, posed a significant obstacle in this regard, one that Parisian émigrés had to address. Ghanem was adamant that while the Caliph may be a spiritual authority, he could by no means command the transnational political allegiances of Muslims. “The interest of an introspective and wise Islam is, at base, to have a Caliph, guardian of the Holy Places, limited in his role to facilitating the pilgrimage and guarding religious orthodoxy. Outside of this, there are only dreams and utopias.”⁹³

As with debates over the exact nature of Syrian independence, the general question of trans-imperial Islam testified yet again to the overlapping concerns drawing together émigré spokesmen and French authorities during the war. By all accounts, it was a question that touched upon nearly every aspect of French imperial policy in the Mediterranean. Policy analysts and colonial officials had spoken of the need for a comprehensive *politique musulmane* prior to 1914, but the war years added a new urgency to these debates. With Berlin and Istanbul attempting to use Pan-Islamism as a cudgel, the cause of Islamic solidarity posed an existential threat. Colonial and metropolitan authorities addressed this challenge in different ways, prompting certain officials to criticize the lack of coordination between the various governmental bodies. “Shouldn’t this moment prompt us to seek out a synthesis and organization?” Lutaud implored. Collective security concerns now demanded a far-reaching *politique musulmane* for the entire empire, he believed.⁹⁴ Lucien Hubert, a key member of the *parti colonial* in the National Assembly, came to a similar conclusion by 1917. The multiple and complex administrative structures across the North African territories were nothing short of shambolic, in his opinion. “From this state of things results the incoherence that diminishes our energies in North Africa.”⁹⁵ Looking ahead, Hubert foresaw France playing a leading role in Africa and the Middle East. This leadership entailed coming to grips with France’s position in the world as a “Muslim power,” enacting meaningful colonial reforms in line with this status, and “little by little adapting *Islam Français* to the civilization of our country.”⁹⁶

References to “French Islam” had grown among writers, colonial reformers, and officials supportive of consolidating the North African empire in recent years. Commanding the loyalty of colonial subjects required shielding France’s Muslim

⁹² Watenpugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, 125–26.

⁹³ Shukri Ghanem, “Les Arabes avant et pendant la grande guerre: Le Califate et le pouvoir temporel,” *Correspondance d’Orient* (10 January 1917), 13.

⁹⁴ AMAE, Guerre, 1656, Charles Lutaud to Aristide Briand, MAE, 7 March 1916.

⁹⁵ Hubert, *Une Politique Coloniale*, 14.

⁹⁶ Hubert, *L’Islam et la Guerre*, 46.

imperium from the currents of trans-imperial Islam. As the war continued, critics came to re-evaluate France's *politique musulmane*, generating reflections on what being a "Muslim power" entailed and the meaning of this alleged "French Islam." The jihad declared in 1914 placed the issue of the Ottoman Caliphate front and center in these debates, obliging CIAM to dedicate a sufficient amount of attention to the subject.⁹⁷ The failure of the German-Ottoman strategy to provoke colonial insurrections alleviated some of these anxieties, but vital questions over religious authority and Muslim loyalties continued to linger. The war itself brought new challenges, suggesting that the Ottoman Empire was not the only danger France confronted.

The Arab revolt led by Sharif Hussein and funded by the British posed its own set of problems. While Britain sought to wrench the Arab provinces from Ottoman rule, individuals in the Foreign Office and Arab Bureau were beginning to speculate on what the demise of the Ottoman Empire might entail. "When Turkey has disappeared from Constantinople and the Straits, there must, in the interests of Islam, be an independent Muslim political unit somewhere else," the foreign secretary Edward Grey surmised in 1915. "Its center would naturally be the Moslem Holy Places, and it would include Arabia."⁹⁸ British propaganda during the revolt took aim at the Ottoman Caliphate, questioning the legitimacy of a Turkish dynasty laying claim to Islam's Arab inheritance and traditions. The former Egyptian Vice-Consul, Herbert Kitchener, went further, recommending that Hussein, as a descendant of the Prophet, be put at the head of a new "Arab Caliphate."⁹⁹ Hussein was amenable to the idea, believing it would bolster support for his Pan-Arab polity. The Indian administration, however, was cold to the proposal. So too were many British Muslim community leaders in the metropole. Like their fellow subjects in India, British Muslims identified with Sunni Islam and expressed a strong attachment to the Ottoman Caliph, earning them the epithet of "Turcophiles" in the British press.¹⁰⁰ The war had only strengthened these Pan-Islamic sympathies. The British Islamic Society, a London-based advocacy group for British Muslims, impressed upon the government that support for the Caliph remained unshaken. "The present Khalifa is being held in quite as much respect and veneration by Muslims as have been his predecessors," the organization claimed. "Furthermore, there is no desire among the Muslims to change the status of the Khalifate."¹⁰¹ The society maintained that Muslims would "strongly resent and will not tolerate" any interference by European Christians in their

⁹⁷ Sbaï, *La Politique Musulmane*, 54–55.

⁹⁸ BNA, FO 371/2486 (no. 34982), Edward Grey to Sr. F. Bertie, 23 March 1915.

⁹⁹ Nurullah Ardic, *Islam and the Politics of Secularism: The Caliphate and Middle Eastern Modernization in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2012), 203–04; Isaiah Friedman, *British Pan-Arab Policy, 1915–1922* (London: Transaction, 2010), 1–2.

¹⁰⁰ Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800* (London: C. Hurst, 2004), 84–90.

¹⁰¹ BNA, FO 371/2486 (no. 72671), M. Ehsam El-Barky to Edward Grey, 30 May 1915.

religious affairs, suggesting that British support for a rival Caliph would be met with resistance. Grey heeded these and other warnings, resolving that “the question of the Khalifate is one which must be decided by Moslems without interference from non-Moslem powers . . . The decision is one for Moslems to make.”¹⁰²

This acknowledgment did not mean that Kitchener or experts within the Arab Bureau abandoned their dream of creating an Arab Caliphate beholden to Britain. More importantly, French authorities remained suspicious. Talk of an Arab Caliphate suggested Britain might renege on the territorial arrangements laid out in the Sykes-Picot agreement. Under the circumstances, they had to wonder whether they had contended with one Pan-Islamic threat only to find themselves confronting another directed by their wartime ally. Britain was clearly motivated to secure its dominance in the Ottoman Middle East after the war. While this clashed with France’s own objectives in the eastern Mediterranean, if Britain sought to harness Pan-Islamic allegiances and pursue its own Arabo-Muslim policy, it would unquestionably pose a challenge to France’s imperial designs and security. The old Franco-British rivalry was being reignited, eliciting fundamental questions over what the post-Ottoman regional order would look like.

Policymakers made no secret of their desires to undercut Ottoman Pan-Islamism and relocate the seat of the Caliphate. The question of where to establish it, however, was unclear. Writing to the foreign minister Théophile Delcassé in 1915, DeFrance advised against Egypt. While it was a vital center of Islamic theology and tradition, Egypt’s proximity to North Africa and Syria made it problematic. “We do not want a new and powerful link attaching Algiers, Tunis, Beirut or Damascus to Cairo,” he warned.¹⁰³ Mecca was the obvious choice, but here too Britain retained a significant level of influence. In 1916, France dispatched a diplomatic mission to the Hijaz consisting of Muslim dignitaries from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco to gauge their influence with the Meccan emir. Officially the delegation was to inquire about purchasing two buildings in Mecca and Medina to service French Muslim pilgrims in the Holy Land. Unofficially, it was intended to convince Sharif Hussein of French support for the Arab cause. While the mission was successful in obtaining the desired properties, it failed to lure Hussein and his family away from the British.¹⁰⁴ According to the Algerian-born foreign affairs expert Georges Gaillard who worked in conjunction with CIAM during the war, if France could not be certain of its control over a Meccan Caliphate, another alternative had to be found. Given the circumstances, redirecting Muslim loyalties eastward rather than directing them toward France and its empire was foolish, if not potentially damaging.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² BNA, FO 371/2486 (no. 34982), Edward Grey to H. McMahon, 14 April 1915.

¹⁰³ AN 475 AP 155, DeFrance, Minister in Cairo, to Delcassé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 3 January 1915.

¹⁰⁴ Sbaï, *La Politique Musulmane*, 69–73.

¹⁰⁵ AN 475 AP 155, “Note de M. Gaillard: Les Événements de l’Orient et le Khalifat,” 7 March 1915.

Luckily, Gaillard did have another option on the table. Since the invasion of Morocco, policymakers had entertained ideas of setting upon a potential “Western Caliphate” under the Moroccan sultan. Like the Hashemites in Mecca, the Alawī dynasty in Fez boasted descent from the Quraysh tribe, tracing its lineage back to the Prophet Muhammad. The Alawī had traditionally used its illustrious lineage to assert its authority and legitimacy in Morocco, a tactic which Lyautey encouraged in promoting a particular version of “Moroccan Islam” that could serve the French protectorate.¹⁰⁶ Transforming “Moroccan” Islam into a trans-regional brand of Islam would, Lyautey believed, establish “a solid Islamic pillar of support” that could counter Ottoman and British influence.¹⁰⁷ African military authorities were keen to note that Ottoman Pan-Islamism found little support in Morocco because “the Moroccans recognize their own sultan as their imam and not the one from Constantinople.”¹⁰⁸ Given the supposedly organic links between Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, Gaillard was inclined to believe that a Moroccan Caliphate could be created, one that could contain Muslim religious loyalties within the French Empire. “It is to the future that we must look,” he urged. “The reconstitution of Western Islam could present, in the coming years, a powerful interest, not only for the Berber Arabs of North Africa, but for the Muslim populations of the Sahara, of Mauritanian and Sous,” territories with a more recent history of Islamic practice.¹⁰⁹

French experts and CIAM took up the proposal and submitted it for review. In numerous draft reports sent to the government over the next two years, opinion was mixed. Although the Moroccan sultan Yusef Ben Hassan had the credentials to serve as Caliph, it was questionable whether Morocco’s seemingly “orthodox” brand of Sunni Islam could present a competitor to the Ottomans.¹¹⁰ Power dynamics within the colonial administrations also played a part. Lutaud was guarded against creating a Western Caliphate in Morocco, fearing it would eclipse the influence of Algeria. He breathed a sigh of relief when his counterpart in Tunisia, Gabriel Alapetite, expressed similar qualms. Noting the strong Pan-Islamic sentiments evident among Tunisians, Alapetite bluntly indicated that “a significant change in the horizon of the Tunisians would have to occur in order to turn them away from the East and see in Morocco a credible successor of the Prophet.”¹¹¹ There was little doubt that the current war had created a “schism in

¹⁰⁶ Burke III, *The Ethnographic State*, 174–79; Daniel Rivet, “Quelques propos sur la politique musulmane de Lyautey au Maroc,” in Luizard, *Le Choc colonial et l’Islam*, 264–67.

¹⁰⁷ AMAE, Guerre, 1650, Lyautey to Alexandre Millerand, Minister of War, 21 October 1914. Also see: AMAE, Guerre, 1650, Lyautey to Delcassé, 12 November 1914.

¹⁰⁸ AMAE, Guerre, 1650, Général de Division Moinier to Alexandre Millerand, 15 November 1914.

¹⁰⁹ AN 475 AP 155, “Note de M. Gaillard: Les Événements de l’Orient et le Khalifat,” 7 March 1915.

¹¹⁰ See for example: ANOM, GGA/10H/54, “Conférence de M. Doutté,” 25 November 1914; CADN, 1TU/1/V/990, Deffrance, Minister in Cairo, to Delcassé, MAE, 3 January 1915.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Sbaï, *La Politique Musulmane*, 62.

the Muslim world,” Jean Gout explained.¹¹² Yet whether Muslim loyalties could be redirected toward Morocco was another question.

German and Ottoman propaganda repeatedly drove home the message that the Ottoman dynasty, regardless of its Turkic origins and family lineage, ruled over the largest Muslim state and therefore provided “a common spiritual center” for the global Muslim community.¹¹³ In 1916, the *Revue du Maghreb* entered the fray, railing against Sharif Hussein’s Arab revolt and the European powers’ “grotesque meddling” in Muslim religious affairs. Neither Hussein’s “Arab Caliphate” nor France’s “Western Caliphate” had any legitimacy, the paper cried.¹¹⁴ Europeans had no right to decide the matter. “The question is, in fact, quite simple: the Caliphate must belong to the sovereign of a *powerful* and *independent* Muslim state.”¹¹⁵ It was evident that the European powers could not be seen as installing a new Caliph, lest the prospective candidate lose all legitimacy among Muslims. As Delcassé warned, French interference in Caliphal politics “could have the most vicious repercussions on our Muslim subjects.”¹¹⁶ When it came to the future of transnational Islam, patience and reserve was essential. Gaillard was of the same opinion, although he was not prepared to abandon the idea of a Western Caliphate outright. In his recommendations to CIAM in 1915, he advised against engaging directly in issues of Caliphal authority. The task at hand was to “build up the personality of the Sultan of Morocco and accentuate his role on the side of religion.”¹¹⁷ If France could not directly enforce its will on the global Islamic community, it could quietly prepare the ground for a brand of transnational Islam conducive to its interests.

Even as the war years revealed the limits of Pan-Islamic mobilization, French officials persisted to cling to an instrumentalist view of Islam, seeing the Caliphate as a vehicle for the internal and foreign needs of the imperial state. This approach, like many aspects of France’s imperial repertoire in North Africa, replicated the logic and practices of Ottoman imperial state-building.¹¹⁸ Given the chance, France imagined itself supplanting the Ottoman Empire and asserting itself as a large “Muslim power” capable of commanding the loyalties of the millions of Muslims beyond its borders. “French Islam” was never conceived wholly within the confines of a national-imperial framework. If it could be used to bind Muslims

¹¹² AMAE, Guerre, 1657, Jean Gout, acting for MAE to the diplomatic and consular agents in foreign countries, 28 November 1916.

¹¹³ Menemenli-Zade Edhem Bey, “Das Osmanische Reich und die islamische Kultur,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 5 (April 1917), 264. Also see: “Das Kalifat als Geistiges Band,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 6 (May 1917), 361; Shaykh Abdül Azizi Shawish, “Das Kalifat,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 1 (January 1918), 1.

¹¹⁴ “Questions arabes,” *Revue du Maghreb* (30 August 1916), 4: 115–16.

¹¹⁵ “L’indépendance Arabe?” *Revue du Maghreb* (30 November 1916), 7: 209.

¹¹⁶ AN 475 AP 155, Delcassé to the Minister of the Colonies, 9 February 1915.

¹¹⁷ AN 475 AP 155, “Observation de M. Gaillard en la compte-rendu de la Commission des Affaires Musulmanes” (1915).

¹¹⁸ Sbaï, *La Politique Musulmane*, 54–55.

to a vision of a French imperial community, it also had the potential of expanding the geographic reach of the *présence française* across Africa and Asia, underwriting a trans-imperial strategy of expansion and influence. Although the plan was impractical while the Ottomans remained in power, French policymakers were confident that this program would bear fruit in the near future as the fortunes of war turned in favor of the Entente.

By late 1918, the Ottoman war effort was grinding to a halt. Six years of constant warfare had accelerated Ottoman decline and eroded CUP authority. With Britain assuming full control over the Mesopotamian expedition by 1917, the Ottoman position in the Middle East collapsed. That March, British forces occupied Baghdad and fortified their position in Sinai, the Hijaz, and the Persian Gulf. The loss of Mesopotamia coupled with the disappointing returns of the Ottoman jihad prompted German strategists to rethink the value of the Ottoman alliance, and with it the massive amounts of money and aid supplied to Istanbul. As the German front in Europe crumbled during the autumn of 1918, it was clear the Ottoman government could no longer hold out. On 30 October, Ottoman authorities negotiated an armistice with Entente authorities, bringing the war to an end. Two weeks later, Istanbul was occupied by Allied forces as the CUP leadership fled and the Young Turk government collapsed.¹¹⁹

While the Ottoman defeat brought a momentary reprieve, it also forced a number of issues that had been provisory during the war years. In the days prior to the formal Ottoman capitulation, France watched with horror as British troops marched into Damascus accompanied by Hashemite forces and proceeded to set up a postwar Arab government under Faisal bin Hussein, son of the Meccan Sharif. Fearing the Sykes-Picot agreement was about to unravel, France immediately moved to occupy Lebanon and gain the support of notables in Beirut for a French protectorate. The plan, however, drew resentment from Syrian and Arab nationalists in the city, widening the rifts between Lebanists and Syrianists that had emerged during the war. As tensions rose, the potential of a new war over Syria became a reality.¹²⁰

The Syrian question remained part of the broader question of how to treat the defeated Ottoman Empire. Anglo-French plans to carve up the empire mixed with British promises to Arab leaders during the war portended the complete dissolution of the Ottoman imperial state. By the war's conclusion, British public opinion was even questioning whether Sultan Mehmed VI should be allowed to remain on the throne. Academic and Christian organizations were vocal on such issues, calling for a punitive peace against the "barbaric" Turks. In early 1919, faculty members at Oxford University drafted a petition demanding the government

¹¹⁹ McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 307–39.

¹²⁰ Ali A. Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 139; Tauber, *The Arab Movements*, 242–43; John D. Grainger, *The Battle for Syria, 1918–1920* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013).

support a re-Christianization policy in the Balkans and the expulsion of all ethnic Turks from the region. "In particular we would emphasize the paramount need of the restoration of the great church at St. Sophia to the use of the Christian religion," the signatories remarked.¹²¹ Over the coming months, various religious associations submitted similar petitions, insisting that Hagia Sophia be reclaimed for Christendom.¹²² Learning of these demands, the Ottoman Grand Vizier Damat Ferid Pasha emphatically pressed upon British authorities that to gratify such vindictive impulses would only enflame anti-British opinions across the "entire Mussulman world."¹²³ Mehmed VI likewise agonized over what these attitudes held for the future of the empire and his own power. Setting his mind at ease, Ahmed Hamdi Pasha, one of Mehmed's top generals, assured him that Britain could not afford to impose a draconian peace on the Caliph of the Muslim world. "England is not at all likely to run the risk of arousing the enmity of her Muhammadan subjects, especially in this age of democracy, by treating Turkey firmly," he confided.¹²⁴

Hamdi was fully aware of the power Caliphal authority had among British subjects and understood that Britain's self-image as a "Muslim power" could be used to good effect in wresting concessions from the Allies. Three days after the formal Ottoman capitulation, Amin Sayed Khoully, secretary of the Edinburgh Islamic Society, addressed the British government, expressing his hope that it would "regard the feelings" of British Muslims in concluding peace with the Ottoman Empire. "We the Moslem subjects of the British Empire are confident that His Majesty's Government will allow no policy of aggression towards the Ottoman Empire and will respect the rights of the most revered Khalif of Islam."¹²⁵ In the coming days, additional petitions poured in from other British Muslim associations defending the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and stating their support for Mehmed VI as Caliph. "We are all loyal, yet we are Muslims and we belong not to this country nor to that but to the Muslim Nation," affirmed Abdul Majid, an imam at the Woking Mosque outside London and member of the British Islamic Society. "Turkey's plight is ours, and we must help."¹²⁶

To add force to his declaration, Majid enjoined the Islamic Society to rally Indian and Egyptian Muslims behind the proposal, using the colonies to exert pressure on the British government. Indian Muslims hardly required external motivation. Support for the Muslim unity movement had been strong on Subcontinental Asia, with Indian religious leaders consistently identifying with

¹²¹ BNA, FO 608/111 (no. 5407), "Expulsion of the Turks from Europe" (1919).

¹²² BNA, FO 608/111 (no. 8811), G. G. Harrison to Arthur Balfour, 12 April 1919.

¹²³ BNA, FO 608/111 (no. 8426), "Future of San Sophia," 20 April 1919.

¹²⁴ BNA, FO 371/4161 (no. 159449), "Future of Turkey: Account of an Interview between H. H. the Sultan and General Hamdi Pasha," 14 November 1919.

¹²⁵ BNA, FO 371/3419 (no. 197557), Amin Sayed Khoully to David Lloyd George, 2 November 1918.

¹²⁶ BNA, FO 371/3419 (no. 199619), "Muslims in England," 25 November 1918.

Abdülhamid's message of Pan-Islamic solidarity. Since the 1880s, leading cities in Bengal, Bombay, and the Punjab had been connected to Istanbul through cultural and quasi-political networks, providing the Ottoman government with a measure of influence and support in the Raj that persistently agonized British officials. At the conclusion of the war, Pan-Islamic sympathies ran high in India, eliciting calls for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire and the integrity of the Caliphate office.¹²⁷ The numerous letters and telegrams arriving from India made clear that Muslims would interpret any threat to Ottoman sovereignty as an offense to their religion. For their part, Muslim activists in the metropole used these declarations of Pan-Islamic support to press for a moderate peace settlement, urging Britain to act like the "Muslim power" it claimed to be. The Anglo-Ottoman Society founded in London to advocate on behalf of Ottoman interests was explicit in this respect. "[We beg] the Government to yield to the significant and unanimous representations of our Indian Muslim fellow-subjects against the destruction of Turkey and against any action intended to favour a change in the Caliphate."¹²⁸ Ottoman subjects understood the power that the colonies could exert on British policy and they endeavored to appeal to Pan-Islamic sympathies across empires to influence the peace settlement. That February, the leading British Indian spokesman Syed Ameer Ali received a telegram from the Ottoman scholarly community exhorting him to speak out on behalf of the silenced Ottoman Empire. "Cry her innocence to the world," the writer implored. "Your voice is that of Moslem India and in lending itself to speaking for the conscience of its compatriots it would also be the spokesman for all of Islam."¹²⁹

Given the promises made during the war to its Allies, Britain found its freedom of action restricted when it came to the arduous task of hammering out an acceptable peace settlement. Failure to mollify Muslim public opinion threatened to provoke colonial unrest while prior obligations ensured that maintaining Ottoman territorial integrity was all but impossible. Caught between these dual pressures, the government believed that the Caliphate might provide the key to resolving these conflicts. In May, it attempted to assuage the fears of the Indian administration, acknowledging the potential repercussions that could result from a victor's peace. "However small the area left to Turkey," a memo assured, "[the] Sultan should remain an independent sovereign, any dependence on another power being inconsistent with his position as Caliph."¹³⁰ While the Allies proceed to occupy Ottoman territories, it was hoped that preserving a shrunken Ottoman

¹²⁷ M. Naem Qureshi, *Pan-Islamism in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

¹²⁸ BNA, FO 608/111 (no. 5593), "Resolution from the Anglo-Ottoman Society," 12 March 1919.

¹²⁹ BNA, FO 608/111 (no. 3882), Halid Zia, Doyen of the University of Constantinople, to Ameer Ali, 17 February 1919.

¹³⁰ BNA, FO 608/110 (no. 15247), "Proclamation to Indian Moslems Explaining Terms of Peace with Turkey," 18 May 1919.

state under a nominal Caliph would temper Pan-Islamic outrage for the moment. To this end, Mehmed VI was persuaded to set up a new parliament and form a government with which to conduct the coming peace negotiations. The plan backfired when elections returned a nationalist majority. Goaded by the foreign occupation and fears of dismemberment, Turkish elites rallied behind an Islamist platform, signaling to France and Britain that the religious politics bolstered by Abdülhamid and the CUP were far from extinguished. “The national sentiment finds itself reinforced by the religious sentiments held by the many Muslims for whom it is essential that the Caliph remain in Constantinople, that he be independent and sufficiently strong to fulfill his role as defender of Islam,” one French report despaired.¹³¹ The French president, Raymond Poincaré understood the dangers that this turn of events presented. Neither Britain nor France could ignore this religious nationalism taking root. “[We are] the two countries which have the greatest interest in keeping Islam calm,” he stated.¹³²

The nationalist backlash jeopardized the ongoing peace negotiations and threatened to intensify the pressures exerted by the global Muslim community. In late 1919, John Michael de Robeck, the British High Commissioner in Istanbul charged with overseeing the occupation, alerted the Foreign Office that a flood of Pan-Islamic pamphlets was coming off the presses and circulating through the capital.¹³³ More alarming still was the fact that radical groups with names like *Dar-ul-Hakumt* (The House of Governance) and *Ittihad-i-Islam* (Islamic Unity) appeared to be working with government officials to assist in arming Turkish guerrilla forces abroad and “[sending] out preachers to inflame the villages on Anatolia.”¹³⁴ The bi-weekly newspaper *Irâde-i Milliye* run out of Sivas reported that the Allied governments were planning to hand Muslim holy sites over to the Armenians and printed stories detailing the vindictive butchering of entire Muslim villages. “Contrary to all justice, the British are aiming to massacre and annihilate the Muslim nation,” it exclaimed.¹³⁵ As the “liberation” movement spread, a host a new Islamic parties and confederations grew up throughout central and eastern Anatolia.¹³⁶ According to one intelligence officer, Pan-Islamic parties were sprouting up like “mushroom growths” in Istanbul, attracting Ottoman military commanders and prominent religious figures. The Hamidian Pan-Islamists were coming out of the woodwork giving “currency to old Pan-Islamic ideas under

¹³¹ AN 475 AP 155, Raymond Poincaré to M. de Saint-Aulaire, ambassador to London, 25 January 1922.

¹³² AN 475 AP 155, Raymond Poincaré to M. de Saint-Aulaire, ambassador to London, 25 January 1922.

¹³³ IOR/L/PS/11/166/P71/1920, J. M. Robeck to Earl Curzon, 7 December 1919.

¹³⁴ IOR/L/PS/11/171/P3097/1920, Weekly summary of intelligence reports issued by M. I. L. C. Constantinople Branch, 11 March 1920.

¹³⁵ BNA, FO 371/4161 (no. 159449), “Extracts from the Newspaper Iradei-Millie,” 14 November 1919.

¹³⁶ BNA, FO 371/4161 (no. 163686), “Situation in Turkey: Weekly Summary of Intelligence Reports,” 28 November 1919.

new forms.”¹³⁷ British authorities grit their teeth when they learned that known Indian “anarchists” who had worked with the CUP during the war were among the liberation fighters, furnishing a conduit between the underground nationalist movements and political activists operating in Egypt and India.¹³⁸

To make matters worse, CUP partisans exiled in Europe drew inspiration from the instability roiling Anatolia. Unwilling to acknowledge defeat, they had taken refuge in Switzerland among the many Muslim activists and anti-colonial nationalists gathered there, forming a Party of National Defense composed of former CUP leaders and old “Hamidian pashas.” By early 1919, the group had elaborated a platform committed to preserving the Ottoman Caliphate, with branches stretching from Geneva to Lausanne and Zurich.¹³⁹ Enver Pasha was also active in Switzerland collaborating with Soviet agents keen to harness the Pan-Islamic movements breaking out in Central Asia.¹⁴⁰ Within a year, French intelligence reported that the former minister of the interior, Talaat Pasha, was leading “a sort of Turkish republic” in Berlin calling itself the League of Oppressed Peoples. Consisting of a handful of old-guard CUP officials, the faction was plotting sabotage operations against the Allied military administration and seeking to reunite the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴¹ Most if not all of these movements stood little chance of success and quickly fell apart due to infighting and petty squabbles. Talaat would be assassinated in 1921 by an agent of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation as payback for his role in the atrocities perpetrated against the Ottoman Armenian community during the war. Enver was to end his days fighting and dying in Tajikistan as “Commander-in-Chief of all the Armies of Islam,” leading a radical Pan-Turkic movement with Soviet support.¹⁴² In spite of their haphazard character, these exile movements fanned the flames of Pan-Islamic activism at a time when the Allied governments were seeking to curtail the flows of transnational Islam and consolidate their imperial position in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

For France, the need to finalize the Ottoman question was becoming acute by the end of 1919. In Syria, Faisal’s Hashemite faction was gaining traction while the question of the Ottoman Caliphate remained a sticking point among Syrian nationalists. Forcing the issue, however, held its own problems. By early 1920, French authorities in Tunisia were beginning to fear that the Allied occupation and possible ouster of the Caliph might generate mass protests in the protectorate. Local authorities attempted to allay these anxieties. “This eventuality can only produce a bad impression, but it is not to be feared that it will provoke outside

¹³⁷ BNA, FO 371/4161 (no. 168774), “Weekly Summary of Intelligence Reports,” 12 December 1919.

¹³⁸ BNA, FO 371/4161 (no. 165718), “Weekly Summary of Intelligence Reports,” 5 December 1919.

¹³⁹ BNA, FO 608/110 (no. 5986), “Activities of the CUP in Switzerland,” Telegram from Sir H. Rumbold to Mr. Balfour, 31 March 1919.

¹⁴⁰ IOR/L/PS/11/171/P2876/1920, “Note sur le mouvement panislamique,” Lord Granville to Lord Curzon, 18 March 1920.

¹⁴¹ AN 475 AP 155, “Bulletin de Renseignements des Questions Musulmanes,” 15 October 1920.

¹⁴² Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace*, 487–88.

demonstrations to an extent that will trouble public order,” the civil controller in Sousse reported that January.¹⁴³ In Gabes, local authorities offered a similar conclusion, indicating that most Tunisians were ignorant of events taking place in Syria and Istanbul.¹⁴⁴ The same was true of the authorities in Souk-el-Arba, who claimed events in Syria and Istanbul were rarely discussed, adding, “in effect, the number of those who are literate outside the bureaucracy and susceptible to reading newspapers and commenting on them is extremely low.”¹⁴⁵ The Resident General was no doubt shocked when two months later a crowd of Tunisians assembled before the Al-Zaytuna Mosque waving green banners and declaring their support for the Ottoman Caliph. Leading the crowd, the educator Chadli Mourali mounted the steps of the mosque to cheers. “My dear coreligionists, we hope that France will not tolerate the English occupation in Constantinople,” he bellowed. “If it should declare war on England, we will march with them. On the contrary, if the English persist to occupy Stamboul, we will wage war here if it is necessary to do so.”¹⁴⁶

The imperial entanglements binding places such as Istanbul, Tunis, Mumbai, and Cairo were a testament to the resilience of trans-imperial Islam and the cross-regional attachments that sustained it. Whether in India or Tunisia, colonial subjects were determined to exercise their voices and exert pressures on imperial metropolises, acting out the unity they believed bound an imagined global Muslim community. Imperial states could not remain indifferent to their pleas. Nor could they sit back and let events work themselves out either. Taking note of the Hashemite movements gaining momentum across the Middle East and Syria in 1921, Laurent Depui, an agent assigned to the French consul in Jeddah, underscored the need for France to take a stance on the issue of Caliph authority. “France [must] take a clear position which will definitively attract to it the sympathy and support of all the Muslim world.”¹⁴⁷ For a self-proclaimed “Muslim power,” Muslim public opinion mattered. And yet imperial interests and rivalries continually hindered governments as they attempted to negotiate between the expectations of imperial subjects and the trans-regional flows that animated Muslim politics. The Pan-Islamic movements that took shape in the immediate aftermath of the war restrained French action, limiting its ability to influence the question of transnational Islam. As a new decade dawned, French authorities watched their hopes of forging a “French Islam” that was transnational in scope yet imperial in nature evaporate.

¹⁴³ ANT, Series MN, Carton 16, dossier 4, “Cabinet Confidential,” Contrôleur civil de Sousse to Flandin, Minister Resident General, 16 January 1920.

¹⁴⁴ ANT, Series MN, Carton 16, dossier 4, “Note: Contrôleur civil de Gabes,” 14 January 1920.

¹⁴⁵ ANT, Series MN, Carton 16, dossier 4, Contrôleur civil de Souk-el-Arba to Resident General, 16 January 1920.

¹⁴⁶ ANT, Series MN, Carton 16, dossier 4, “Note: Sûreté Publique,” 10 March 1920.

¹⁴⁷ ANOM, GGA/10H/54, Depui, géant le consultat de France à Djeddah to Aristide Briand, MAE, 10 July 1921.

While the Allies proceeded with caution, the Turkish liberation movement took bold strides. When it was announced in 1920 that the Allies did intend to separate Anatolia from the Arab provinces and divide up the Ottoman Empire, Turkish nationalists and Pan-Islamists responded with outrage. In 1922, nationalist forces under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal successfully beat back Allied forces, seizing control of Anatolia and proclaiming the birth of a new Turkish Republic. While the Ottoman Empire was finished, Turkish national sovereignty would ensure that a free and independent Turkey prevailed. Eighteen months after abolishing the sultanate, Kemal announced the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate, putting a definitive end to the question. Kemal's forceful policies dealt a swift blow to the Caliphal movements in India and the Arab world. Yet by this point, many French imperialists had already moved on. Discussions of "French Islam" were now confined to the more modest subject of "Islam in France," as French officials debated the country's *politique musulmane* and how best to manage the many Muslim subjects populating its imperial nation-state.¹⁴⁸ Writing to the Moroccan administration in 1922, the colonial explorer Édouard Michaux-Bellaire candidly explained that a French Caliphate was as backward looking as it was absurd. "The Muslims do not love us, especially in their own lands," he admonished. "It is out of the question for them to be governed by us."¹⁴⁹ More to the point, religion no longer commanded the same authority that Europeans attributed to it. The creation of the Turkish Republic marked a decisive turning point. "Muslim nationalism" was now on the rise, and the achievement of Turkish independence, rather than Pan-Islamism or tradition, was the source of inspiration for Muslims worldwide. Anti-colonial nationalism was the real threat on the horizon, in Michaux-Bellaire's opinion, a threat that France would be foolish to ignore.

The New Mediterranean Order and the Paths of Empire

Writing from Paris in 1919 as Muslims across the world came to the defense of the vanquished Ottoman Empire, Georges Samné offered a sober critique of the phenomenon he was witnessing. "[The Pan-Islamists] refuse to adapt to their own times," he remarked dismissively. "This program purely theoretical, presupposed a unity for Islam that it never really had." In his transition from Ottomanist to Syrian nationalist, Samné had come to believe that the future of the Middle East lay in national, rather than religious association as Muslim states increasingly moved "toward accentuating their national character."¹⁵⁰ Naturally, such arguments

¹⁴⁸ Sbaï, *La Politique Musulmane*, 69–70.

¹⁴⁹ AN 475 AP 155, Michaux-Bellaire to Hout, 20 November 1922.

¹⁵⁰ Georges Samné, *Le Khalifat et le Panislamisme* (Paris: Imprimerie Dubois et Bauer, 1919), 5, 9, 18.

aligned with his support for the secular and independent Syrian state he saw on the horizon. As demands for an Arab Caliphate threatened to undermine the Greater Syria imagined by émigrés operating in Paris, Samné did not mince words. The Caliphate had little bearing on the geopolitical realities of the post-Ottoman world, he contended. European powers slow to grasp this fact were playing a losing hand.

Having committed much of his professional life to Oriental affairs, Samné understood the important shift taking place as the First World War wound down. New nationalist aspirations coupled with European imperial impulses were consolidating a process that had been occurring across the Muslim Mediterranean since at least the 1880s. As French mandate status was secured over Lebanon and Syria and Britain expanded its reach into Palestine in the years following the First World War, a new spatial regime was imposed on the assemblage of Ottoman provinces stretching from Lebanon to Persia. The Muslim Mediterranean, with its cross-border cultural attachments and multiple loyalties, was being re-spatialized in accordance with the dictates of a national-colonial order. How Islam would adapt to this new constellation of colonial and national enclaves had yet to be seen, but imperial strategists like Samné and Michaux-Bellaire hinted at the implications this process held for the future. Pan-Islamism had perennially cast a long shadow over European empire-building projects, betraying the many anxieties and uncertainties that accompanied Europe's expansion across the Muslim world. In their efforts to exercise control over subject populations, governments had repeatedly been forced to struggle against the centrifugal pull of Islam and Caliphal authority. In the wake of the war, Wilsonian ideals of self-determination and revised notions of European stewardship provided a new geopolitical and discursive context for containing the trans-imperial flows that had challenged imperial sovereignty in the past. National borders became, at least in theory, "axiomatic features" of the new postwar world order, erecting barriers against the forms of transnational religious authority and identification that had previously frustrated European regimes.¹⁵¹

The irony of course was that insulating the empire always required working through trans-imperial networks. To fight the war, French and British officials forged relationships with regional press agents and intermediaries as they attempted to curtail cross-border flows and hamper German-Ottoman propaganda initiatives. They also engaged local powerbrokers with an eye on expanding their imperial reach across the Ottoman Middle East. As in the past, these objectives dovetailed with the agendas of émigré groups and community leaders who exploited their connections to European officialdom in pursuit of their own ends. While Syrian and Arab activists mobilized support for their vision of a post-Ottoman Middle

¹⁵¹ Watenpugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, 139.

East, French officials were busy imagining what the Muslim world would resemble once the Ottoman Empire had vanished from the scene. These dual projects were not independent of one another, and frequently informed one another as imperial displacements and the seismic geopolitical shifts provoked by the First World War transformed the Mediterranean. The war years illuminated one of the central contradictions laying at the heart of modern empire-building. Efforts to impose sovereignty and consolidate imperial rule were perennially dependent upon the many extraterritorial and trans-imperial flows that accompanied empire. Imperialists may have thought in terms of color-coded maps and borders etched with linear precision, but these “lines in the sand” betrayed a more complex reality, one made evident in both the actualities occurring on the ground as well as the processes through which empires were manufactured.

Conclusion

Entangled Histories and Fractured Pasts

In the summer of 1930, French Algeria turned one hundred. This milestone was greeted with a wave of commemorative celebrations across the colony. Local communes organized parades and held public events to honor a century of French rule. In various towns and cities, monuments were erected to the first French colonizers and notable colonial governors. The postal service even issued special commemorative stamps featuring images of the port of Algiers.¹ In the colonial capital, a series of concerts, balls, and naval exhibitions were staged over a span of six months while politicians gave long-winded speeches to enthusiastic crowds. “The landing of the French army on the beach of Sidi Ferruch marked the beginning of a new era, comparable to the landing of Spain in America,” proclaimed Gustave Mercier, a French-Algerian political elite who presided over the committee responsible for organizing the centenary celebration.² Metropolitans also felt it important to partake in the public festivities. In 1929, the French President Gaston Doumergue set up a propaganda committee charged with organizing events in the country to ensure that “all of France” understood the significance of this magnificent event.³

The centenary celebration provided an occasion to reflect on the years of French rule in Algeria and the legacy of French colonialism in general. In anticipation of the festivities, experts associated with the Collège de France and Faculté des lettres d’Alger set to the task of writing commemorative histories of the conquest, many of them commissioned by the Algerian government.⁴ In these works, contributors praised the successes of the French “civilizing mission” and the transformations it had wrought. They also saw fit to comment on the French Empire broadly, noting Algeria’s “close union with the rest of North Africa.”⁵ The conquest of 1830 was inscribed within a longer narrative of French expansion

¹ “Le monument de Boufarik,” *L’Afrique du Nord Illustré*, 25:453 (4 January 1930), 5, 17.

² Gustave Mercier, *Le Centenaire de l’Algérie: Exposé Ensemble* (Algiers: P. and G. Soubiron, 1931), 1: 21.

³ André Lambelet, “Back to the Future: Politics, Propaganda, and the Centennial of the Conquest of Algeria,” *French History and Civilization*, 1 (2005): 62–63.

⁴ Jacques Cantier, “Du discours scientifique au discours commémoratif: Les Antiquisants de l’École d’Alger face au centenaire de la conquête,” *Anabases* 15 (April 2012): 27–36.

⁵ Stéphane Gsell, “Introduction,” in J. Alazard et al., *Histoire et historiens de l’Algérie: Collection du centenaire de l’Algérie* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1931), 3.

across the shores of Mediterranean Africa. The region stretching from Morocco to Tunisia was part of a general “Mediterranean world” linking Africa and France, the historian Eugène Albertini reminded readers.⁶ While Algeria was the prized jewel in the crown of France’s North African empire, it was always a reference point in a larger imperial geography elaborated by politicians, scholars, and colonialists since the 1880s. In the past “North Africa” may have been a malleable concept, but by 1930 this was no longer the case. “Today we have clear ideas on the form of North Africa,” insisted Émile-Félix Gautier.⁷ With outright rebellion quashed and French rule recognized across the three territories, publicists spoke confidently about the *présence française* in the region, noting, as the historian Georges Yves did, “that there is every reason to assume [it] will endure.”⁸

This conviction was not only one of academic making. At a moment when scholars were pontificating on the “natural unity” of French North Africa, the publisher Michelin was contributing to the process of empire-building in its own way. In 1929, Michelin printed its first single-volume guidebook encompassing Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia in its *Editions du Centenaire*. Snaking motor routes, colorful maps, and excursion recommendations aimed at holidaymakers helped stitch together a familiar imperial geography just as much as insipid histories penned by leading experts of the day.⁹ Continuity across time complemented homogenization across space, assisting in the construction of an imperial imaginary.

The Algerian centenary marked the culmination of a process occurring since at least the turn of the century, if not earlier. Efforts to give form and substance to a quintessentially “French” North Africa were part of a larger initiative to create a bounded and secure empire, one populated by a sizable Muslim population and possessing a wider regional presence across the Mediterranean. Following France’s entrance into the Maghreb in 1830, policymakers increasingly expressed concerns over borders and jurisdictional authority as they consolidated the *présence française* in North Africa and the Levant. These concerns were heightened with the advent of renewed imperial expansion in the late nineteenth century as politicians came to place a premium on territorialized jurisdiction and explicit imperial sovereignty as a basis for international relations. Although the late nineteenth century saw a shift from “informal” to “formal” imperial control, the realities of empire-building reveal that this transition was hardly clear-cut when it came to the Mediterranean as elsewhere. While it is common to think of empires as bounded entities with well-defined borders and jurisdictional

⁶ Eugène Albertini, “L’Algérie antique,” in Alazard, *Histoire et historiens*, 89.

⁷ Émile-Félix Gautier, “La cadre géographique de l’histoire en Algérie,” in Alazard, *Histoire et historiens*, 19.

⁸ Stéphane Gsell, Georges Marçais, and Georges Yver, *Histoire d’Algérie* (Paris: Boivin, 1927), 321.

⁹ Kory Olson, “Come Drive French North Africa: Cartographic and Guidebook Discourse in Michelin’s 1929 *Maroc, Algérie, Tunisie*,” *French Colonial History*, 20 (2021): 29–64.

boundaries, in practice imperial rule often conveyed a different story. Rarely did spatial representations of empire accord with the geographies of Maghrebi natives. Frontiers and open borders had long been aspects of Muslim social life. The trans-local religious and cultural affiliations that cut across the region traced a geography at odds with the enclosed colonial enclaves delimited by imperialists. European authorities may have endeavored to rupture these ties through the imposition of colonial bureaucracies and the drawing of linear political borders that defined sovereign limits, but time and time again they found it necessary to work through the existing Sufi networks, tribal ties, commercial routes, and migratory habits familiar to the people they governed. Trans-imperial connectivities both disrupted and abetted empire-building projects. If the rhetoric of the “new imperialism” favored territorialized states, alternative strategies were never off the table and remained part of the modern imperial repertoire well into the years of the First World War.

The Mediterranean was a complex imperial ecosystem in which European and regional powers participated. Capturing these intricacies requires looking beyond unitary frameworks to examine the cross-border movements and communities that influenced the formation of modern imperial states. Such a perspective furnishes a larger panorama on which to chart the paths of modern empire-building. Muslim religious networks, anti-colonial activism, and the circulation of print possessed a trans-regional and occasionally global scope. In attempting to harness and redirect these flows, colonial officials were drawn deeper into the entanglements that empire nurtured. Despite the best efforts of European authorities, the Mediterranean remained a fluid space of interactions and converging trajectories that resisted the enclosed, circumscribed forms of sovereignty desired by colonial officials.

This is not to deny that the long nineteenth century marked a critical moment in the re-spatialization of the Mediterranean. The First World War fractured many of the links that connected the Ottoman world. The ambiguous frontiers and layered forms of sovereignty that had previously characterized the southern and eastern Mediterranean gave way to a new national-colonial order which reoriented loyalties and cultural affinities. In turn, these new arrangements set the stage for nationalist movements and struggles in the years to come. Colonial interventions transformed cultural identities and state-society relations, politicizing them in the process. The interwar years would continue to see native elites appropriating notions of indigenous identity manufactured by imperial powers and directing them toward their own political ends. Territorialization and greater colonial control ironically prefigured the liberation movements that would assume shape after the Second World War, providing activists with ready-made concepts of “Algerian” or “Moroccan” nationality that could be used to frame anti-colonial platforms. While European colonialism effaced indigenous histories, anti-colonial

nationalism provided natives with a means of reconstructing and reclaiming them, effectively making them their own.¹⁰

These developments continue to have implications for the region to this day. The shadow of “French North Africa” persists to loom over the Maghreb. The “natural unity” binding Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia that French observers were inclined to see remains part of contemporary Maghrebin identity, as trade agreements like the Arab Maghreb Union reveal. Yet this supposed unity is tenuous at best and has never precluded sharp conflicts over national sovereignty and jurisdiction.¹¹ The legacies of colonial border-making and later efforts at post-colonial nation-building have more often than not tended to fragment rather than unify. The common historical memories and identities that activists once appealed to have been replaced with sharp political divisions and claims to territory. Border disputes both past and present between Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia stem from the colonial period, as each state seeks to assert its sovereignty over the very same borderlands that once frustrated colonial officials.¹² Moreover, the struggle between state borders and Pan-Islamic identity is by no means finished. While nationalists have sought to territorialize loyalties and channel them inward, Islamists have constantly served to obstruct these designs. In 2007, the Algeria-based Salafist Group for Preaching Combat transformed itself into the more notorious Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which has engaged in campaigns against national governments and pledged to unify Muslims across state lines.¹³ In a similar fashion, in 2014 the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) succeed in resurrecting a Caliphate stretching across Iraq and Syria with the intention of uniting the Sunni *ummah* and commanding the loyalties of all true believers. While contemporary Islamist militancy bears little resemblance to the Muslim cosmopolitanism of the late nineteenth century, it is nevertheless evident that conflicts engendered by borders, faith, and identity remain present to this day across the Muslim world.

If colonial border-making has had a lasting impact on the region, so too has the European Mediterranean paradigm. *The Mediterranean* was always a European invention, one that homogenized an array of different cultures, memories, and historical trajectories. It blurred the boundaries between different

¹⁰ McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria*; Johnathan Wyrzten, *Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 4–5.

¹¹ Paul A. Silverstein, “France’s *Mare Nostrum*: Colonial and Post-Colonial Constructions of the French Mediterranean,” *The Journal of North African Studies*, 7:4 (2002): 11–12.

¹² Pierre Robert Baudel, “La production de l’espace national au Maghreb,” in Pierre Robert Baudel, ed., *Lieux d’autonomie et centralisation étatique: Etat, territoire et terroirs au Maghreb* (Paris: Editions CNRS, 1985).

¹³ Fatma Ben Slimane, “Between Empire and Nation-State: The Problem of Borders in the Maghreb,” in Bechev and Nicolaidis, *Mediterranean Frontiers*, 35–36; Frederick Wehrey and Anouar Boukhars, *Salafism in the Maghreb: Politics, Piety, and Militancy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

regional enclaves and sub-systems, offering a uniform space on which Europeans projected their own economic, political, and cultural agendas. Although historians today have sought to resurrect the internal diversity and intersecting histories that the Mediterranean encompassed, the power of this geographic imaginary remains strong. Nations like Morocco and Turkey have consciously promoted images of themselves as “Mediterranean” countries, whether to emphasize their connections with Europe or make themselves more appealing to European and Western tourists. Strategic and economic policies like the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership outlined in 1995 have encouraged such self-fashioning.¹⁴ Since the 1990s, the European Union has supported a process of region-building through trans-Mediterranean agreements focused on economic development, immigration, and security.¹⁵ Partnership—what some critics have not hesitated to brand neo-colonialism—has extended European administrative reach across the sea, with EU members providing training for border police and military equipment to assist local authorities. In return, EU states have benefited from intelligence sharing and access to energy reserves. The effect has been the creation of a buffer zone cutting along Europe’s southern and eastern peripheries, transforming North Africa and the Middle East into a new borderland characterized by asymmetrical power relationships and overlapping administrative institutions.¹⁶ Rather than a constellation of sovereign nation-states, the Mediterranean has once again begun to resemble a complex tangle of regional and transnational governmental structures with scaled genres of rule and authority.

In the early twenty-first century, France was not reticent in claiming a leading role for itself in cementing this Mediterranean partnership. In the run up to his presidential election in 2007, the future head of state Nicolas Sarkozy offered a pessimistic picture to voters, insisting “France doubts itself, its identity, its role, and its future.” Yet he also offered hope, reassuring listeners “our future will be found... in the Mediterranean.” Sarkozy conjured up familiar images of the Classical Sea which gave birth to European civilization and spoke of a “new renaissance occurring on the two banks of the Mediterranean.” This project would, he affirmed, be nothing short of a “policy of civilization,” a phrase that could not help but evoke memories of the republican *mission civilisatrice*

¹⁴ Öktem, “The Ambivalent Sea,” in Bechev and Nicolaidis, *Mediterranean Frontiers*, 19–23; Fulvio Attinà, “The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Assessed: The Realist and Liberal Views,” *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 8:2 (2003): 181–99.

¹⁵ Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford, “Normative Power: The European Practice of Region-Building and the Case of the Mediterranean Partnership,” in Emanuel Adler, Federica Bicchì, Beverly Crawford, and Raffaella A. Del Sarto, eds., *The Convergence of Civilizations: Constructing a Mediterranean Region* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 3–41.

¹⁶ Mark Langan, *Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of “Development” in Africa* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Raffaella A. Del Sarto, “Borderlands: The Middle East and North Africa as the EU’s Southern Buffer Zone,” in Bechev and Nicolaidis, *Mediterranean Frontiers*, 156–58; Haleh Davis and Thomas Serres, eds., *North Africa and the Making of Europe: Governance, Institutions, and Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

proclaimed in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ As to whether French voters desired to embrace this trans-Mediterranean inheritance was another matter. A decade later, right-wing publicists were still grumbling about the erosion of French national identity as the continent confronted an unprecedented refugee crisis that saw people from North Africa and the greater Middle East flock to the shores of Europe. Following traumatic events like the Bataclan and Nice terrorist attacks inspired by ISIS, they were quick to point the finger at the threat of radical Islam coming from the south. Whereas colonialists of the previous century were once eager to promote the idea of France as a “Muslim power,” conservatives today regularly lament the fact that France is now home to over five million Muslims, the highest among EU member states.¹⁸

North Africa has continued to play an important role in France’s post-colonial global entanglements. Despite its integration into the European Union, France has maintained close bilateral economic and political ties with the governments of its former colonies. While the French colonial empire is no more, France’s footprint in the region remains extensive. The former African colonies—typically referred to as *Françafrique*—are linked to the metropole through foreign policy, trade, and economic dependence. Post-war migration has also tied France closer to the Muslim Mediterranean, with immigrant communities originating from the Maghreb and Syria altering the cultural makeup of the country and generating new frictions over French national identity and public recognition for minorities.¹⁹ These migrations have established bi-coastal networks and transnational connections that have influenced everything from French cuisine and literature to acts of terrorism perpetrated on French civilians. Taking a broad perspective, it is possible to see France and the Maghreb as forming a single transnational and trans-political space shaped by the movement of people, the transfer of cultures, and the political evolutions occurring on both sides of the Mediterranean.²⁰ The tensions and painful memories shared by north and south are a testament to the afterlife of colonialism and the enduring connections it fostered.²¹ France today remains bound to the Muslim Mediterranean, whether it chooses to or not.

¹⁷ Nicolas Sarkozy, “Discours de Toulon” (7 February 2007), *Vie Publique*, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/165425-declaration-de-m-nicolas-sarkozy-ministre-de-linterieur-et-de-lamena>.

¹⁸ “Europe’s Growing Muslim Population,” Pew Research Center Report, 29 November 2017.

¹⁹ Dominic Thomas, *Africa and France: Postcolonial Cultures, Migration, and Racism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Richard L. Derderian, *North Africans in Contemporary France: Becoming Visible* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

²⁰ Paul A. Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 2–5.

²¹ Andrew Hussey, *The French Intifada: The Long War Between France and its Arabs* (London: Granta, 2015).

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